PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
1 February—12 February 1993

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES — VOLUME 218

TWELFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

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House of Commons

Monday 1 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Garden Festival Wales

1. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on Garden Festival Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): The national garden festival was an extremely successful event and, despite the adverse weather from July onwards, it succeeded in attracting more than 2 million visitors.

Mr. Bruce: In congratulating the Welsh Office on its role in promoting the garden festival, may I ask my hon. Friend whether there was a greater benefit to the economy in general, not only through visitors and tourists, but in expanding the economy and demonstrating that the Government are wholly committed to regenerating jobs in south Wales?

Mr. Jones: On behalf of my right hon. Friends and myself, I am happy to accept my hon. Friend's congratulations, which are very much due to Philip Weekes and everyone else who worked with and for Garden Festival Wales Ltd. They did an exceptional job, as did the local authorities—Blaenau Gwent borough council and Gwent county council. I remember that thousands of people attended on the last day and everyone who went to see the garden festival came away impressed by what can be done in reclamation and by the positive images of Wales that it presented.

Mr. Llew Smith: While I accept all the remarks about the people who made such an outstanding contribution to the garden festival, and while the Government helped to finance the festival and to bring about those good works, on the other hand the Government have brought about a situation in which basic credit approvals for Blaenau Gwent have been slashed by more than £600,000. Environmental schemes in other parts of the constituency will have to be slashed, so the good work done through the garden festival is being outweighed by bad works in other parts of the borough. Will the Minister meet the local authorities to discuss the fact that the basic credit approvals for Blaenau Gwent are the lowest for any district council in Wales?

Mr. Jones: I am certainly not so pessimistic as the hon. Gentleman. I seem to recollect that the Government provided more than £30 million in support for the garden festival. That was a substantial and worthwhile investment for the local authority to build on. I know that Blaenau Gwent borough council and Gwent county council have formed a partnership with the Welsh Development Agency —the Victoria partnership—which has some interesting plans to take that forward. I look forward to developing the end use of the site.

Capital Programme

2. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be in a position to announce the capital programme for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I am pleased to announce that in 1993-94 the planned gross capital expenditure in respect of my Department's

programmes will total approximately £1,500 million for the first time ever. With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall arrange for details to be printed in the *Official Report*.

The information is as follows:

1. Planned gross capital expenditure for 1993-94 in respect of all programmes within my responsibility totals some £1·5 billion.

2. The expenditure plans of my Department, including those public expenditure programmes with capital components, will be set out in the Departmental Report to be published in February.

3. The provision of £1·5 billion covers a range of Welsh Office capital programmes.

The main components are:

	£ million
(i) Local authority gross capital expenditure	620
(ii) Central government roads and transport	180
(iii) Central government health (including NHS Trusts)	138
(iv) Housing for Wales	130
(v) Welsh Development Agency	124
(vi) ERDF grants	70

4. Lists of major projects included in the programmes are as follows.

Major capital projects in progress include:

	Estimated Total Spend £ million
Central Government Roads	
A55 Pen-y-Clip Tunnels	121
M4 Earlwood—Lonlas	59
M4 Briton Ferry—Earlwood	60
A487 Port Dinorwic Bypass	14
M4/A4042 Brynglas Tunnels/Malpas Road	69
A483 Welshpool RR	16
M4 Baglan—Briton Ferry	37
A55 Aber	11
A465 Glynneath—Aberdulais	84
M4 Link to 2nd Severn Crossing	53
Transport Grant Schemes	
A472 Maesyowmner—Newbridge	36
Talbot Green Bypass Extension	11
Pontypridd Inner relief road	35
Butetown Link	132
Hospitals	
Ysbyty Maelor, Wrexham	20
Ysbyty Gwynedd II	9
Morriston IV	33
Torfaen Community	6
Arts and Libraries	
Museum development of Cathays Park building	21
WDA Land Reclamation Schemes	
Bargoed Colliery and Tips	11
Oakdale Colliery and Tips	8
Pentre Colliery Tips	5
Phurnacite Works, Abercwmboi	3
Georgetown Cyfarthfa Tips	3

Major capital projects planned to commence in 1993-94 include:

	Estimated Total Spend £ million
Arts and Libraries	
Provision of third library building	11
Central Government Roads	
A4042 Llantarnam By-Pass	18
A5 Glyn Bends	11
A470 Pentrebach-Cefn Coed	58
A483 Llandeilo Eastern By-Pass	18
Transport Grant Schemes	
A4048 Tredegar By-Pass	9
A4067 Swansea Valley Dualling Stage 1	16
Hospitals	
Singleton Theatre/SDU Development	9
West Mon Community	7
Barry Neighbourhood	8
Cardiff Neighbourhood	7
Other Environmental Services	
Cardiff Bay Barrage (subject to Parliamentary approval)	147
WDA Land Reclamation Schemes	
Maerdy Colliery Tips Phase 2	2
Brymbo Steelworks	10
Barry Marine	13

Mr. Richards: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that represents an 8·5 per cent. increase in spending in the last year? Will not those record figures accelerate the transformation of the Welsh economy that we have seen in the past 13 years, particularly in view of the new industrial projects which I understand are to be announced today?

Mr. Hunt: I am, indeed, pleased to confirm that seven new industrial projects, involving investment by companies of more than £13 million, the planned creation of 614 new jobs and the safeguarding of more than 260 others are being announced today. That is very good news for Wales and, in particular, for the county of Clwyd. As well as the projects in 1992, my Department has been able to give regional selective assistance to help to create a total of 12,690 jobs in Wales.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Secretary of State accept that we need a garden festival every week in Wales to recover from the industrial dereliction of the past? The present programme of capital funding is by no means adequate to deal with the problems in the south Wales valleys. When will he give special treatment to the valleys so that they can recover from the situation caused by the decline of heavy industry?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman constantly pleads the cause of his part of the valleys, the Rhondda, but I hope that he will recognise that since my predecessor announced the programme for the valleys in 1988 there has been a remarkable transformation of those valleys—*[Interruption.]* Of course there is much more to be done. That remarkable transformation, which came about as a result of a positive partnership between local authorities and the Welsh Development Agency has resulted in the largest land clearance programme anywhere in Europe and has attracted an enormous amount of

private sector investment. I hope that from time to time the hon. Gentleman will pay tribute to my predecessor for having initiated such a successful programme.

Dr. Spink: Do the figures given by my right hon. Friend include the second Severn river crossing, and what impact will those excellent figures have on jobs in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: The figures that I have announced today do not include the £300 million project for the second Severn crossing, which is a private-sector-led project. The record level of capital programme in Wales invested by the Welsh Office, combined with the enormous projects such as the second Severn crossing, will involve the biggest capital spend ever seen in Wales. That is good news for Wales.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State clarify whether the capital investment programme is a deliberate strategy aimed at cracking the unemployment problem, particularly the black spots in Gwynedd, Dyfed and the valleys of Glamorgan, where thousands of young people are unemployed and where construction workers are looking for work? There is work to be done on schools, hospitals, housing and roads, but we seem incapable of bringing the two together and cracking the problems.

Mr. Hunt: Of course, I recognise that parts of Wales need capital investment and I shall do my best in terms of housing, education and the Welsh Development Agency. Where possible, all capital programmes will be directed in the best possible way to secure, among other aims, growth. The Welsh economy is already at the forefront of the economic upturn in the United Kingdom and I am confident that there will be many more job announcements in the coming months and many more job opportunities in Wales. I agree that we need to ensure that we do everything possible to reduce the difficult rise in unemployment throughout Wales, but we must recognise that we in Wales are doing better than the rest of the United Kingdom, Europe and many other parts of the world.

NHS Units (Allocation of Funds)

3. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance has been issued by his Department on the way in which finance is to be allocated to NHS units by health authorities in Wales; what assistance he has sought from the Audit Commission in ensuring that this is done fairly and in the best interests of patient care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office guidance to health authorities has rightly concentrated on securing quality health care rather than the allocation of budgets to providers. The Audit Commission's current study will further inform health authorities. I am pleased to announce that I have today agreed the release of an extra £750,000 for health authorities to secure additional hospital treatment before the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Michael: Is the Minister aware that, even with the additional money provided, there is still capacity in Llandough hospital to deal only with very urgent and emergency operations and that the hospital cannot undertake elective surgery for chest and geriatric patients? Will the Minister undertake an independent investigation into the way in which money is provided—or not provided—to the units in South Glamorgan? Will he let us have an objective view of exactly how the finance will be spread among the different units?

Mr. Jones: What the hon. Gentleman asks for is already in hand. My officials are in touch with the health authority on the question of Llandough hospital. In terms of South Glamorgan more generally, I met the chairman and general manager on Friday afternoon, when they were able to tell me about the progress being made. In the first seven months of this year, more operations were carried out than in the previous year and by the end of this financial year they expect, like the other health authorities in Wales, to have achieved another record throughput.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: May I put it to my hon. Friend that the most important ingredient in health care is the patient? Does he accept that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and that infinitely more patients are being treated in Wales, as in other parts of the United Kingdom, than were ever treated under the Labour Government?

Mr. Jones: I could not agree more. Let us quantify it: since this Government came to power in 1979, a further 161,000 patients per year have been treated in hospitals, as well as 126,000 more out-patients and 133,000 more day patients. All in all, the health service in Wales is now treating almost 400,000 more patients each year—and the number is increasing all the time.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Will the Minister help the House by telling us how, after 1 April, he will ensure that the financing of health units in Wales will be able to continue and that enough urgent and non-urgent hospital beds will be in place? He will know that under a Welsh Office circular issued in 1991 elderly people can choose, with their relatives, not to be discharged to private nursing homes and be means tested but to have the entire cost borne by the health authority. Will he provide money for that?

Mr. Jones: Yes, we have already made money available under both headings. I have been able to announce a further £38 million for social services departments throughout Wales for care in the community and we have already announced that spending on the national health service in Wales will have increased by significantly more than the rate of inflation—by 5·2 per cent., in fact. I look forward confidently to next year's figures showing another record number of patients treated by the health service in Wales.

Mr. Fabricant *rose—[Interruption.]* The Opposition may jeer, but my mother was born in Wales and brought up in Aberavon, so I am as Welsh as Welsh Opposition Members—and is not Wales part of the United Kingdom anyway?

Is my hon. Friend aware that only this morning, in the "Today" programme, evidence was given that more and more people are being treated by national health service trusts? Would he agree that trusts in Wales are showing themselves to be equally as successful as those in England?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is quite right. I am delighted to find a strain of Wales healthily represented in his blood. Our national health service trust in Pembrokeshire is already treating more patients this year than last and I am looking forward to the new health service trusts coming onstream from 1 April this year following suit. One

obvious factor is the growth in day treatment cases. Since the Government came to power there has been a dramatic 329 per cent. increase in such cases in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Morgan: In the light of the figures recently published by the Minister showing that the number of senior bureaucrats in the NHS in Wales has been rising almost as rapidly as the number of English Tory Members coming to Welsh Question Time to ask phoney questions —the numbers have risen from 180-odd to 850-odd—may I ask the Minister how he intends to curb the increasing number of bureaucrats and accountants who are running the NHS in Wales? If he does nothing, in five years' time there will be more accountants than medical consultants working for the NHS in Wales.

Mr. Jones: Clearly, something as important as the NHS in Wales has to be properly managed. There is no point in taking selective figures, often out of context, when what really matters is the number of patients being treated, which continues to increase in Wales. Last year was a record and the current year looks like being a record. Given the above-the-cost-of-living increase in funding that we have provided for the health service, I am confident that next year will be a record as well. That is the important test.

Flooding

4. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of the local authorities and water companies to discuss the effects on Welsh commerce of repeated flooding in urban centres.

Mr. David Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, on 4 December I visited Pontypridd and Tredegar to see for myself the difficulties being faced by many people as a result of the flooding. I took the opportunity to meet representatives of the local authorities and the National Rivers Authority.

Dr. Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree that for far too long the rivers of industrial south Wales have been treated as little better than open sewers? The sewerage systems serving the communities along the banks of those rivers are mainly of Victorian vintage and in heavy rain they discharge back into the streets causing misery to households and threatening the livelihoods of many of our commercial centres. Will he recognise that rebuilding those sewerage systems and reconstructing the waterways of Wales is a great civil engineering project that the Government should take seriously? It would provide a great focus for jobs in south Wales, help to reinvigorate the heart of our commercial centres, and lift the fear of flooding.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman makes many points and I shall address the main one——

Mr. Skinner: Money.

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman says, that is money. Since 1979 my Department has grant aided £34 million worth of flood prevention works in Wales. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will pay tribute to Welsh Water for the way in which the quality of our water has improved. Welsh Water's investment programme is now running at £500,000 per day. Of course there is still a need for schemes to be presented. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my Department does not have power to carry out the works, but it has power to grant aid schemes. I hope that some imaginative and innovative schemes will be presented so that we may address them from the point of view of grant aid.

Mr. Roger Evans: My right hon. Friend will appreciate the recent problems in Monmouth town. Can he add to what he said on the last occasion and make a statement?

Mr. Hunt: With regard to investment and the Bellwin rules, authorities incurring expenditure on eligible works have to submit their initial claims by 1 March. Three authorities—Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda and Cynon Valley —have told my Department that they will be able to make eligible claims. I understand that the remaining authorities' expenditure is below the threshold. I am awaiting a further report on the flooding in Monmouth and will obviously look carefully to ensure that such flooding can never happen again.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State accept that the Bellwin formula applies to spending after flooding and that much misery and hardship could have been avoided if proper preventive measures had been taken in the first place? Will he undertake to carry out a survey of river banks in Wales that are most at risk and ensure that the survey will involve special funding by the Welsh Office to our local authorities and the National Rivers Authority?

Mr. Hunt: As I pointed out to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), my Department does not have power to carry out the works, but we have the money to grant aid those who have such powers. I have already said that since 1979 the Welsh Office has grant aided £34 million in making sure that those projects can be taken forward. I have been given evidence from within my Department that if those works had not been carried out Wales would have suffered much worse flooding. Of course I am interested in any other schemes to prevent further flooding, especially in certain parts of Wales. The hon. Member for Pontypridd knows what I have said about Pontypridd and I undertake seriously to consider any schemes that are put forward.

Tourism

5. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the value of tourism to Wales in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Figures for 1992 are not yet available, but in 1991, despite a difficult economic climate, the tourism industry showed considerable resilience. There was an estimated increase of 5 per cent. in the number of tourism trips taken in Wales by United Kingdom residents, compared with 1990, while expenditure by domestic tourists remained unchanged at £900 million at current prices. In addition, the Wales tourist board estimates that earnings from overseas tourists in 1991 were about £120 million.

Mr. Coombs: I thank my right hon. Friend for that somewhat cautious answer. Does he agree that there is every reason to think that the figures for 1992 will confirm a similar rising trend for tourism in Wales? Does he further agree that credit for that goes, first, to the Wales tourist board, which has carried out excellent work, and secondly,

to the fact that section 4 grants continue to be available in Wales? What figure does my right hon. Friend estimate for section 4 grants for last year?

Sir Wyn Roberts: As my hon. Friend knows, it is a little premature to speak of tourism in Wales in 1992, but I hope that he is right. On the question of giving credit for the success of the tourism industry in Wales, there is no doubt about the important role played by the Wales tourist board. There is also no doubt that section 4 grants have helped enormously to improve the tourism product in Wales.

In 1991-92, some £4·2 million of expenditure was approved in support of 258 projects with an estimated capital value of £23·7 million. It is anticipated that almost 500 jobs will be created as a result of those projects. It is clear that the leverage factor of 1:5 in terms of section 4 grants is extremely good and the grants are very much valued by the Welsh tourism industry.

Mr. Hain: Tourism is no substitute for proper investment in industry. What action is the Welsh Office taking to promote tourism in the Neath area? The Wales tourist board official guide, "Wales 93", which is the bible of visitors to Wales, does not give Neath a single mention, although almost every other parliamentary constituency is mentioned. The guide takes no account of the fact that the Penscynnor wildlife park attracts the second largest number of visitors to any tourist attraction in Wales. There are many other scenic places, such as Gunsmoke in Seven Sisters and the Resolven canal. The Welsh Office should be promoting the many opportunities for tourism in that area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The fact that we all know of Penscynnor and the other attractions in Neath says a great deal about the area and the work that has been done not only by the WTB, but by the local authority and others to attract tourists to the Neath area.

Tourism is an industry which provides employment for 95,000 people in Wales. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should think that it is not an industry; it is an important industry.

Mr. Harris: Can my right hon. Friend help me with a conundrum? He said that the £4 million of section 4 tourism development grants were very much valued in Wales. Can he explain why the tourism industry in my constituency and in the constituency of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is denied access to such grants?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My hon. Friend knows that I have no responsibility for tourism outside Wales. All that I can say is that we are extremely glad that Wales has section 4 grants. We have been allowed to retain them because the industry in Wales is rather different from the industry in England. We do not have major hotel chains, and so on; our industry is very much based on small family-sized and medium-sized companies.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The right hon. Gentleman must be aware of the prime importance of the seaside resort of Porthcawl in any strategy for raising money for tourism in Wales. Having failed to give Ogwr borough council money under the urban programme to redevelop and improve the promenade in Porthcawl, will he now have discussions with the Welsh Development Agency to ensure that money is made available under its tourism initiative to bring Porthcawl into the 21st century, to help tourism and to provide facilities for residents?

Mr. Roberts: Of course I shall look at the situation in Porthcawl that the hon. Gentleman described. I can only reiterate that we lay enormous emphasis on tourism and the benefits that it brings to Wales. For example, the tourist board recently devised an overseas marketing strategy. We hope that the number of overseas visitors to Wales will increase over the next three years.

Wages

6. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase the wages of the lowest decile of Welsh wage earners.

Mr. David Hunt: I always do my best to attract in Wales the sort of investment that will do precisely that.

Mr. Flynn: Why does Wales have the highest proportion of low-paid workers of any region in the United Kingdom? Why is it that since the present Secretary of State took office there has been a 6 per cent. deterioration, in relative terms, in the personal incomes of the people of Wales? How long must the Welsh people continue to be the skivvies and drudges of Europe? Does the right hon. Gentleman have any jobs to offer today that are more rewarding than the weekend offer for people to be tied to posts while high-speed trains speed past?

Mr. Hunt: I announced today another 614 new jobs. The hon. Gentleman is selective in his use of statistics, and I will give the correct figures. Since I became Secretary of State, wage levels in Wales have increased faster, at 16·7 per cent., than in Great Britain as a whole, where the figure is 15·8 per cent. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would get his facts right.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is it not the case that in the past week the Confederation of British Industry has referred to a great improvement in terms of orders and optimism in Wales, and in the intention of many businesses in Wales to invest more in training next year even than their English counterparts? Is it not true also that wage levels in Wales will depend ultimately on the success of those particular businesses, which are now demonstrating more confidence than is the case nationally?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. One has only to look at the headlines of the past week or so, such as

"Welsh firms much more confident",

and

"Welsh optimism holds on to its record rise",

and

"It has been an encouraging start to 1993, with signs of green shoots all round".

—*[Laughter.]* Those are not my words. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] they are the words of John Smith—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am referring to someone whom I will call the enlightened and far-sighted John Smith. He is the John Smith who used those words in the *Western Mail*. I am, of course, quoting the former Member of Parliament for the Vale of Glamorgan, I quote him again:

"It has been an encouraging start to 1993, with signs of green shoots all around us."

I hope that Labour Members will permit me a moment of reflection, because this is the first time I have ever agreed

with a John Smith—not the John Smith who masterminded Labour's election defeat but the man who suffered as a result. It is about time that Labour Members faced the facts and stopped being the merchants of doom and gloom.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the wage earners of Point of Ayr, Taff Merthyr and Betws see green shoots in the weeks ahead? What representations are being made by the Secretary of State and his Department to the President of the Board of Trade—who was born in Wales—to ensure that the jobs in those pits, and those communities, are still here in the months to come?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I cannot possibly anticipate the results of the energy review and the publication of the Government's White Paper, on which I am working closely with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Ron Davies: Despite his earlier histrionics, the Secretary of State knows as well as any Opposition Member that Wales has grievous economic problems—the problems of low pay and high unemployment. Surely, one way of tackling the problem of low pay would be to do something about the current appalling levels of unemployment.

Last week, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry made it clear that the coal industry's future now depends on political decisions. Will the Secretary of State give Welsh Members a direct and unambiguous assurance that he will not accept in Cabinet any decision to end mining, and the hundreds of jobs that depend on it at the Welsh collieries—Point of Ayr, Taff Merthyr and Betws?

Mr. Hunt: I have already explained that I cannot anticipate the results of the Government's deliberations. I shall certainly not do what Labour did in the 1960s, when it shut many of our Welsh pits, often without providing job alternatives. More than 70 pits were closed in a single year.

I hoped that the hon. Gentleman was rising to agree with his former colleague, John Smith, and to start talking up the Welsh economy instead of talking it down. He has indeed become noted in Wales—as the merchant of grunge.

Credit Approvals

7. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the basic credit approvals for capital provision for *(a)* Mid Glamorgan and *(b)* Welsh counties in total for 1993-94; and what the figure was for 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: The basic credit approval issued to Mid Glamorgan county council for 1993-94 is £14,626 million, compared with £19,086 million for 1992-93. In total, basic credit approvals for Welsh counties for 1993-94 are £77,067 million, compared with £99,050 million for 1992-93. The reduction in 1993-94 reflects the transfer of responsibility for further education institutions to central Government. Separate provision has also been made available to local authorities for 1993-94 to cover expenditure which is to be reimbursed by grants from the European regional development fund.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Secretary of State aware that—not only because of those capital cuts but because of the threat of capping—many county councils, including Mid Glamorgan, are now having to abandon, postpone or cancel vital school and road-building projects, all of which could have created employment? At the same time, hundreds of jobs are going in every Welsh county as a result of the right hon. Gentleman's rate grant settlement proposals. How does all that square with the idea that public expenditure-led growth is possible in Wales, particularly in Mid Glamorgan?

Mr. Hunt: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the overall totals for the next financial year compared with those for the current year, and at the gross capital provision, he will see that in Wales the settlement is expected to yield gross capital spending of £620 million by local authorities. That is an increase of £61 million, or 11 per cent., and does not take account of the £70·6 million that I set aside to cover expenditure to be reimbursed by ERDF grants. The figures speak for themselves.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Secretary of State will understand that, because of the introduction of his capping criteria, Gwynedd, for example, will have to cut a standstill budget by at least £3 million this year. Inevitably, that will mean the closure of old people's homes and of some schools, and the loss of jobs. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the issue seriously? I invite him to speak again to local authority leaders in Wales and to ensure that they are properly resourced this year.

Mr. Hunt: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman realises that we are dealing with basic credit approvals. Provided that you, Madam Speaker, are happy that I should extend the answer to cover the whole local authority settlement, I would point out that in Wales it represents a 3·1 per cent. increase over the equivalent figure for last year. Per capita expenditure amounts to over £900 for every man, woman and child in Wales, towards which the Government will be providing through aggregate external finance, £810. In all respects that is a reasonable settlement, bearing in mind the present difficult economic circumstances. I pay tribute to all those involved in local government who, like the Government, are having to face up to those difficult decisions, against a background of difficult economic circumstances.

Mr. Ron Davies: Something is obviously worrying the Secretary of State, because we have had an increasingly eccentric performance from him this afternoon. As he does not live in, and as he does not represent, a Welsh constituency, obviously he does not understand the problems of Wales as we understand them. Does he not realise that the tight revenue settlement, together with capping, means that many local authorities are unable to spend even their reduced capital budget and that that will mean cuts and job losses in the schools and road building programmes and in homes for the elderly and the fire service? When will the Secretary of State acknowledge that unemployment in Wales is rising because of the Government's policies, not despite them?

Mr. Hunt: If eccentricity is a virtue, the hon. Gentleman displays it on every occasion in his comments to the Secretary of State. He must face up to the realities of the present situation, which are, clearly, that today we have been able to announce a record level of capital spend for next year over this year and that local authorities on their current account are having to face up to some very difficult

decisions, just as the Government are having to face up to those difficult decisions. If the hon. Gentleman calls eccentric a performance by the Treasury Bench which has just won one Welsh Question Time seven nil, then I am quite happy to plead guilty.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Land

24. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is his latest estimate of the numbers of hectares of land administered by the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): At 31 December 1992, the commissioners' agricultural portfolio consisted of about 62,000 hectares of mostly let farmland.

Mr. Flynn: Will the right hon. Gentleman persuade the Church Commissioners to re-read the beautiful passages in Isaiah, chapter 11, and Hosea, chapter 2, on the kinship between human kind and the animal kingdom and then to reconsider their policy of allowing the barbaric cruelty of deer hunting, hare coursing and fox hunting on Church Commissioners' land, or is their Christian charity confined to one single species?

Mr. Alison: I shall certainly read the scriptures that the hon. Gentleman prescribes. By going back even earlier in the Old Testament, the hon. Gentleman will recall the earliest provision of all made for derelict human kind after the fall, which was the slaughter of innocent sheep to provide woollen clothing.

Investment Policy

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement about the investment policy of the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners' investment policy is to seek to achieve the best total return on their assets—that is, growth of both income and capital. This reflects their primary objective, which is to provide adequate financial support for the Church's serving and retired clergy.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the failure of some of the recent investments in property suggest that God works in a mysterious way his miracles to perform? Does he also agree that these failures will lead to the Church having to raise more money in the parishes, which is probably in the long-term interests of the Church of England?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will note that the losses suffered by the Church of England in its investment in property have been matched by the losses suffered by most of the secular world at home at the same time. There is nothing exceptional, therefore, about that. My hon. Friend will recall that the diversity of our investments meant that when the stock exchange crash occurred in 1987 we were scarcely affected by it. My hon. Friend, however, is absolutely right. There is enormously more scope for contributions by the man and women in the parish. I look forward very much to that contribution increasing in 1993.

Mr. Enright: In view of the right hon. Gentleman's views reported at the weekend that there should be no investment in the 10 pits, will he urge the Church Commissioners to love their neighbour rather than to pursue his "beggar my neighbour" and "am I my brother's keeper?"-type policies?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman refers to a press quotation which does not ring a bell as being correct, but I must stay in order, Madam Speaker: the Church Commissioners have no direct investment in coal property or coal mines.

Ordination of Women

26. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many Church of England clergy have been in communication with the pensions board because they are contemplating leaving the ministry as a result of the decision of the General Synod to permit the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Mr. Alison: About 500 clergy have been in touch with the pensions board on that matter since the vote by the General Synod. Most have given no indication of their intentions.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is strong feeling on this subject among the clergy in my constituency and that it would be unfair if individual clergy who chose to leave the Church on a matter of conscience were in any way penalised as a result of pension implications?

Mr. Alison: Yes. I take note of what my hon. Friend says, but, as I think he knows, provisions have been made for substantial financial compensation for clergy who wish to leave the Church of England as a result of the clergy ordination measure. We reckon that the cost is likely to be in the region of £1 million per 100 clergy retiring per annum, so the compensation figures are substantial.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

33. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration he has given to the effect of increases in lawyers' fees on the legal aid budget; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): All matters relating to total legal aid expenditure are taken into consideration when setting provision for legal aid.

Mr. Mullin: What thought has the Parliamentary Secretary's Department given to reducing the legal aid budget by making the courts more efficient, even if it is at the expense of inconveniencing the odd judge or two?

Mr. Taylor: Very tempting. Considerable efforts on a very broad front are being made urgently in the Lord Chancellor's Department to try to reduce delay. The hon.

Gentleman and the House will probably agree that we must all be the enemies of delay because it is expensive and demoralising. We are introducing a White Paper and a Magistrates Courts Bill to try to get best practice among magistrates and the inspectorate and better block listing. Likewise, in the county courts, cases below £1,000 will be dealt with far less formally and more cases will be dealt with in the county courts in lieu of the High Court. These are only a few examples of a broad front endeavour to achieve what the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Mr. Dickens: When the new proposals for legal aid are laid before Parliament they are not debatable, so does my hon. Friend think that the Lord Chancellor would accept amendments?

Mr. Taylor: No, I do not think that the Lord Chancellor, having satisfied himself at the appropriate moment that he has it exactly right, would be such a man —he will stick to his own proposals, explain them and, if necessary, defend them.

34. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures he will adopt to publicise the availability of legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board produces leaflets and posters on the legal aid scheme and distributes them widely.

Mr. Jones: Does the Minister agree that, whatever amount of money is spent on advertising, about 7 million people in Britain will lose access to legal aid? Does he accept that in Wales, tens of thousands of people on low wages, but just above benefit level, will be excluded from access to legal aid? Even at this late stage, why does he not tell the Lord Chancellor's Department that it should think again about its reprehensible decision?

Mr. Taylor: No. I think that the hon. Gentleman may find that the position in the Principality is more reassuring than he suspects. Since 1979, the number of acts of assistance given under legal aid has increased from 900,000 to 3·1 million and, during the immediate forecast period of the next three years, it is expected to rise to 4 million. So far from our having cut legal aid, it has doubled over the past four years and is due, under the autumn statement, to increase in the next three years by 10 per cent., 10 per cent. and 10 per cent. It is available to almost half of society and more than one fifth of society will receive it free. It is arguably one of the most generous systems of legal aid in the world.

Mr. Stephen: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the figures that he has just given, but does he accept that the key question to be answered is what proportion of our national resources can we afford to spend on the dispute settlement system?

Mr. Taylor: I agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's question. We may need better ways of resolving disputes and, in considering the application of resources, we must certainly consider the interests of one party who is a party to every legal aid case—the taxpayer. All too often, the taxpayer seems to get left out of such considerations.

Mr. Boateng: Bearing in mind the concern that exists among hon. Members on both sides of the House about the Lord Chancellor's legal aid proposals, will the Minister tell the House by what authority and at how much expense the highly contentious document going under the misnomer "Legal Aid—The Facts" was produced? Will he answer that question bearing in mind the widespread concern about the Lord Chancellor's proposals in the profession and among consumer associations—of which he is well aware—and the fact that the real fact of the matter, which the document does not reveal, is that up to 12 million people will lose all eligibility to free legal aid?

Mr. Taylor: I just cannot see how 12 million people can drop out of a system that is being used by 3·1 million people; it does not make sense. If the hon. Gentleman wants to know who is prepared to accept responsibility for the document in this House, the answer is—I am.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the best ways of achieving the best use of the Lord Chancellor's budget for legal aid is to improve the efficiency of the courts? Does he accept that a higher quality of court manager and therefore a better use of the listing system—through, for example, computers—is something to aim for, and will he endeavour to ensure that his Department trains court listing officers to the highest possible degree?

Mr. Taylor: I am entirely sympathetic to the drift of my hon. Friend's question. It seems to me to be a proper ambition—and it is perhaps becoming an urgent ambition —that the various courts should be linked by computer. In that, I include the magistrates courts. Often, as one Opposition Member found to his cost not long ago, a defendant may be summoned to appear in two magistrates courts simultaneously, may choose the one of his own liking—or least disliking—and may simply not tell the other court that he does not intend to turn up, causing great inconvenience and cost to that other court. I am sympathetic to the aim of linking the courts, their records, their information and their planning by means of modern information technology.

Judges and Magistrates (Election)

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will now introduce legislation to elect judges and magistrates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. The Government do not consider that elections would provide a suitable basis for appointment or be compatible with the principle of judicial independence.

Mr. Skinner: He was quick to do it with the trade union leaders, though. Why is it that judges are seemingly alone in not having been dragged kicking and screaming into the modern world? Instead of simply dressing up in powdered wigs and kinky clothes, why do not judges have to fight for their jobs? Why are they not selected and reselected like Members of Parliament? And why do not the Government clean out the freemasonry? Why, in working-class communities, are there more Tory magistrates than Labour magistrates—even in areas where the Labour vote is three times greater than the Tory vote? The whole thing stinks and it is time that they got rid of patronage, had judges elected and re-elected and made them fight for their jobs.

Mr. Taylor: There is no reason why a judge should not be a freemason—*[Interruption.]*—or a member of Rotary or Round Table. The judge takes a judicial oath, and that oath will guide him as to his interests in any matter and whether he is qualified to deal with it.

I am anxious to answer the hon. Gentleman fairly and squarely in dealing with the question of the composition of benches and the background to them. It may be useful for him to know that in Derbyshire, his county, the Lord Chancellor is confined to those who offer themselves for appointment in the first place. That is the recruiting ground. To be a magistrate, a candidate should apply. To become a judge, it is necessary first for the candidate to apply for part-time judicial service. So the Lord Chancellor is limited in his recruiting ground to those who offer themselves.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is puerile to call for the election of judges and magistrates and that should such an unfortunate development ever occur, it would lead to the politicisation of the judiciary, which would seriously undermine the independence of our justice system?

Mr. Taylor: Our judges and magistrates are, by their oath, independent. There are elections for judges in the United States and I am not sure that the results are always very edifying.

Ms. Eagle: Does the Minister feel that if judges were elected, we might end up with a more representative sample of society serving on the bench, including more women, remembering that at present there is a disgracefully low level of women sitting on the bench? Is he aware that that leads to people taking perverse views of the roll of women in society and to some comments that are unfortunate, to say the least, being made in some cases?

Mr. Taylor: The uppermost rule must always be that the best people are chosen, though I share the hon. Lady's view, as does the Lord Chancellor, that there should be more women and more representatives of minorities. The problem at relevant past times in the recruiting grounds in the legal professions was that there were not enough representatives of the right ages of those minorities. But they are joining the legal professions in far greater numbers now, so that shortly, when they move to the age when they will be eligible for appointment, they will be there for promotion. The hon. Lady looks forward to that time and it may surprise her to hear that I do, too.

Legal Aid

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the growth in cost of legal aid since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Net expenditure on legal aid has risen from £99 million in 1979-80 to £906 million in 1991-92. It is estimated that legal aid will cost more than £1·1 billion this financial year, some 28 per cent. more than last year.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that that increase of 10 times underlines the need for the reforms that the Lord Chancellor is introducing? What are the income limits below which legal aid will still be payable under those proposals, and how do they compare with 1979 income limits?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend asks whether the increases that I reported in my answer were of themselves a fundamental reason to get legal aid under control. The answer must be absolutely yes, they are.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that the changes will be extremely damaging to women who want to apply for aid in domestic violence cases? Is he further aware that if he is serious about wanting to bring about cuts in the legal aid budget, he should consider the rapid appointment of several stipendiaries, a step which would not only clear court cases but, in the long run, save an enormous amount of money?

Mr. Taylor: In the instance that the hon. Lady gives, of a woman at threat and risk of domestic violence, she will find that in all normal cases—if that lady goes for representation—the solicitor, quickly satisfying himself that she is eligible, will give her an emergency legal aid certificate, start to represent her and get help for her, such as perhaps restraining orders, at a very early stage.

I believe that we have about the right number of stipendiaries. Our long tradition of a lay magistracy has served the country well. The stipendiary must be seen as complementary and not an alternative to the lay magistrate.

Lady Olga Maitland: In view of the staggering increase in spending on legal aid, and recalling that my hon. Friend the Minister said earlier that Britain's legal aid system is the most generous in the world, would he spell out how Britain's legal aid system is the most generous in the world because it is a fantastic success story?

Mr. Taylor: I have never said that Britain's legal aid system is the most generous in the world, but I suspect that it may well be. Legal aid is available to half of the population, and it is available to more than one fifth of the population for no contribution at all. Far from the legal aid system being cut in the autumn statement, it is due to increase by 10 per cent., 10 per cent. and 10 per cent. in the next three years. The number of acts of assistance is expected to increase over that period from 3·1 million to 4 million. That is generous.

38. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will amend the rules relating to the availability of legal aid in order to assist those individuals involved in class action.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board has recently established special procedures relating to multi-party actions which are intended to assist the progress of such actions in appropriate circumstances.

Mr. Byers: Is the Minister aware that the 1,700 people who are involved in the class action against the manufacturers of valium librium and mogadon have had their legal aid suspended, and that the reason given for that suspension is that some of them have weak medical support? In the light of the decision to suspend legal aid for those people, will the Minister review the guidelines to which he referred a moment ago to ensure that those with strong legal cases are not denied legal aid because of the weakest case? In particular, will he take urgent steps to

review the decision which has been taken to suspend legal aid from those involved in the valium, librium and mogadon action?

Mr. Taylor: No, I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that in any civil case there must be enough medical and other evidence to make the grant of legal aid reasonable. As with privately funded cases, the prospective winnings should also be enough to make litigation worth while despite its costs. However disappointing it may be for the plaintiffs, it is not fair to ask the rest of the tax-paying community to pay for cases that will not prosper or, if they do, will produce no net winnings.

Bosnia

3.33 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"securing peace in Bosnia."

With the collapse of the Geneva peace talks, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen are going to the United Nations Security Council to ask that United Nations pressure be applied for the acceptance of their peace agreement. We are faced with the prospect of the United Nations being asked to apply political, economic and military pressures on any party which refuses to accept the Vance-Owen proposals.

The House has not debated Bosnia for a considerable period. The people of Bosnia, the British forces who are risking their lives in Bosnia and the British public—indeed, hon. Members of the House—are entitled to know the policy on Bosnia of Her Majesty's Government. What instructions will be issued by Her Majesty's Government to our representatives in the United Nations in the coming days when the life and death decisions are to be taken?

If the Vance-Owen plan remains unacceptable, and if even the United Nations action to enforce the agreement fails, what will Britain, the European Community and the rest of the international community do to stop the slaughter, lift the sieges, stop the ethnic cleansing, feed the hungry, provide safe havens for those in great danger and stop the rape of women and of girls as young as six?

The terribly difficult future for Bosnia should have been aired in the House many times before now. I plead with you, Madam Speaker, to give the House the opportunity of debating how we can secure an effective peace for the people of Bosnia and that poor and very dangerous country.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"securing peace in Bosnia."

I have listened most carefully to what the hon. Member has said. I have to give my decision without giving any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.35 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Among your many onerous duties—I cannot pretend that this is a major matter—you are responsible for the supervision of the customs, practices and behaviour of the House. You will know that on Thursday night there was a motion to suspend the 10 o'clock rule. When the vote took place, 15 members of the Liberal party voted for that suspension. One gained the impression that it was their intention to pursue and follow the debate thereafter. Apparently, that was not so. There was a subsequent vote between 12 and 1 o'clock and only one Liberal member was present.

Is it appropriate that people should vote for the House to carry on its business into the early hours of the morning and then absent themselves into the darkness of the night and leave it to other people——

Madam Speaker: Order. As Speaker, I do not listen to points of order about matters which arose when the House was in Committee.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As reported in *The Guardian*, the Post Office Board and the Government are conspiring to privatise the Post Office—Post Office managers to line their pockets and Ministers to line the Treasury coffers. Surely we should have a parliamentary debate about that. Have you had any request from the Government to make an urgent statement about the matter before they make their final decisions?

Madam Speaker: No Ministers have let me know that they wish to make a statement on that issue.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you had a request from the Secretary of State for National Heritage to make a statement about the takeover of LBC? I wonder whether you and others are aware that the previous company, Crown Communications group, ran LBC into bankruptcy. It has now been stated that some of the personnel who brought the company down and made it bankrupt will run the new company, with Lady Porter as a backseat driver. It is high time that we had a statement.

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by any Ministers that they wish to make a statement today on that matter.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.),

LICENSED BETTING OFFICES

That the Licensed Betting Offices (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 51) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Licensed Betting Offices (Amendment) Scotland Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 68) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

ENTERPRISE ZONES

That the Lanarkshire (Motherwell) Enterprise Zones Designation Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 24) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Lanarkshire (Hamilton) Enterprise Zones Designation Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 23) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Lanarkshire (Monklands) Enterprise Zones Designation Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 25) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Speaker: We now come to the Orders of the Day—*[Interruption.]* Order. We do not want any side meetings going on here. There is an important one going on at the moment from the Chair.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [*Progress, 28 January*]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.37 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We are proceeding with a Bill which deals with all aspects of European union at the very moment when the previous showcase of European union, the exchange rate mechanism, is in tatters. Is it appropriate for us to proceed further, especially with the debate on citizenship of what is described as the union, without a Minister coming before the Committee to tell us the latest position on the ERM and the impact and influence that it will have on the pound? It seems to me that we are proceeding down a Utopian and impractical road when the previous scheme is already in tatters and no statement has been made to the House or the Committee. I should like your guidance accordingly.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Gentleman's point does not have too much relevance to amendment No. 12. I suggest that we proceed with the debate on that amendment.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Following on from what my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said about the demise of the ERM, as this Maastricht debate is closely connected with the ERM, which has seemingly reached a state of collapse, could it not be argued that we should not proceed with this tinpot Maastricht Bill? It is meaningless. France or one of the Benelux countries may well be the next to suffer the domino effect. The whole thing is crazy. We keep debating this issue despite the fact that it is dead. It is time we directed our attention to questions that matter to the people—unemployment, housing, education—and stopped pottering about with a Bill that ought to have its neck wrung.

The Chairman: As the hon. Member is aware, the Bill was given a Second Reading by a majority of 244. I am therefore duty bound to ensure that we proceed with the Committee stage and that we have a fair debate.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): You, Mr. Morris, know that today's business was decided last week. You look at me in a quizzical manner, but it is a fact that the menu for this week was decided through the usual channels. Last week, it was decided that we should debate this Bill today. However, since that time certain events concerning the exchange rate mechanism have taken place. The Bill is, in large measure, about European monetary union—a system based on various rules and regulations which, after the events of the past weekend, will not be appropriate. European monetary union can work only through arrangements different from those provided for in the Bill.

How is it possible for the Committee, at this late stage, to make the necessary contact with the Government to secure a change in today's business? It is quite obvious that this Bill is no longer appropriate, as the European

exchange rate mechanism is dead, and monetary union is buried. We are legislating for something that is manifest nonsense. May we have your assistance, Mr. Morris?

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question, but the rules of the House of Commons are such that I have to accept the business that is set down for today. The first amendment for debate is No. 12, which deals with citizenship.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I do not know when we shall reach the question of cohesion, but that debate may not be far off. I am aware of the fact that, in dealing with large numbers of amendments, the Chair faces difficulties. However, I have to say that, in respect of this question, it seems that two debates are joined. It is quite clear that at least half of these amendments are sponsored by hon. Members who are interested in the composition of the Committee of the Regions. As different parts of the United Kingdom are represented here, I understand the widespread interest. However, there is a distinct sub-cluster of amendments dealing with the substance of regional policy—a matter of great importance. Have you, Mr. Morris, been able to consider this matter, and will you give some thought to the possibility of our having two separate debates for this group?

The Chairman: I am especially grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, to whose letter I have responded. He may find my reply on the Board, although it will not have been there until about 2.30 pm.

In essence, many of these categories represent a confederation of issues. I have to look at the opening amendment and consider the implications of those that are attached to it. The right hon. Gentleman will find that, in the end, it is a matter of judgment. On the question of cohesion, my judgment is that all the amendments that are linked pull to the centre. It may well be that some of the regional issues will develop, and it will be in order, in the course of speeches relating to certain amendments, to allude to them. Nevertheless, as they have particular relevance to the lead amendment, I am not inclined to break down the groups.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): We are about to turn to the question of citizenship, which is, of course, related to elections and, in turn, to the rights of voters, who, at general elections, determine matters relating to monetary affairs. From all that is happening in the markets, it is abundantly clear that the exchange rate mechanism and economic and monetary union are dead.

The Chairman: Order. That may have been an ingenious way of reintroducing the question of the exchange rate mechanism, but I have already ruled on that matter, and I do not want any further references to it.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We all appreciate the problem that the grouping of amendments pose for the Chair. You told my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that the important debates on the constitution and the powers and activities of the Committee of the Regions are linked to the broad issue of cohesion, which covers north-south regional assistance. According to your ruling, those amendments will be taken together. Will you bear in mind that if the amendments were to be incorporated in a Bill it might well contain 10 or 12 clauses and two schedules, as was the case when we discussed the question of asylum last week? Will you bear that and the range of subjects under discussion in mind when making any decision about the conclusion of the debate?

The Chairman: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that the Chair is willing to listen sympathetically to particular points made and especially to distinctive points, as I have said during discussions on earlier amendments.

3.45 pm

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You said that you did not want to take any more points of order on the exchange rate mechanism and, as always, I abide by the ruling of the Chair. I should like your guidance on the circumstances in which you would be willing to consider a manuscript amendment, if events in the outside world make our debate irrelevant.

The Chairman: When I see the manuscript amendment.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You mentioned that you were minded to consider the closure with sympathy and with regard to the number of amendments in the group. Can you confirm that, on average, during the passage of the Single European Act, three amendments were grouped together? The next group contains 12 and, under the heading of cohesion, 23 amendments and four new clauses are grouped together. Am I right in thinking, therefore, that each debate should be roughly seven times as long as the average during our consideration of the Single European Act?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman's interpretation of my earlier remarks is entirely wrong. I do not think that I said anything to that effect, and frankly I am surprised that he picked it up. The number of amendments is irrelevant to the length of the debate. It is open to hon. Members to put down a host of similar amendments. I have served on Bills when there have been even more amendments than there are for this Bill. It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that there is a full debate on and around the lead amendment and the matters that flow from it.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. On the subject of closures, a serious matter is at issue. If a Bill is timetabled, right hon. and hon. Members know exactly how much time they have to deal with each stage of the legislation. We are working to a totally arbitrary system of closures—at the whim of the Government, it seems. Will you use your discretion and, at the very least, will you not cut off an hon. Member in mid-sentence, as happened to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), because it appears discourteous? You, Mr. Morris, did not do that—it was one of your colleagues in the Chair—but it is a discredit to the Committee.

The Chairman: I must make it clear that the acceptance of a closure is not at the whim of the Government, but is entirely a matter for the judgment of the occupant of the Chair, who decides whether the amendments have been adequately debated.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Marlow: It is totally new, as it has only just occurred to me. My intention is to be helpful. Obviously you and the Committee do not want to legislate for nonsense and we have difficulties because of the monetary situation. Would it be possible to suspend the sitting for a short time because of the great pressure——

The Chairman: Order. No. Clearly, as the point has only just occurred to the hon. Gentleman, it cannot have had much consideration.

Before I call the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to move the amendment, perhaps the Chair will be allowed a point of order on a subject about which a number of colleagues have written to me. I appeal to members of both Front Benches to speak into the microphones in front of them and to resist the temptation to turn round to address their colleagues, as other Members cannot then hear their arguments.

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Item C on pages 11 and 12 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following amendments: No. 78, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(other than Article 8)'.

No. 125, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G C, on pages 11 and 12 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 128, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article 8e on page 12 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 165, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 8 on page 11 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 166, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 8a on page 11 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 167, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 8b on page 11 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 169, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 8e on page 12 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 317, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 8 on page 11 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 364, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 8c as referred to in Article G on page 12 of Command Paper number 1934'.

No. 424, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'other than obligations arising from Articles 8 or Articles 8(a to e) on pages 11 to 12 of Cm 1934, concerning Representation of the People Acts and matters related thereto.'.

No. 427, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'other than duties imposed in citizens of the United Kingdom that would otherwise arise after the coming into force of this Act in respect of Article 8, paragraph (2) in Cm. 1934, page 11, other than those incorporated in an Act of Parliament specifying those duties.'.

No. 428, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'other than Article 8b of Cm. 1934, page 11, except where arrangements existed prior to 1st January 1993.'.

No. 429, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except for the second paragraph of Article 8e on page 12 of Cm. 1934.'.

No. 44, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Part Two thereof'.

No. 115, in page 1, line 17, at end add—

'(3) The above subsections shall only come into force subsequent to the laying before Parliament by Her Majesty's Government of a Command Paper concerning "Citizenship of the Union" which shall include: (i) a description of the duties of citizens, as referred to in Article 8(1) of the Treaty on European Union; (ii) the likely implications for the United Kingdom of Article 8a (Freedom of residence); (iii) the need for any derogations in respect of Article 8b (Municipal membership and voting); (iv) the effect on the personnel, organisation and financing of H.M. Foreign Service in respect of obligations imposed by Article 8c (Common protection by diplomatic and consular authorities); and to approval of the terms of such a document by Resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.

Mr. Blair: This amendment raises the issue of citizenship and the new article 8 of the treaty of Rome that is provided for in the Maastricht Bill. New article 8 declares that every person holding nationality of a member state becomes a European citizen. However, it is made clear that the countries themselves will determine nationality. Under new article 8, such people are deemed citizens of the European Community. The article is partly symbolic as it establishes for the first time the formal concept of citizenship in the European Community. It confers new rights on those citizens. We want to ask the Government questions about their policy on those issues and have debates on them so that everyone may have a full understanding of article 8.

Article 8a provides for a right to move and reside freely within member states, subject to treaty conditions, which include many of the directives promulgated under the treaty of Rome that affect the ability to reside and freedom of movement. Article 8 effectively reiterates, but also slightly expands on, article 8A of the Single European Act 1986. The term "resides" is added in new article 8 in the treaty, but I should have thought that that was implied by the provisions in the Single European Act.

Under new article 8a(2), the Council may unanimously act to facilitate the rights of people as citizens after a proposal from the European Council and the specific assent of the European Parliament. Article 8b gives citizens the right to vote in local elections of the country where they are residing, subject to details that will be drawn up by the Council by the end of 1994, after a proposal by the Commission and consultation with the European Parliament. There is also an additional safeguard of derogations being permitted where warranted by the specific problems of a member state. That gives, for the first time, a right to vote in local elections where the nationals of any member state are residing in a member country.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that the word "municipal" does not necessarily mean local? In European law and in the Court of Justice, the ruling has already been given in an important Italian case that the word "municipal", as applied to the treaty, would also mean national. The word "municipal" is regarded as referring to national in the context of the European Community. Therefore, it is highly debatable whether the hon. Gentleman can say that, in this context, the word "municipal" means local.

Mr. Blair: Of course, I shall study the judgment to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I should have thought that the word "municipal" was used here precisely to distinguish such elections from national elections. I would be deeply surprised if, in that context, the word "municipal" had the opposite meaning of national.

The details of how the procedures are to be implemented will provide a further opportunity to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The details are to be the

subject of proposals drawn up by the Council, on a proposal by the Commission and after consultation with the European Parliament. The procedure is time limited, and should be complete by the end of 1994. Will the Home Secretary say whether there are any procedures to be undertaken in the event of failure to reach such an agreement, which is possible?

Some nations—as I understand it, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands—already grant some form of right to vote in local elections. This country gives such a right to Commonwealth and Irish citizens. Article 8b(2) has the same procedures, but on a slightly different timetable, on the ability to vote in elections for the European Parliament. The details of such procedures are to be agreed by the end of 1993. Article 8c extends the protection by diplomatic or consular authorities of all member states to any of their citizens.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As my hon. Friend knows, the main qualification for voting purposes in the United Kingdom is residence on a given date at a given address. Under these arrangements, what will be the qualification for residence for a European union citizen? How long will he have had to live in the United Kingdom before residence can be claimed? What information will be sought; to whom will it be sent? Will there be any right of appeal if residence is refused? What would happen to a person denied the right of residence, given that there are no deportation rights under these provisions?

Mr. Blair: That is a fairly lengthy list of questions. The issue of residence will be justiciable by a citizen of Europe in exactly the same way as it is now under our domestic law. As for the test of residence, article 8b makes it clear, in respect of this and in respect of voting for the European Parliament, that detailed arrangements are a matter to be discussed by the Council on a proposal from the Commission and from the European Parliament. Those are the circumstances in which some of these questions will be answered.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I think that my hon. Friend is saying that the House of Commons is not to be given the information because it is not available. Does he intend to deal with article 8.2, which he has not yet mentioned but which speaks not only of enjoying rights, but of the fact that

"citizens . . . shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby".

What does he imagine that those duties will be?

Mr. Blair: The duties are set out there are duties laid down in the treaty of Rome. As I understand it, article 8 is not an article of the Maastricht treaty. It is to be a new article of the treaty of Rome, so the obligations set out in it are those of the treaty of Rome. Article 48, for instance, concerns the freedom of people to work in other member states. It imposes rights and obligations. I should have thought that the idea of taking rights and obligations together was entirely sensible——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blair: It is an extraordinary feature of these debates that saying something that one thinks is entirely uncontroversial provokes a storm of outrage.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Why do all the entitlements to which the hon. Gentleman has referred require citizenship?

Mr. Blair: Citizenship is established by the new treaty, but the rights that people have are rights that they already have to a certain extent under the Single European Act ——the right to move around freely within the Community, for example. The purpose of citizenship is to add, in part symbolically, to the rights that people already possess. Citizenship follows entirely naturally from the fact that people are given certain rights and obligations in the Community. The notion of citizenship is sensibly derived from those principles.

Mr. Marlow: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way with his usual supreme courtesy. I should like to reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). All these rights and obligations will exist if and when this Bill is passed. They already exist under the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, so why do we need the concept of citizenship? I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's constituents feel this way, but many of mine certainly do not want to be European citizens, which they will be forced to be if the Bill is passed. Why does he want to impose that on people when there is no benefit to be had from it?

Mr. Blair: As I have just said, these obligations and rights exist anyway——

Mr. Spearing: No.

Mr. Blair: I think that my hon. Friend will find that they do if he looks at the treaty carefully. Citizenship merely formalises the relationship. Many people see no contradiction between being citizens of Europe, as defined by the treaty, and being citizens of their own national states.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Under any of the provisions, will it be possible for a person to renounce his citizenship of the union?

Mr. Winnick: If it is, may I apply now to opt out?

Mr. Blair: I note that my hon. Friend wishes to add to the opt-out list.

Surely the position is exactly the same as the one that currently exists for a citizen of this country. One does not renounce that here or in Europe.

Mr. Wilkinson: That relates to the question that I wish to pose. How on earth can a citizen of the union renounce his citizenship without renouncing his British birthright or British nationality that he acquired by naturalisation? Surely there is a great distinction. There is no process for renouncing European citizenship, whereas a British citizen can renounce citizenship whenever he or she wishes.

4 pm

Mr. Blair: If a British citizen renounces his citizenship, it will have an impact on his citizenship under the treaty, but I see no great problem about that. I shall speak about citizenship towards the end of my speech. I accept that there is a fundamental disagreement between those who regard the concept of citizenship in Europe as awful and those who do not. We would do well to recognise that at the beginning.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I should like to make some more progress before allowing any more interventions.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps my hon. Friend would allow me to intervene before he leaves his present point.

Mr. Blair: Of course.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), who speaks for the Liberal Democrats on this matter, may like to consider my intervention. My hon. Friend says that the provision does not change much: it just gives a new name to obligations under the treaty of Rome. However, we are not to become citizens of the treaty of Rome or even the city of Rome because article 8 states:

"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye may well want to become a citizen of the European union under the treaty of that union which, of course, subsumes the treaty of Rome. Why does my hon. Friend think that at midnight on a certain day every citizen of this country will become obligated to the duties imposed by citizenship of the union, which may well be greater than the duties imposed by citizenship of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Blair: Some of us feel that the advent of citizenship in Europe is not a loss of national identity. That is the point at issue. I do not at all regard it as a loss of national identity because I think that we shall gain something from it, and that that gain will outweigh any theoretical loss.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The hon. Gentleman has been diligent in allowing interventions by those who do not share his and my outlook on this issue, and it is fair to allow an intervention putting the other side of the case. The point that the hon. Gentleman makes is extremely well established in the United Kingdom. No one among those hon. Members from Wales and Scotland who have been most active and vociferous in the debate suggests that people from Wales or Scotland are any less Welsh or Scottish because they happen to be British subjects. They are subjects rather than citizens, and many of us think that it is worth establishing citizenship in this country and in the wider European Community as well.

Mr. Blair: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not think that we shall be entirely persuasive on this matter.

Article 8d gives the right to petition the European Parliament and to apply to the ombudsman. The procedures for doing that are set out in articles 138d and 138e of the treaty of Rome. The ombudsman is given the important power to investigate maladministration in the European Community. Article 8e imposes an obligation on the Commission to report progress in relation to citizenship and it allows rights to be added or strengthened by the Council unanimously on a Commission proposal after consulting the European Parliament. That change can be effected only in accordance with the constitutional requirements of member states.

Those are the rights that are set out. The article is in part symbolic and in part it confers certain rights to vote, to petition the European Parliament and to go to the ombudsman. The procedure gives certain rights and imposes certain obligations, but it also has a formal status. Many people understand that the European Community has a power over the citizens of the Community, so it is entirely sensible that, where people are both ruled and have a share in ruling, citizenship should be established for them. Indeed, we should be looking for new and better ways to involve the citizens of Europe in the decisions that will affect them.

Article 8 is at least a beginning in that process. It does not mean that we scrap our nationality or citizenship, or even that we subordinate it. It means that running alongside our rights and obligations as British citizens will be a European citizenship.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my hon. Friend accept that obligations under the treaty include, for everybody over the age of 18 in this country, conscription for military service?

Mr. Blair: As far as I am aware, it does not include that obligation.

The Single European Act, which was passed some years ago, allows people to move freely around the European Community. Article 8 builds on and extends that. We have had that provision for some time without any of the deleterious effects suggested by some hon. Members.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his courtesy; he has taken many interventions from both sides of the Committee. Does he agree that, however much he wishes to minimise the position, the article formalises in the Bill and in the treaty a new and revolutionary development? What authority or mandate do we have from the British people to introduce a citizenship of the union? I know of no mandate or authority that would allow us to follow that route.

This may be a revolutionary idea for both Front Benches, but would not it be far more appropriate to ask the British people whether they agree with the proposal? If, by a majority, they say that they do, I shall accept that that is their will. What authority or mandate do we have to follow what is undoubtedly—although the word is not used for obvious reasons—a federal route? It is a paving step towards total federal union.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: It does not matter how much my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) shakes his head, it is a federal route. Once we follow it, it will be extremely difficult to reverse the tide. We must have a mandate from the British people before we proceed in that way.

The Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was shaking his head because he knew that the matter was not covered by the amendment.

Mr. Blair: Our mandate is derived from our ability as Members of Parliament to represent our constituents. Article 8 will allow people the right to vote in both local elections and European elections. It will also allow them to petition the European Parliament and to go to the ombudsman. I cannot for the life of me see why those rights are so inconsistent with our ability to function effectively, either as a country or as individuals within a country, that some hon. Members should construct an edifice of outrage. I think it to be an entirely sensible notion.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I want to conclude to allow someone else to speak, but I will take a final intervention.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has obviously studied the matter carefully. Is he right to say that there is a real bonus in all this? I have a residence in Southend-on-Sea and another in Glasgow, but British law states that I can vote in only one of those places. If someone who is a resident of Paris also becomes a resident of Southend-on-Sea, will he be able to vote twice? That could be a dramatic development. Is there the hidden bonus that someone who has residences in two countries can vote in both, but someone who had two residences in this country can vote only once? That would be a dramatic bonus for the democratic system.

Mr. Blair: Of course one could not vote at two places in the same election, but one can do as the hon. Gentleman says now. Article 8 does not affect those arrangements. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's statement that we shall lose something by the notion of citizenship in Europe. For a generation that has seen and liked a Europe in which barriers to co-operation are coming down, citizenship provides something of a symbol.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman answer my question? Will it be two votes or one?

Mr. Blair: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question many times. Viewed through the eyes of young people in particular in this country today, the prospect of a closer Europe is good. It is not frightening; it does not alarm them. It can even excite and sometimes inspire them. I do not believe that the concept of citizenship will be in any way detrimental to our country or those who live in it. Viewed sensibly, it will be part of progress towards a better, more stable world—and the European Community has a place in that.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) for moving his amendment in the way that he did. Having returned to these debates, I am glad that they make a welcome change in the distribution of labour between the two Front Benches. Normally, it falls to the Minister to explain particular provisions and to answer interventions, but I am spared that in large part, because the hon. Member for Sedgefield has already subjected himself to cross-examination on every aspect of article 8.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, as I did the other day, on giving answers that are entirely in line with my understanding of article 8. It is becoming increasingly clear to me as we debate parts of the Bill in which the hon. Gentleman and I have been involved that—as I have long suspected, for as long as we have been in the House—the hon. Gentleman's views on the European Community are indistinguishable from my own.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman rises to find a difference. He has an unfortunate mental block on the social chapter, which I know that he wanted to see included in the obligations on us, whereas we declined to be drawn into that. The hon. Gentleman holds different views also on economic and monetary union. Labour's position is that we should have assented, whereas the Government decided to opt out of the immediate provisions of EMU and to reserve questions such as a single currency for a later date. As some of my hon. Friends have said, in current circumstances that date looks further away rather than nearer.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman now. For the sake of defending his own back, as I appreciate, he is trying to find some difference between his opinions and my own.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is attempting to answer my question before I ask it. If we wholeheartedly agree on those issues, why is not the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared, as is every other party in Europe—socialist or conservative—to agree to the social chapter and make sure that social Europe is part of the new Europe that we want to create?

The Chairman: Order. Perhaps that discussion could take place elsewhere, because that aspect is not covered by the amendment.

Mr. Clarke: I defer to your ruling, Mr. Morris, because that topic was debated at considerable length last week.

On citizenship, I agree entirely with the views of the hon. Member for Sedgefield. Like him, I feel no sense of outrage at the idea that, together with being a national of the United Kingdom, I shall be a citizen of the European union. I understand that some people in this country feel qualms about that proposition, but I do not believe that their view is held by the majority.

When the concept of European citizenship is examined in the context of article K, the practical consequences should not raise fears in anyone's mind. In fact, important new rights will flow from it to the citizens of this country.

Mr. Marlow: Does my right hon. and learned Friend intend to respond to the debate if he manages to catch your eye later, Mr. Morris? He is putting the Government's case now, and several speeches will follow. It would be helpful if we knew that, after those speeches, he will respond; otherwise, it will be difficult for hon. Members to know whether to intervene at this stage.

4.15 pm

Mr. Clarke: I am not usually accused of being too withdrawn in debates, or of being glued to my seat. Perhaps unfortunately, I regard the matter as fairly straightforward, and I am speaking now mainly to reinforce what has been said by the hon. Member for Sedgefield. As I said in our previous debate, whether I speak again rather depends on what points are raised. If points are raised that have not been dealt with so far, I may seek to catch your eye later, Mr. Morris. Let me, however, keep my options open by saying that I see no point in doing so if I find at that stage that I have nothing new to add, or that no new points have been raised.

Mr. Rowlands: Whatever the joys and benefits of citizenship of a European union, will it be possible for someone who does not wish to belong to that union to renounce his or her citizenship?

Mr. Clarke: For as long as a person is a British national, that person will be a European citizen, under the terms of the treaty and the Bill. As was said earlier, if someone wishes to renounce British nationality, certain

[Mr. Clarke]

consequences will follow; but there is no separate provision whereby a person can remain a United Kingdom national but renounce citizenship of the European union. As I hope to illustrate, trying to renounce citizenship would have few practical consequences for such people; indeed, they would be giving up important new rights—albeit of a limited kind—conferred by the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on being the first Secretary of State to attend the Committee stage. I should like to hope that some of the others will appear to speak about foreign affairs and, indeed, Treasury matters. I commend my right hon. and learned Friend on the way in which he is taking all this punishment.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the word "municipal" is important, in relation to the question of citizenship? The European Court of Justice has already ruled that the word "municipal", in relation to the Community, means "national": that raises serious questions of interpretation, in regard to whether the right of a national to vote in other countries' elections will arise. Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that a careful assessment is made by his legal and other advisers?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that questions are also raised in relation to the duties imposed under title II, including questions relating to allegiance and possible conscription? Many such matters are dealt with effectively by provisions in the citizenship section of the treaty, which seem to be more like a blank cheque than anything else.

Mr. Clarke: Let me deal with my hon. Friend's points in reverse order. The treaty and the Bill impose no new duties on individuals. It is the existing duty of us all to comply with the law, including such European Community law as is directly applicable in this country, or has been introduced by Parliament following a European directive. Sometimes a United Kingdom court judgment will impose a duty on an individual to comply with what is the law of the land because of our European Community membership, but no new duties are being inclosed.

I am glad to say that the idea of a duty to serve in a European army, or to be conscripted into military service of some kind, is entirely unfounded. I understand that that issue featured extensively in the Danish referendum: one reason why many Danes were induced to vote against the treaty was the fact that campaigners had persuaded them that they were about to be conscripted into a European army. According to all my study of the treaty and all the advice that I have received, there is no such risk.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am still replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

His questions lead me to the new rights granted under new paragraph K, including the extremely important right to vote and stand for election in certain elections. The right to vote and to stand for election is in municipal elections and in elections to the European Parliament in whichever member state the citizen resides.

My firm opinion, and the advice that I have received, is that "municipal" does not mean national general elections. The choice of the word "municipal" in the relevant article was designed precisely to rule out elections to national Parliaments. If my hon. Friend is correct when he says that he has seen a judgment of the European Court which he believes leads to an interpretation of the word "municipal" as meaning national elections, I shall be happy to look at it and give it further consideration; but, as I stand here, it is my firm belief that what we are talking about are local government elections, probably with effect from 1995, and the European Parliament elections in 1994.

British citizens are thereby given the right to vote or to stand for election in those elections, if they are resident in another Community state—a right similar to the right that is given to Community nationals who are resident here.

Mr. Shepherd: Is it the Home Secretary's understanding that the Queen becomes a citizen of the union of Europe under the provisions of the Bill?

Mr. Marlow: Has she been asked?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give further consideration to that question, but I do not see why not.

Mr. Shepherd: She must do.

Mr. Clarke: The Queen is undoubtedly a British national. She, being a national of the United Kingdom, is likely to become a citizen of the European union. *[Interruption.]* I shall reflect upon that point, but I very much suspect that that is the position. I do not believe that we should expand upon the position of the monarch at length, but I do not see why the Queen should be any more fearful of that prospect than anybody else is likely to be.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On the question of citizenship and the right of people to vote in elections, is the Home Secretary aware that across the continent of Europe there are 15 million people who are not citizens of any European country but citizens of countries outside Europe—political refugees, economic migrants and so on—who are denied any political rights in national elections in any country whatsoever? Does he not think that it is time that this aspect of prejudice against people who live and work in Europe was addressed?

Mr. Clarke: Every country obviously reserves the right to restrict its franchise to particular nationalities or citizens. We have always done that in this country. Voting in United Kingdom elections has always been open to citizens of the United Kingdom, citizens of the Irish Republic and certain Commonwealth citizens, but we do not give voting rights to other people who are nationals of other countries. Those who take up long-standing residence in this country and feel themselves to be deprived of the right to vote in general elections are always faced with the perfectly straightforward choice of whether to apply for British naturalisation, if they feel that they are excluded from——

Mr. Richard Shepherd: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My understanding of the rules of the House of Commons is that, when anything touches upon the Queen's prerogative or upon the Queen's majesty, a Minister of the Crown brings a statement to the House attesting that the Queen herself has no objection to the provision. I should be grateful for your ruling, Sir.

The Chairman: The point that the hon. Gentleman makes relates to the Second Reading or Third Reading of the Bill.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Let me make a little progress, and then I shall give way again, I am sure.

Mr. Shepherd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. If that has not been signified at Second Reading, surely it has an implication for the subsequent Committee stage, when the Government go on to reduce or subordinate the Queen's position relative to the ultimate law-making authority within the Community, the European Court of Justice.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will have studied the Order Paper and looked at page 3397, which clarifies the position.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to you, Mr. Morris. I do not believe that anything that I said touched upon the Queen's prerogative. I also believe that it has always been the position that the monarch of this country is subject to the law of this country, and has never sought to be otherwise.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Let me move on. There will be plenty of other opportunities for hon. Members to intervene.

We are at least beginning to deal with the practical rights which flow from European citizenship. I said that four new rights were established by this section of the treaty. The first is the right to vote in certain elections. The second is the right to consular protection in states where the member state of which a person is a national is not represented.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that, under the treaty as it stands, the ex-leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), stood for election in Italy?

Mr. Clarke: British citizens have done so. Several member states of the European Community will not have to change their law to comply with this provision. In the past, there has been a disparity in practice between the 12 member states. As a result of the agreement, the United Kingdom is proposing to give new rights to vote in, and to stand as candidates at, municipal and European elections. Personally, I see no objection to that, if someone has established his right to residence here, especially when one remembers that the same right will be extended to the leader of the British Liberal party not only in Italy but in every other member state once the provision is in place.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend would be good enough to speak at some length on what he dismissed most airily as "the Danish point" in fearing a common European army. The preamble to the treaty clearly states that it was resolved

"to implement a common foreign and security policy including the framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence".

It is not obvious that, if citizens of the new united Europe are all able to vote for an increasingly powerful European Parliament, it would be irresponsible for them to be able to vote for war without having to bear the consequences of having to fight themselves or having their family fight? As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, the cases of Casement and John Amery show the horrible dilemma of a person who has a citizenship of which he cannot dispose and which leads him to be tried for treason, in this case because of forced loyalty to a European identity which he might want nothing to do with.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend ingeniously seeks to read across from other provisions of the treaty dealing with foreign and security policy—perfectly properly—which are part of the so-called second pillar of Maastricht. The second pillar of Maastricht will proceed as the third pillar on interior and justice matters, by a process of intergovernmental co-operation requiring the unanimous consent of any of the members to a change of policy.

It is also plain that defence policy will proceed on the basis of developing the Western European Union as the European arm of NATO. It has repeatedly been the Government's policy to remain committed to NATO as the main arm of our western defence policy, the Western European Union being part of the European commitment to that. There is absolutely no suggestion of our Government, or any Government, contemplating forming a European army. There is no treaty obligation on us to do so. There is absolutely no question of this country being committed to war through a process to which we have not consented.

To go beyond that to the subject that we are now discussing, and to try to extract from it a fanciful notion that, under this part of the treaty, we are paving the way for conscription may have worked with a few gullible Danes, but it should not be seriously argued in the context of this debate. *[Interruption.]* I hear sounds of shocked outrage at that attack on the Danish nation——

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is not it disgraceful, and insulting to a foreign nation, to refer to its members as gullible? If you were to look in "Erskine May", would you not find that that is a remark that the Home Secretary should withdraw?

4.30 pm

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the occupant of the Chair. Let me make it clear to hon. Members that we are to have a full debate on foreign and security matters a few days hence.

Mr. Clarke: I should make it clear——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: If my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) thinks that I said that all Danes are gullible, he plainly misheard me.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. Hon. Members must not persist in standing when it is clear that the Secretary of State does not propose to give way. They must resume their seats.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Let me relate the point to the provision before us——

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: Let me first reply again to the points that are being pressed.

In so far as there were Danes who voted against Maastricht because they believed that there would be conscription to a European army, it remains my firm opinion that those Danes were gullible. They may indeed have been few, as I said. In so far as there are hon. Members of this House who believe that the provisions pave the way for conscription to a European army, they are extremely gullible—and again, they are few, in my opinion, in number. The position under the treaty is that there is no obligation to have conscription——

Mr. Budgen: May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to give himself a new intellectual treat? Will he turn to page 5 of the treaty, which, I remind him, is the page on which the preamble—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which he hasn't read."]—which I am sure he has now read—occurs. Will he explain to the House what this means:

"the . . . framing of a common defence policy, which might"—

The Chairman: Order. Not this afternoon Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As I understand it, you ruled out of order an hon. Member who wished to quote the preamble to the treaty. Moreover, you hinted earlier that reference to article J—the intergovernmental area relating to foreign policy—was not in order in a debate that concerns the duties of citizens. I put it to you, Sir, that the two are closely connected.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. What I ruled out of order was the request by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) to the Home Secretary to explain the preamble. Hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman, who were here at the time know that we had a full debate on the implications of the preamble. Moreover, elements of the preamble are covered by a whole host of amendments, and those relating to armies, armed forces and defence matters will be covered in later groups on foreign and security policy matters. That is my ruling, and that is all.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I be clear about this? Is it the position that we may discuss the advantages of European citizenship but are not allowed to discuss any of the potential disadvantages or obligations? That seems to be what your ruling implies.

The Chairman: I am here to serve the Committee. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is engaging in pure argument. The Committee has before it amendment No. 12; that is what the Committee is supposed to be discussing.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I think that we all understand the difficulties of trying to debate the Bill and the series of amendments with which we are confronted; they cover a great deal of ground, and many of them are interdependent and linked. I imagine that your ruling is not meant to signify that you regard the series of debates as essentially a series of mutually exclusive watertight compartments. The fact that a topic has been, or is about to be, debated principally in connection with one group of amendments surely cannot preclude a reference to it for the purpose of illuminating the principal subject of another group of amendments. I understand that to be the purpose of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I hope that you will regard that, as in order, so long as it is not carried to the point when the principal subject of the debate becomes different.

The Chairman: If it was his intention to make an allusion or reference, the hon. Member was in order, but I did not understand that to be the implication of his suggestion. Otherwise, I confirm what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) says.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) referred to the preamble to the treaty. I suggest that there is a direct connection between the amendment that is before the Committee and the preamble. The first part of article 8, which is the subject of the debate, says:

"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established."

The preamble to the treaty says:

"Resolved to establish a citizenship common to nationals of their countries"

That is followed immediately by the words quoted by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. So there is not only an allusion but a clear link between the treaty preamble and article 8.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Member for making that point. He will clearly see the paragraph that says:

"Resolved to establish a citizenship common to nationals of their countries."

It then goes on to another paragraph. The reference that the hon. Member quoted and I have re-quoted is in order. The next is not, apart from a passing reference or allusion to it. I hope that that clarifies the position.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am grateful to you for clarifying the position, and I am sure that it is the wish of the Committee that the temperature should cool a little. To ensure that I understand the will of the Committee, may I ask whether you are ruling, on reflection, that we may discuss the potential obligations of European citizenship? If so, the discussion of an evolving, and no doubt idealistic, European defence policy and even a European army are subjects that may impinge on the obligations of European citizenship.

That is the only limited point that is raised. I have known the views of my right hon. and learned Friend for 30-odd years and I appreciate that he is an idealistic supporter of the European ideal. I dare say that he would like his son to have the chance to fight and die for a European army. We are giving him an opportunity to explain all that.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that, if hon. Members are rising to put points of order, they are new ones, because we have traversed the situation. References and allusions are acceptable.

Mr. Clarke: To restate my point, which is firmly based on the treaty—including the preamble and article 8—citizenship of the union involves no new duties on individuals beyond the existing duty, in so far as it is extended, to comply with European Community law, as

enforced where necessary on us all as individuals by the United Kingdom courts, and there is no new duty to take part in any European army. Indeed, there is no reference to a European army from beginning to end of the treaty.

If at a later stage—I shall not deal with the point in detail now—we return to the text of the treaty, I shall ask my hon Friends to bear in mind, when referring to page numbers, the fact that they are all using the British edition, whereas I am using the European Community's—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is the difference?"] The words are the same, but the page references are different.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Enthusiastic though the Secretary of State may be with his European credentials, I urge him to recall that the treaty that was laid before this Parliament in Cm 1934. No wonder, if he has not been reading that, he does not know much about it.

Mr. Clarke: I assure my hon. Friend that the text of the two are the same.

To return to what we are discussing, there are no new duties: there are a number of new rights. I have already referred to the first two rights—voting and consular protection abroad. The third is the right to petition the European Parliament, and the fourth is the right to apply to a European ombudsman.

I agree entirely with what the hon. Member for Sedgefield said. I cannot believe that anybody could reject the concept of being given the right to petition the European Parliament or to apply to a European ombudsman. Indeed, I suspect that a large number of our critics in the Committee at present will take advantage of both those rights with considerable frequency, once they have accepted that they have become citizens of a European union when we have ratified the treaty.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that he has spoken about duties as they exist at present? Can he give the Committee an assurance that no fresh duties will be imposed on our citizens in future as a result of a decision either of the European Court or of the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Clarke: Any development of the European union would involve fresh treaty obligations. We have not yet ratified this treaty. The question of what future treaties might come along is a matter on which I certainly must not speculate. In effect, the duties that fall on us as a result of Britain's membership of the European Community, and any future membership of the European union, will arise from those legal obligations on us all to obey the law of the land.

As far as the law of the land will incorporate European legislation, either directly applicable or passed by the House to give effect to European directives, we all have a duty to follow it. If we do not follow the law, the United Kingdom courts, occasionally, with reference to the European Court on a point of difficulty, will in the end impose an obligation on us.

Mr. Winnick: The Home Secretary said there were no new existing duties. I do not understand that, but perhaps he will clarify the position for the Committee. The word "existing" does not appear in article 8.2. I am taking the position, if you like, before the treaty is put into force. The treaty makes it clear that there will be a common security policy.

If that is the case, why does the Home Secretary tell the Committee with such confidence that under no circumstances in future will a common security policy mean whatever may arise on the international scene, with duties and obligations imposed on British citizens which will arise from the treaty? How does the Home Secretary come to the conclusion that there will be no new existing duties? I do not understand that.

Mr. Clarke: I said that no new duties will be imposed on nationals of the United Kingdom as a result of the treaty, save the duties on us all to comply with the law as it evolves under the treaty. As for the reading of "security policy", I will not stray out of order, Mr. Morris.

The point of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is relevant to the so-called pillared approach from Maastricht, which has been fundamental in most of the debates that we have had. The second pillar of foreign and security policies and the third pillar, which we are now discussing, of justice and interior affairs are outside the competence of the European Community. They do not proceed subject to the institutions of the Community.

The Commission has no sole right to initiate foreign or security policies. It is not subject to the European Court of Justice. We are talking about provisions under which we co-operate Government to Government. So far as we enter into new policies or new obligations, it is by the unanimous consent of the member states.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I have not finished yet.

I should make it clear that it is open to us as a sovereign country to have a common foreign policy with our Community partners if we wish to enter into such a policy. For as long as I have been in the House, many people who are fairly sceptical about the European Community have often urged the virtues of a closer foreign policy among the members of the European Community.

The idea that the foreign policy of the United Kingdom or the foreign policy which the United Kingdom has agreed to in alliance with its allies and the rest of the European union imposes personal obligations and duites is extremely limited. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said a moment ago, it can be treason to work contrary to the United Kingdom's security policy.

Apart from that, however, I do not think that the matter is relevant. We should return to matters which are relevant to what we are now talking about. With great respect, it does not help the case against Maastricht when blatant red herrings are drawn across the trail, obscuring what European citizenship comprises.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I suggest to the Minister that he may well be wrong on this issue, because the possibility of a European army, which is decried, is not a red herring at all. There has been considerable discussion or thought about the establishment of a European defence force. In 1992, the Government and the Minister's Cabinet colleagues announced to the House that the British Army would be the lead unit, the core unit, of the rapid reaction force which will be established on a European basis.

Substantial arguments have been advanced on the establishment of a European defence force. If it is an army,

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

a navy or an air force, it is still a force. That does not detract from the Minister's argument, but he should get his facts right.

4.45 pm

Mr. Clarke: We have a history. Let us simply take the post-war part. Parts of the various defence forces in the United Kingdom have been committed to NATO or deployed in alliance with our European neighbours. There is nothing new about that. So far as there have been such commitments, the British Army, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy have been committed in that way. But I am being drawn out of order again.

No hon. Member can claim, while keeping a straight face, that we are entering into any obligation to merge our Army, our Air Force or our Navy with anyone else's army, air force or navy. The leap of imagination that goes beyond that—to say that people might be conscripted into any merged force—was an argument unworthy of the Danish referendum, and it should not be deployed here.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): Surely there is every difference in the world between an alliance and obligations which follow from citizenship. I find it difficult to fathom this from what my right hon. and learned Friend is saying. I believe that he is against a formation of a new state of Europe, yet citizenship implies the formation of such a state. How does the Minister square those two matters?

Mr. Clarke: I am against the formation of a state of Europe. It seems that our arguments on the Bill are slightly beside that point. The most significant part of the Maastricht treaty is that the 12 member states abandoned any suggestion that they would go down the path towards a common state. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh yes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West said, having known each other very well over many years, in my case, any more is a change of mind on my part.

The idea of the founding fathers—to use that rather pompous phrase—who created the original treaty of Rome was that the institutions of that treaty would extend Community competence to wider fields of whatever sort. In the end, one effectively has the institutions of a state with a common Parliament, a common court, a Council of Ministers, an embryonic Government and so on. In practice, that has not worked out in the past 20 years to the satisfaction of many people, most especially in the United Kingdom. As I sometimes say, the result is that we are all Gaullists now.

The Maastricht treaty, compared with all previous European agreements, marked a most sharp change of direction from the common institutions in the direction of extending what we now call a European union into new areas on a different basis of co-operation between sovereign Governments. Article 8, which we are now talking about, is part of establishing that co-operation by a variety of methods.

I see nothing wrong with the idea that article 8 refers to citizenship of a European union. It involves no derogation from our citizenship of the United Kingdom. Its practical consequence is to impose no new duties. It is to impose the four new rights. The people of the United Kingdom did not have two of those rights before, vis-a-vis the European institutions. I see nothing in article 8 which is contrary to the Government's policy or the interests of the United Kingdom.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I hope to move shortly to a conclusion. *[Interruption.]* I will not give way simply to the hon. Member who shouts the loudest.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I should like to ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether he has reflected on the conflict of law. For instance, I cannot imagine the circumstances, but it is still held that Parliament may revoke our membership of the European Community. Under the provisions of the Bill, we are citizens of the union. My right hon. and learned Friend seems to be more uncertain about it, but my argument is that that is a superior citizenship, because the United Kingdom is a subordinate constituent of the European union. Where does my allegiance and duty lie? Is it with the laws of the United Kingdom or with those of the European union? How would one resolve a conflict should it arise?

Mr. Clarke: I have not said at any point that I regard European citizenship as superior to British citizenship. The position remains that my hon. Friend, like me, remains a subject of the United Kingdom. We are subject to the courts of the United Kingdom. The courts of the United Kingdom will enforce the duties imposed on us by the laws of the European union, to which Britain will be adhered. So there is no great difficulty.

If my hon. Friend had the right, which he appears to want, to renounce European citizenship, he would not rid himself of any duties to which he might object, because no duties are imposed on him beyond those which we already contemplate. He would renounce the four new rights which I have advocated. We are discussing an attempt to build around that.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: If hon. Members catch your eye, Mr. Morris, they may seek to enlarge the debate and read into the provisions of Article 8 things which are not there.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and I have already sought to chase off many of the shadows. There is a great deal of talk of waving around documents, reading them and contemplating them. I recommend that my hon. Friends read article 8, in whatever edition they prefer— *[Interruption.]* It has become clear during these debates that I have not only read far more of the treaty, but have understood it with rather greater clarity, than most of my critics. I will listen to their points, but meanwhile I commend article 8 to the Committee, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Sedgefield on tabling this probing amendment.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall be brief because there is clearly a great deal of interest in article 8 among hon. Members on both sides of the House. By speaking in support of article 8, I shall by definition speak technically against the amendment. However, judging by the tone and substance of the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), I believe that he, at least, does not seek to press the amendment to a Division. What other sections of the parliamentary Labour party do will become clear later.

When we are discussing citizenship, it is important to remember what was pointed out earlier in the debate before the cacophony began which it is the speciality of the Home Secretary to whip up, especially among his hon. Friends. He did so when he served in other Departments and still does in his present Department. Before that cacophony got going, it was pointed out that it was up to the member states of the Community to define citizenship. That is an important prerequisite which comes in front of much of the argument or, if argument is not the right word, many of the points which have been swapped across the Floor of the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: I will give way to the hon. Lady in a moment if she will let me complete this opening thought.

As we have seen from the balance in previous debates on this treaty-related legislation, not many of the hon. Members who have attended the debates subscribe to the notion of Europe. However, an increasing number of people—judging by the evidence of one's eyes—and especially younger people see Europe as a natural entity. Irrespective of article 8 and—with respect—what people may say at the Dispatch Box, young people already feel European. They class themselves as European and want to remain in that mould. In giving effect to that outlook for the future, article 8 does the right thing and the House will do the right thing by supporting it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is not a lawyer——

Mr. Kennedy: I never will be.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am glad to hear that. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will address the point in article 8.2 which has been carefully avoided by both the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen and the Home Secretary. What does the hon. Gentleman think is meant by:

"Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights conferred by this Treaty and shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby"?

Does he believe that in plain English that seems to say that citizens will not only enjoy the right, for example, to go to the European ombudsman but must respond to the obligations imposed? Is it not likely that all those European young people to whom the hon. Gentleman refers might be slightly less anxious about being European if they suddenly discovered that their future was to be determined by a large organisation in which they had a tiny say?

Mr. Kennedy: I am glad that the hon. Lady stressed that I was not a lawyer. By definition, my answer will be a lay person's response. It is a straightforward philosophical argument. Any set of rights which citizens enjoy in a nation state or any democratic set-up carries with it responsibilities. We argue about rights and responsibilities —two sides of the same coin—on a host of issues including the economy, domestic social policy and law and order. We argue time and again about the rights of individuals and the responsibilities that those rights carry with them. Article 8 is a classic example of that.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: I shall first complete my answer to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Who knows, I may even satisfy the hon. Gentleman by fully responding to her point. I doubt it, but I shall try.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich mentioned the right to petition the European ombudsman. Let us assume that the treaty will be ratified by Britain and that at some point beyond the end of this year, a citizen of Britain petitions the ombudsman on some grievance. If the ombudsman upholds that grievance, the Government of the day or the institution involved will have to address that grievance and set it right. I am sure that any Member of Parliament would support that process if the grievance were legitimate.

Rights and responsibilities run in two directions. They are not all from the top down. The institutions which we are creating must have responsibilities in an accountable sense to the citizens of the member states and of the union as a whole. That side of the argument must be put robustly because it is correct and valid.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has many opportunities to speak so I should like to begin by giving way to the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill).

Mr. Gill: My question is short. In the hon. Gentleman's opinion as a layman, is the assertion that the Secretary of State made this afternoon that it is possible to create citizenship without creating a state correct? Is there any truth in that statement?

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): What about Commonwealth citizenship?

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has looked rather wider than I might have done to answer that question by saying that one can talk about Commonwealth citizenship. That is an adequate answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. There can be a category or classification of citizenship which goes beyond the nation state.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: I give way to the hon. Gentleman because the show would not be complete without Punch.

Mr. Cash: That is very good, although I daresay that the hon. Gentleman would not particularly want to be called Judy. Does he agree that the discussion is not simply a matter of philosophy? He mentioned the idea that some obligations might arise in connection with the economy. He fails to understand that, under this title, citizenship comes within the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. Therefore, the duties imposed by the treaty will be adjudicated upon by the European Court of Justice. The slithery attempt, which the hon. Gentleman has tried on the House, to get past that question by saying that our arguments are nitpicking legalese will not succeed.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) asked the hon. Gentleman a simple and straightforward question. She asked whether he believed that duties would be imposed by the treaty. Will he answer that question?

Mr. Kennedy: The party of which I am a member can be accused of a range of things, and frequently is by both Conservative and Opposition Members, perhaps even on occasion with justice and correctness. But, in respect of matters European, we can hardly be accused of slithering. Let hon. Members recall the vote that took place here last November.

The longer this debate goes on, with arguments about very detailed legal definitions, the more we lose sight of the fact that political common sense must be applied. The political common sense of what has been negotiated and agreed, as well as the political circumstances surrounding the entire process since the original Maastricht weekend summit, suggests that some of the fears that have been raised are phantom fears, and the Home Secretary is correct in suggesting that they were introduced during the referendum in Denmark. There is no doubt that votes in Denmark were swung as a result. But these matters must be addressed in a sensible manner. I do not believe that there is some great design going beyond the art of the possible and the politically deliverable, not just at Community level but at the level of individual member states. That is the way in which we should approach the issue.

5 pm

Mr. Rogers: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has fallen into the same trap as the Home Secretary. It has been suggested that the Danish voters were misled by a rumour about the establishment of a European army. The fact is that European countries have already got together and decided that a European defence force would be a good thing. A rapid reaction force has been set up, with Britain as the lead country. That is not a bad thing. Indeed, it may well be a good thing.

Mr. Kennedy: I am not levelling that accusation; such suggestions have come from other quarters. But let us take the obvious comparison of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Note the word "Treaty". Tragically, in the name of NATO, a British service man was recently killed on active service. That person was a member of the British armed services, which are committed to NATO under the terms of that treaty. It is a treaty to which this country gave its name and to whose implementation, in terms of pursuance of the law, as seen by successive Governments, troops have been committed.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is extremely courteous.

I should like to put to him the fundamental point that NATO is an association of free and independent sovereign states and that there is no NATO citizenship. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) pointed out, history contains no instance of the conferring of citizenship on an individual other than by a state or by an empire, such as the British empire, the Roman empire or the Soviet empire. There is no such thing as Commonwealth citizenship. Commonwealth nationals resident in this country have the citizenship of the nations to which they belong, and we choose freely to grant to them certain rights and privileges of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kennedy: I am not quite sure what point the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. Perhaps, if he catches your eye later, Mr. Morris, we shall hear his argument developed more fully. In the meantime I am having the greatest difficulty in understanding the focus of his comments.

Let us consider the United Kingdom itself. In this regard my remarks are directed not at Labour Members who are hostile, concerned or critical in respect of this matter but at Government Members, who are members of the Conservative and Unionist party. I am a Scot. I am from a country with a distinct culture, a distinct education system, a different Church and a different legal system. Some Scots are happy, and some are not, but we are represented in the United Kingdom Parliament and contribute as a part of the kingdom.

Some Scots like the idea of dual citizenship. For example, the late Iain Macleod always entered "Scottish" in the nationality column of hotel registers. Some Scots feel Scottish in some contexts but British in others. Different instincts may prevail at different times. But that does not make either identity less valid than the other—a point that has been missed entirely in respect of European citizenship, which is regarded as an element of this union. What we have here is a question of confidence in one's personal and national identity. If, in this respect, the European level can be furthered, so much the better.

On the question of the definition of citizenship, we welcome recognition of the reality of freedom of movement and freedom of employment. Then there is the question of voting rights—something that exercises the minds of hon. Members on both sides. In this context, there has been discussion of the meaning of "municipal". I have not seen the legal ruling that has been referred to, but I am somewhat reassured by the Home Secretary's remarks about what was in mind when the treaty was being drafted.

In this regard, two further points ought to be made for the benefit of those who are critical of the right to vote in local—I shall not use the word "municipal"—or European parliamentary elections. There is no doubt that that is a significant extension of rights and of their political effects on individual member states. However, it remains open to the electorate in any constituency, whether in a local election or in a European parliamentary election, to cast their votes as they please. If people are not satisfied that a candidate from another member state is sufficiently local to represent them properly, they may vote for someone else.

In this regard, I agree with what was said about my right hon. Friend the former leader of the Liberal party, who, as a matter of principle, put the theory to the test in Italy some years ago and was rejected at the ballot box. It was his right to exercise that freedom under Italian law, as it was the right of Italian voters not to accept him as a parliamentary representative.

Mr. Cash: With regard to the word "municipal", the European Court of Justice said in 1972:

"the treaty entails a definitive limitation of the sovereign rights of member states against which no provisions of municipal law, whatever their nature, can be legally invoked."

It is quite clear that, in that context, "municipal" means national.

Mr. Kennedy: As I have already said, I am not a lawyer, but that definition is very legalistic and forensic. I am not in a position—certainly not off the top of my head—to discuss "municipal" in this context and come up with something authoritative. No doubt the hon. Gentleman

has himself sought legal opinion, and we look forward to hearing what it is. I am quite sure that he would not have raised the matter in this way without having satisfied himself. We look forward to hearing from him.

Mr. Fraser: As distinct from international law, which is law governing several countries, municipal law means domestic law and has nothing whatever to do with local authorities.

Mr. Kennedy: For the second time during my short contribution, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

I do not wish to go beyond the bounds of this group of amendments, Mr. Morris, but article 8 carries with it an extension of voting rights and opportunities. That is an important constitutional and political development and it is fundamental. It is a matter of principle and is one of the reasons why I take the view that the British public should have the opportunity to cast its verdict on the treaty, outwith the normal scope of a general election, as and when we have completed the procedures and processes of this House. That is why we should have a referendum and that is why I shall cast my vote in favour of the opportunity for such a process, as and when we get that right.

Although I differ entirely some hon. Members on their analysis of the viewpoint, I recognise that the issue is one of principle and as such goes beyond the normal confines of party politics.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: This will be the last intervention that I shall allow, as I want to leave time for other hon. Members to speak.

Mr. Jessel: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the extension of voting rights in local municipal elections and elections for the European Parliament to people from the continent, as the treaty refers to both. Does he not think that that could be the thin end of the wedge for a proposal to extend voting rights to foreigners in parliamentary general elections, which could distort the result in a way that most of us would not want?

Mr. Kennedy: I stand open to correction, but I think that citizens of the Irish Republic have voting rights in United Kingdom general elections. If it is the thin end of the wedge—to use the hon. Gentleman's phrase—then it was not inserted by anything decided at Maastricht, but has been accepted in the House for decades. If hon. Members are so concerned about the breach or the establishment of that principle, why did they not try to deal with it through all the procedures open to them as Back Bench Members of Parliament, such as ten-minute Bills, Adjournment debates, private Members' motions and all the rest? Why has it suddenly become such a fear when it is suggested as a part of the Maastricht treaty? I do not accept that argument.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Kennedy: No, I gave a fair response to the previous intervention and I wish to finish now.

In conclusion, it is interesting that the concept of citizenship is assuming increasing salience in domestic and international politics among the centre-left or reformist politicians—whichever terminology one chooses—as opposed to the traditionalists. It is being much debated within the Labour party. When Governor Clinton was running for President he stressed the sense of empowerment and of the citizen being able to assume more rights and as a result have more access to activities within his or her country. Definitions of citizenship have become a subject and focus of debate in the Liberal and Labour parties as well as elsewhere in this country.

The present Foreign Secretary, as Home Secretary under the former leader of the Conservative party, set out his views of "active citizenship" in the United Kingdom. Clearly, citizenship is a political idea whose time has come. That being the case, it is appropriate for it to be highlighted in article 8 of the treaty. The article is partly practical, and it points towards greater political and institutional integration. It points in a more federal direction and I welcome that. The article is also partly philosophical because it deals with citizenship and begins to redefine and consider the notion of the nation state freshly and more fully. As such, I believe that the article commands our support and we are pleased to welcome it as part of the legislation before us.

5.15 pm

Mr. Wilkinson: I suspect that this apparently insignificant but detailed debate may, with hindsight, turn out to be one of the turning points in our debate on the Bill. If people outside this place fully comprehended what the proposed treaty of European union will do to their identity, they would call into question the legitimacy of what the Government are calling upon the House to endorse.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), who is the long spokesman for the Liberal party on such matters and a great enthusiast for Europe—as we all are—shed a ray of candour on our proceedings when he said that the issue of citizenship was so important that it merited a referendum.

I had my Damascus road conversion on the proposed treaty of European union when those "gullible Danes" —as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary so enchantingly put it—in their considered majority rejected their Government's proposal that the treaty should be ratified. The British people are not gullible. If they had the chance—as they certainly deserve—they would vote against a citizenship of the union as proposed in article 8 of the treaty.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not interesting that, in his frank speech—which I was pleased to listen to when he called for a referendum—the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty, and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) made it clear that he had limited time for the nation state?

Is it not clear that the ardent federalists in this House, not least the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)—who has stated time and time again that he is in favour of a federal arrangement—are keen on the treaty because they understand that is it the paving stone to reach that state, whereas the Home Secretary and the Labour Front-Bench spokesman refuse to concede that fact? Would it not be more frank of the Government to say that outright, rather than trying to mislead the Committee and the British public, which cannot be forgiven?

Mr. Wilkinson: That may be so: I would not seek to gainsay the hon. Gentleman. It is instructive to note that the title of part II, which contains article 8, is "Citizenship

[Mr. Wilkinson]

of the Union". It does not even say "citizenship of the European Community". The word "community" gives the sense of a free association of sovereign states. The title suggests citizenship of a union—a political entity, a new creation. It is a highly centralised creation. It is not even a federation, with proper checks and balances between the constituent elements and the centre, to which the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye referred. It is a union—a centralised united states of Europe.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): There is nothing in the treaty to imply that the union is taking on the essential attributes of statehood. The union has no legal personality. It has to act through those of its component parts which have a legal personality—the communities—whenever there is a question of giving rights enforceable in law. That is why the citizenship provisions are included in the Community treaty. They are there, rather than in intergovernmental provisions. The union does not have a legal personality.

Mr. Wilkinson: I did not know that I was being so provocative. I thought that I was merely stating the truth.

Mr. Gill: Is not the question, do the British people believe what the Minister has said? Does the Committee believe what the Minister has said? If it does not, the Government have got it wrong, and those of us who are opposed to the treaty have got it right.

Mr. Wilkinson: We are not permitted to know the answer, because the British people have not been allowed to exercise their judgment on that crucial issue——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Yet.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We should have a referendum.

Article 8.1 of the treaty states:

"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established."

Citizenship is precious to us. It is an attribute most dear to an individual, and primarily acquired by virtue of birth. If it is not acquired by birth, citizenship is acquired by conscious and carefully considered application—in this country by a process of naturalisation.

I am sure that you, Mr. Morris, have been involved in many such cases, and may have had to affirm as a Member of Parliament that an applicant was worthy of British citizenship. Therefore, you will know that it is something that our state considers important.

It is so important that I well recall sitting along into the night during the passage of the British Nationality Act 1981, when the issue of citizenship was considered at great length as we thought that it could not lightly be given away. We thought that British citizenship was being abused and that we should be careful to whom we should grant it. The signatories of the proposed treaty of European union are not careful—by fiat and edict, they think that they can bestow it on anybody, whether or not he or she wishes it, so long as the individual happens to hold citizenship of a European Community country.

Mr. Marlow: Is it not an insult to the concept of citizenship if people are obliged to have it whether or not they want it?

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): What about the citizens charter?

Mr. Marlow: Yes: if my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) were to look at the citizens charter, he would see the value bestowed on it—a value that will be devalued by the Bill.

Mr. Wilkinson: That is true. The only other means whereby, historically, citizenship has been acquired has been by a process of conquest. That is how citizenship has traditionally been imposed on those who did not wish to assume it voluntarily.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid Kent): I wonder whether my hon. Friend is not building an elegant tower on shaky sand. It seems that the vast majority of citizens of the union have been born within the European Community. If they have the sort of citizenship that makes them eligible for citizenship of the union, it will have been bestowed on them with the same sort of care as that shown when bestowing citizenship on British citizens.

Mr. Wilkinson: As usual, my hon. Friend attributes the best of motives to those involved. That has been the trouble throughout the passage of the legislation. We have all been bored into attributing the best of motives to those who have enjoined us to ratify the legislation, but it is not our job to be gullible. Our job is to subject the proposed legislation to the most careful scrutiny and make people outside realise exactly what is at stake, so that, even if they do not rise up with sticks and staves, they rise up in anger at what is proposed and say that their birthright is worthy of protection. Those people are willing to accept another citizenship, but only if it is their democratic desire so to do, as expressed by their majority will in a referendum.

Mr. Spearing: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that it was not easy to scrutinise the legislation because the Home Secretary used his favourite device of provoking a riot and retiring under the protection of the procedural police?

I wish to raise the issue of citizens' reponsibilities to the Crown in the armed services, of which the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) may have knowledge. If the Crown is subject to a single authority in relation to foreign security policy, and therefore its military consequences—which it is—is the citizen serving the Crown as determined by Ministers of the House, supported by Parliament? Or is it the case that, in the words of the treaty in article J.5:

"The Presidency shall represent the Union in matters coming within the common foreign and security policy"?

Will they not serve the president of the union for the six-month period, rather than the Crown responsible to the House?

Mr. Wilkinson: The hon. Gentleman makes a nice point, and one to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary sought vainly to reply. The hon. Gentleman suggested that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary sought to provoke a riot—I cannot imagine anybody less likely to provoke a riot. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I have known each other, and I have had the privilege of being his hon. Friend on and off, since about 1970, and he is a man with whom it is difficult to take issue, as one instinctively warms to him. However, I do not instinctively warm to his arguments on the issue under discussion, and I am not gullible.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is a nice person, and in case he is in danger of being gullible on the issue of citizenship—like my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—I ask him to read the EC Commission's report on citizenship, published in a supplement on 21 October 1990. It stated that European citizenship as in the treaty was

"the setting of targets for the definition of an individual's civic, economic and social rights at a later stage."

Does my hon. Friend not agree with the Commission and Parliament that that is an important issue, not an insignificant one as has been suggested?

Mr. Wilkinson: The supplement does contain that statement. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was trying to distinguish between the respective applicability to citizens of the union of those parts that are strictly within the competence of the treaty, with relevance to the European Community, and those parts that lie within intergovernmental co-operation—defence and security policy. All I shall say on the second category is that, although the preamble has no legal effect and is not justiciable——

Mr. Budgen: It is important to state that it is almost certain that the preamble is justiciable and something that the European Court of Justice is obliged to take into account. When we consider that the European Court of Justice describes itself in political terms as the agent for greater federalism, we see that my hon. Friend has made no small mistake.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am glad that my hon. Friend has clarified that issue. If he is right, the resolution in the preamble

"to implement a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence"

is germane to those citizens of the union who, through no fault of their own, find themselves with an additional citizenship conferred by article 8 of the treaty.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend should also read the concluding phrase:

"thereby reinforcing the European identity and its independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and the world".

Plainly, the identity of a state is enhanced by a single army. That is a way of reinforcing the European identity. Independence plainly means the independence of Europe not only from other nation states but from subordinate nation states below it.

It is no good saying that the preamble is a vague aspiration. It is part of the legislation, and it will be the basis of the discussions in 1996 when the EC settles down for a further period of what it calls steady progress towards a federal union.

5.30 pm

Mr. Wilkinson: I will not follow my hon. Friend's detailed points, except to say that, in my lay judgment, the citizens of the union will in effect have the rights and obligations normally associated with the citizens of a single state. That, at least, is how I read the treaty.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman has considerable knowledge of military and defence matters, and he and I have often debated them here over the past few years. I am sure that he will recall the establishment of the rapid reaction force, which was intended to be the precursor of an army in which every citizen of the Community and every country of the Community would take up their obligations. Time and again we have argued that it would be better if not only France and Britain but the rest of the European Community took up certain international obligations.

Conservative Members who have raised the spectre of such an army are absolutely right, and the Home Secretary is wrong. This is indeed the beginning of a development towards a European army, but I remind Conservative Members that they welcomed the statement in which the Secretary of State for Defence announced the establishment of a rapid reaction force, and that more than once they have advocated the deployment of joint forces from Europe—especially in former Yugoslavia and Bosnia.

Mr. Wilkinson: That was interesting, but I will not pursue it. I am more interested in the citizenship aspect, which is strictly relevant to this group of amendments.

A more exact parallel was shown by the judgment of the French National Assembly when, in 1954, it rejected the proposed European defence community, recognising that a unified European army was a step too far for the citizens of France—just as this treaty is a step too far for our citizens, unless they are given the opportunity, as they morally should be, to express their will in a referendum. If they are not given that chance, Her Majesty's Government will show themselves either undemocratic in this matter or exhibiting a rare lack of confidence about the outcome.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that my hon. Friend had made a mistake in thinking that the preamble was not justiciable. May I reassure my hon. Friend that he is in good company? When we debated the Single European Act, Baroness Chalker, as she now is, speaking for the Government, was repeatedly questioned on whether the preamble had any meaning or justiciability. She said that it did not. She was wrong, just as my hon. Friend is wrong. So, although we have been reassured time after time by Ministers that all our anxieties about citizenship are as dross, we should beware.

Mr. Wilkinson: Again, I do not intend to pursue my hon. Friend's historical allusion, except to say that, in a number of instances important matters of fact and of principle have not been dealt with by Ministers, who have relied on the closure and the sheer weight of votes to close the argument. I hope that you, Mr. Lofthouse, will permit us the time that the importance of this group of amendments merits.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend creates a great deal of interest by his protestations against closures and the authoritarian behaviour that has so often marred and marked discussion of this Bill. My hon. Friend gives us to understand that parliamentary democracy is not working in these circumstances. Even those of us who, in general, dislike referendums are coming round to the belief, albeit reluctantly, that one may be necessary in this case.

Mr. Wilkinson: Indeed. I was going to say, in the context of the first paragraph of article 8, that the parallels to which I referred earlier, dealing with how citizenship has traditionally been conferred, are historically correct: that is, by birth, by naturalisation, by registration in the case of Commonwealth citizens, or by conquest. There was a time

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when the very word "subjecthood" encapsulated the status of those who possessed British citizenship. It was the same sort of status as that to which St. Paul referred when he stood up and said, "Civis Romanus sum". It was his assurance that he would be subject to the due processes of Roman law.

With citizenship goes the right to deny oneself citizenship—to give it up. The Home Secretary suggested that the only way in which a European national could renounce his European citizenship was to renounce the nationality of his birth or the nationality that he acquired by naturalisation. That is most unsatisfactory. The treaty should provide for renunciation of citizenship.

It is very broad in scope:

"Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union".

I should like to hear what Home Office Ministers have to say about British overseas citizens—an important category. We in this Parliament decided that those who had some connection with the United Kingdom for historical reasons—British subjects of Asian origin living in East Africa, say—should have this category of overseas British citizenship bestowed on them. That would be useful, in as much as they would have a British passport of a kind, but it would not entitle them to residence in the United Kingdom.

That is an important distinction, which the treaty does not mention. I therefore take it that, under the treaty, British overseas citizens would have exactly the same rights, responsibilities and duties as other British nationals. I presume, too, that British overseas territories citizens would have the same rights and duties. It is an extremely important point, because of the immigration and freedom of movement aspects of the proposed treaty of union.

I assume that, with European union citizenship, people with British overseas citizenship could go to France or to another European Community country and establish residence there. It would be interesting to see how the courts decided whether such people could move to the United Kingdom. The first such case would be fascinating. Many Chinese people in Macao hold Portuguese nationality. I assume that, as citizens of the union, they could, if they wanted to, come here. Perhaps 5 million Hong Kong Chinese cannot come here, but my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) tells me that 100,000 Chinese from Macao with Portuguese nationality and thereby European citizenship could come here. That is interesting and important.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Storford): My hon. Friend argues that European citizenship should be capable of renunciation by those who do not wish to hold it any longer. I am puzzled by that argument, because it would mean that European citizenship was independent of the citizenship of EC nation states. That would mean that European citizenship would have its own status, independent of the independent state to which the person also belonged.

That would confer on European citizenship a status similar to the kind that I understood my hon. Friend was arguing against, the citizenship of an independent unit—the European Community. Therefore, it is illogical to demand that a citizen should be able to give up that citizenship when it must and should be entirely dependent upon his citizenship of another European Community country.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend touches on an interesting point. A person holding British nationality and residing in this country should be able to exercise choice about whether to acquire that additional nationality. It is not for a Government, by virtue of a treaty that they happened to sign in a small town in Holland, to decide to confer on all British nationals a new citizenship, unless of course the majority of those citizens so desire in a referendum. Likewise, in all equity they should have the right to renounce citizenship that has been conferred upon them, especially if it has been conferred without their express authority, democratically given in a referendum.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Given the hon. Gentleman's response to that intervention, may I ask whether he is saying that a United Kingdom citizen, a professional soldier in our armed forces who finds that his unit is being committed to the United Nations to perform, for example, peacekeeping duties, can say, "No, I do not agree. I am quite willing to be a British soldier, but I am not prepared to wear a blue helmet and serve on behalf of the United Nations, because I did not support the treaty which instituted that state of affairs." That is the logical corollary to the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Mr. Wilkinson: In no sense is that a logical deduction from what I said. I think that the hon. Gentleman had to be out of Committee when I referred to his speech and his false allusion to NATO. There is no comparison between NATO, a free association of independent, sovereign states, and the European union in terms of conferring obligations on citizens.

It is noteworthy that NATO is such a free association of independent states that the French, since De Gaulle's time, have decided, in their own sovereign manner, to remain independent of NATO's integrated military structure. NATO has always been a free association of independent states and quite different from the union. Certainly it never had citizenship; nor did it confer obligations on citizens of member states.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. NATO was established by treaty, and as a result we have obligations to it. It is true that some members, such as France, opted out of some responsibilities, in exactly the same way as the Government opted out of some of their responsibilities under Maastricht—for example, the social chapter. I wish that we could get away from the irrelevant argument about citizenship in terms of defence-related security, which we shall discuss under another group of amendments. It ill becomes a party which has subscribed to these international organisations and which has waved the flag time and time again now to start knocking it down.

5.45 pm

Mr. Wilkinson: I do not wish to cross swords with the hon. Gentleman on this—far from it. It has not been my desire to bring the debate so dominantly to the issue of military obligations. We have taken up some time on that, but only because some hon. Members remain confused about what the obligations of citizens of the union may be in that regard. That is because of the unclear and unsatisfactory dichotomy between those aspects of the

treaty that fall within the ambit of the Community and those that fall within the ambit of intergovernmental co-operation. I shall gladly move on—I am sure that you, Mr Lofthouse, will be pleased at that.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) spoke about the Scottish, Welsh and Irish examples. I was elected as a member of the Conservative and Unionist party, and nothing made me sadder than when the Conservative party broke from Unionist party in 1972 upon the dissolution of Stormont, against which I voted. The great distinction is that there has already been a democratic process in all three of those parts of the kingdom. At various times, they each had a referendum about their status in the United Kingdom. There was one in Northern Ireland, and at the time of the Bill on devolution there was one in Scotland and one in Wales.

I agree that those soundings of opinion may have been unsatisfactory. Perhaps they were not ideal, and the wording may not have been perfect, but our citizens in those parts of the kingdom at least had a chance to exercise their right to vote. What is so different and wrong today is that all the people in our country are not to have the chance to express an opinion about whether they wish to be citizens of the European union.

Mrs. Dunwoody: How many hundreds of letters has the hon. Gentleman had from his constituents demanding to become members of the union of Europe?

Mr. Wilkinson: I look forward to receiving the first. When it arrives, I shall seek to catch your eye, Mr. Lofthouse, so that I may read it to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Office. It will be quite an historic document.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is making an interesting and wide-ranging speech. I am sure that he will come to that aspect of the treaty which allows our constituents to petition the European Parliament. I am sure that he is aware that, as they do so, article 138c will apply. That important article, of which I am sure my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is aware, allows 25 per cent., a mere quarter, of European parliamentarians to set up a committee of inquiry to investigate alleged—I stress "alleged"—contraventions in the implementation of Community law.

If we are not seen to be applying Community law, a petitioner from my hon. Friend's constituency could go over his head to the European Parliament and, on the basis of a mere 25 per cent., an inquiry could be set up to investigate why this country was not applying the law of citizenship in the way that European institutions might, at a later stage, decide.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because his intervention helps me to make progress and to move on to article 8a.

Mr. Corbyn: Before leaving this matter, will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that there is a real problem in Europe that is not dealt with in the documents, by the Commission or by the European Parliament? Large numbers of people who are nationals of non-European member states enjoy no political rights in Europe, but that is not dealt with in the treaty. That is especially so in the case of Germany, where it is virtually impossible for a non-German to gain German nationality.

Such people are very much second-class citizens and will remain so in the European union envisaged by Maastricht. Should not that issue be dealt with, as it involves the civil rights of people throughout the world?

Mr. Wilkinson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing me back to such an important point. It would have been a great mistake to move on too quickly and to overlook it. He and I have a mutual family interest in this matter.

An aspect of equity is involved. In the old days, the position was anomalous, because Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Irish Republic—although it left the Commonwealth in 1949—enjoyed all the rights of British nationals without having to obtain British citizenship. In those days—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary would call them the bad old days—European Community citizens did not enjoy those rights. It was an extraordinary position, because Commonwealth nationals from, perhaps, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who spoke no English could vote in European parliamentary elections, while European Community nationals could not.

Even if, by some misfortune, the treaty were to be ratified—every hour that passes on the international exchanges makes it look less likely—there would still be an injustice. Citizens of the United States, of Canada and of other non-Community European countries who are resident in Britain, fulfilling all the qualifications for the franchise, would be unable to enjoy it even though they use as many local government services as, for example, European Community nationals also resident in Britain. The question is only partially and inadequately dealt with in the treaty.

Paragraph 2 of article 8a contains the real impetus behind the provisions. The driving force for making the citizenship provisions work is not the national Parliaments, not the national electorates and not the will of the people; it is the Council of Ministers. How will the Council be impelled to do what it collectively believes to be right? It will not be in response to popular will or to the wishes of constituents exercised through hon. Members in this place—it will be by a proposal from the Commission.

It is not we, Members of this sovereign imperial Parliament at Westminster, who will be consulted; it will be the Members of the European Parliament at Strasbourg. As you will know from your lengthy experience, Mr. Lofthouse, it is an extremely remote body. I doubt whether Members of the European Parliament receive more than 10 or 20 letters a week—probably only half the amount that we receive every day. They certainly have little opportunity to see their constituents and, sadly, their constituents see little of them.

Mr. Jessel: They do not know who they are.

Mr. Wilkinson: Perhaps my hon. Friend has the misfortune to be poorly represented in the European Parliament. The Member of the European Parliament who represents me is also a Member of the other place, so I see him frequently. It is a good example of the benefits of the old system, when Members of the European Parliament could also be Members of the British Parliament. There was a much better cross-fertilisation and Members of the European Parliament were more realistic. Indeed, they

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would have been more realistic about citizenship issues, because they would have been better in touch with the ordinary electorate. The same applies to article 8b.

I have no quarrel with article 8c. It is common decency that European Community countries should afford consular access to nationals of other Community countries that happen to have no representation in a particular third country. It is right that, between civilised nations, humanitarian assistance should be given to those in distress. That is spelt out in the treaty in belt-and-braces fashion.

Article 18 would give every citizen of the European union the right to petition the European Parliament. British citizens have known since time immemorial that they have the right to petition our Parliament—and not just to petition it, but to come here to see us, and even to badger us if need be. We are the most accessible legislators in the world.

That cannot be said of Members of the European Parliament. Apart from anything else, they are always on the move and we cannot catch up with them. One week they may be in Strasbourg, the next in Luxembourg and the next in Brussels. If we are lucky, we might catch up with them in the lounge at Frankfurt airport. That position does not inspire confidence.

Mr. Rowe: It is another example of how Maastricht has adopted another good British practice for the edification of the other 11 countries that have not, thus far, aspired to such good practice.

Mr. Wilkinson: That is right. If the European Parliament betters itself by a process of osmosis, that is all to the good. I am not belittling that. I was trying to show that, time and again in the treaty, on the most sensitive matter of citizenship, the Maastricht signatories must defer not to national Parliaments but to the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the European Parliament. There is hardly a word in the treaty about national Parliaments and their role.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is treating the Committee to a careful examination and perusal of article 8, but he passed quickly over article 8b(2), which concerns arrangements for voting in European elections. They shall be decided on a proposal from the Commission, through the Council of European Parliament. There is the possibility of a derogation, but, as my hon. Friend knows, the derogation is always time-barred and time-limited. Is my hon. Friend an enthusiast of proportional representation? If not, he may find that it will be imposed on the United Kingdom by that measure.

6 pm

Mr. Wilkinson: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. In my strong desire to make progress, I overlooked that important point—as I did in respect of article 8b, where the same applies to municipal elections: arrangements

"may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to a Member State."

Again, there could be moves in the Community to harmonise elections for municipalities on, for example, a proportional representation basis—which would be anathema to most right hon. and hon. Members, who believe that the strong connection between the councillor and his ward electorate is crucial to the satisfactory functioning of our democracy.

It would also be damaging for European Parliament elections to be by proportional representation, which I am sure is the desire of the majority of Community member states. It is important for our citizens not to go down that road but for this country to obtain the derogation to which my hon. Friend alluded.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): My hon. Friend has several times denigrated the role of the European Parliament. He was very rude about it, despite the fact that a number of MEPs are members of our party, and presumably are not subject to the kind of criticisms that my hon. Friend was offering? Does not my hon. Friend agree with the declarations on the role of national parliaments in the European Union and on the conference of the parliaments, proposed on page 127 of the treaty? They would solve many of the problems to which my hon. Friend drew attention.

Mr. Wilkinson: I must resist the temptation to respond, because I am trying to stick strictly to the amendments on citizenship, and not deal with matters relating to the place to which my hon. Friend so dearly aspires.

Article 8e states:

"The Commission shall report to the European Parliament, to the Council, and to the Economic and Social Committee"—

a body of bureaucrats, not a national parliament—

"on the application of the provisions of this Part."

In other words, it will report on progress in the matter of European citizenship.

That is, once again, a fundamentally undemocratic procedure, which flies in the face of the natural obligation of the signatories to the treaty to recognise that sovereign national parliaments are the custodians of the most dear and sacred rights of their citizens—the rights of citizenship.

Mr. Fraser: I support the treaty's proposals for union citizenship. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, although it is currently nothing more than a symbol, it is an important token of membership of a multinational, multilingual and multi-faceted community.

Two of my three children were able to work and live in the Community without work permits or restrictions on their ability to move about. Many members of the younger generation find it extremely difficult to understand the narrow nationalism portrayed by so many of the artificialities and distortions that I have heard from Conservative Members over three days.

To the younger generation, the restrictions on individual citizenship and divisions between European countries have become archaic. The symbolism provided by citizenship of a greater Community should be welcome. I represent a multilingual, multiracial and multi-coloured constituency. If people have both a United Kingdom and a United Kingdom and European union citizenship—albeit that it will give them only nominal rights in other countries initially—that will diminish the divisions that have proved dangerous in society and in the world.

It is important to have at the beginning—the word "beginning" is what matters—formal but tangible recognition of the rights of European Community citizens in the Community.

Sir Richard Body *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: Having sat here for three days, I made a promise to myself not to give way to any Euro-bores—but perhaps just this once.

Sir Richard Body: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has in his constituency, as I have, a large number of Irish people. They have the opportunity to vote for him, although they are not citizens of this country. I see no reason why that principle should not be extended throughout the Community. I would welcome that. It does not mean that we must have a supranational citizenship imposed upon us, with accompanying future duties and obligations of which we do not know.

Mr. Fraser: It will probably be best if I continue with my own speech.

Although it is only a beginning, that is no reason to vote against it. Citizens ought to have enforceable and equal rights. One of the first times that I voted against my own Government was in 1968, when the concept of United Kingdom citizenship was being diminished in relation to Kenyan Asians. If we are to have European citizenship, it must be meaningful.

There are three deficiencies in the union citizenship that the treaty promulgates. The first is specific and regrettable —the omission of the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Under the treaty, people will have the right to vote in municipal elections—that is, local government elections, in case Conservative Members do not understand the meaning of the word "municipal". They will also have the right, not surprisingly, to stand for election to the European Parliament and to vote in European elections.

It would be crazy to be a citizen of the Community and not to have those rights. Those who live, work and currently reside in another member state should have the right to vote in parliamentary elections also, and that right ought to be conferred by the treaty. It is completely incomprehensible that a German, Italian or Greek can live, work and reside in my constituency for his entire lifetime but not have the chance to vote in a parliamentary election, whereas the Government can give the right to a person who has lived on the costa del crime for the past 12 years, or who left this country because he did not like it and now resides in South Africa, to get on the electoral role and to play a part in British parliamentary elections. It is extraordinary that the latter can happen, yet a fellow European citizen who has worked here and lived here, even if not for his entire life, cannot play a part in parliamentary elections.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan) *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: No, I will not give way.

My second point relates to immigration and dependency rights. I believe that, if there is to be a right of union citizenship, the rights attaching to such citizenship should be equal, and should be harmonised. At present, a rather odd distinction exists. If an Italian, a Frenchman or a German living in this country—and exercising his economic rights in the Community—should marry, no primary purpose rule will apply to the marriage: under European law, that person's wife can remain with him. If they want to bring their children under the age of 21 to this country, they can do so. Indeed, they have the right to bring their grandparents, and any other relatives.

That right, enjoyed by other European Community citizens, is superior to the right currently held by United Kingdom citizens. Surely there is a deficiency in a citizenship that does not harmonise the rights involving dependants. I want those rights to be harmonised upwards rather than downwards—and the Government, in the intergovernmental conference, seem to be trying to harmonise them downwards.

Let me now deal with what I consider to be the principal deficiency. I believe that the Rome treaty, as amended by the Single European Act—it is, of course, to be amended further by the Maastricht treaty—is seriously deficient, in that it does not contain a declaration of principle, and does not confer a specific competence in relation to freedom from discrimination on grounds of race, colour, national origins or social status. Generally speaking, all those grounds are mentioned in the European convention on human rights and the United Nations charter on the subject. For the sake of brevity, I shall call them the "freedom from racial discrimination" grounds, although the definition in the convention is rather wider.

We are discussing the creation of a reality from article 8, which concerns the freedom to reside and to move freely. A person subject to discrimination in regard to housing, for instance, cannot reside freely in another country.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman is entirely right. Article F says:

"The Union shall respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law."

Mr. Fraser: That, I believe, is in the preamble to the treaty. I am arguing that the provisions should be rather more specific. It is true that the preamble contains a reference to the convention; it is possible that articles 100 and 235 confer a competence, and that the social chapter does the same, although very marginally. What I want is a specific reference in the treaty, as an adjunct to citizenship rights, to the elimination of discrimination; the treaty should both make a declaration and provide the necessary machinery.

That is done elsewhere in the treaty. Article 119 is specific about women's rights in relation to equal pay. From that article developed the equal pay directive, which in part had already been translated into English domestic law but whose translation was then completed. I believe that one of the concomitants of union citizenship should be a provision similar to article 119, which would deal with racial discrimination and would enable the Commission —by way of a directive—to develop the machinery to make a declaration of principle enforceable.

If I am to remain in order, I must make a speech about citizenship. Let me make it clear, however, that, if I were out of order, I would be arguing for a general freedom from discrimination, irrespective of citizenship. I had better say that in case I am thought to be leaving out the question of migrant workers and those without European citizenship.

Mr. Corbyn: Do not the Maastricht treaty and the whole thrust of European thinking and legislation completely ignore the political rights of 15 million people who live and work on the continent of Europe, many of

[Mr. Corbyn]

whom are refused nationality in their own countries? None of the legislation is addressed to them. Maastricht will make the current two-tier residence in Europe worse rather than better.

6.15 pm

Mr. Fraser: I agree. I think that the rights of migrant workers—and those of people who are simply dependants—should be exactly the same as those of citizens. I should have liked to speak about that in relation to the social chapter. One of the most regrettable features of the Government's failure to support the social chapter is the fact that the country has been robbed of the authority, and the credibility, to press the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in the context of the chapter. Although the treaty may contain competences and declarations elsewhere, opting out of the social chapter makes it much more difficult to argue that the Commission should initiate legislation in which the Government wish to play no part.

Although there is no constitutional right in this country to be free from racial discrimination—because we have no constitution, although, of course, we are party to the European convention on human rights—we have done rather well. When I first represented my constituency—being a multiracial constituency, it has been racked with riots—discrimination was blatantly exercised. I believe that it is a happier constituency, and that this is a happier country, since the introduction of the Race Relations Act. We have a good record. It is no good just stating principles; the machinery must be created, in this country and in the Community, to turn those principles into reality.

Other countries have built such principles into their constitutions. The very phrase "liberty, equality, fraternity" must imply freedom from racial discrimination. Every other member of the European Community has acceded to the European declaration on human rights, and all of them—unlike Britain—have imported it into their domestic law. We, who have not adopted the constitutional principle, have done better than the countries which have not. That gave us an authority, undermined by our rejection of the social chapter, to introduce laws relating to discrimination.

My point is that, given that we have a Race Relations Act, and given that all other Community member states accede—either directly in their constitutions, or by importing the provisions of the European convention into their domestic laws—not including such matters in more detail in the treaty represents an omission from the rights of citizens and, pace my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, from those of others.

Declarations of principle are not enough. According to the American constitution, it is self-evident that all men are born equal. That did not help the slaves until 1864, and it did not help a lot of black people until the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and 1970s. We need more than a declaration of principle: we need the machinery to implement it.

It is the Labour party's view, expressed at our European conference late last year, and the view of the European parliamentary Labour party that there should be a directive on such matters. I endorse that view, and I consider that such a directive is an important ingredient of citizenship. It is important for these reasons.

First, freedom from discrimination is, in one way or another, part of the governing principles of every member of the Community. Therefore, it is a gross omission for it not to be spelt out exactly in the treaty.

Secondly, the danger inside the Community and Europe as a whole is not discrimination on grounds of nationality. People are no longer, if they ever were, discriminated against specifically because they are French or German. It is much more likely, as happened before the war, that people are discriminated against because they are Jewish, or gipsies, or Arabs. Discrimination always was, perhaps, discrimination on the grounds of membership of a group, not on grounds of nationality. It is self-evident from what is happening in Yugoslavia that discrimination against people because of their membership of a group has to be dealt with.

Thirdly, freedom from discrimination is important as a matter of self-interest. Let no one ever imagine that to allow discrimination can be in anybody's self-interest. It is not; it is the reverse. One only has to look at the history of Northern Ireland and at what is happening now in Yugoslavia. If people were motivated only by self-interest, they would want workable laws against racial discrimination. That is why it is so important to incorporate this principle into the practice of the Community. In a cohesive Community, differences of race and social origin would be unimportant.

It is also important that the European Community should set an example to the rest of the world. One hears talk nowadays of fortress Europe, of a European Community that is distinct and different, that sets itself apart and makes itself exclusive in terms of the rest of the world. When the Community deals with racial discrimination, we shall demonstrate to the rest of the world that the Community has a wider view. At the moment, unfortunately, the Community has an image of being largely white and largely Christian. It is, however, a Community that will eventually incorporate not an Islamic state but Muslims. Turkey is a secular state, but if Turkey or Cyprus becomes a member of the Community, the Community will also incorporate a Muslim tradition. Therefore, it is important for us to demonstrate to the rest of the world what the Community has in mind.

I have listened to several days of the debate, and I have been surprised by the lack of vision and the lack of idealism. Last weekend, the world deplored, not celebrated, the rise of Hitler 60 years ago, a rise that was largely helped by the hatred of foreign nationals, Jews, gipsies, Slavs and minority groups. Six years after Hitler's rise to power, there was a world war. That world war became the basis for forming a community in Europe. The prime purpose of its formation was to prevent that from ever happening again. But we need more than that. If we look at what is happening in Germany and other member states, we see that we also need to learn other lessons about the rise of Hitler to power in the 1930s.

If we are to have citizenship of the union, it must be a full and equal citizenship in which each man and woman has equal dignity. Citizenship should be broadened to the extent of having real declarations and real machinery for the elimination of discrimination throughout the

Community, and they would apply not just to citizens of the Community but to everyone living within the Community.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: What worries me about the speech of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) is that if, against the will of the British people, we are forced into a union where the laws and requirements are not consistent with the wishes of the British people, it may fan those very hatreds that the hon. Gentleman, with the rest of us, is so anxious to stop.

There was much in the hon. Gentleman's speech with which I agreed. The aims that he spelled out are aims with which we can all align, but they can be achieved through intergovernmental co-operation, not by forcing through a pattern of co-operation against the wishes of the people and against sensitivities of our British history and tradition.

This is the first time that I have made a speech in the debates on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and I hope to be brief, but that is not to say that I shall be patronising towards those who wish to intervene. I shall not call them Euro-bores because everybody here has some contribution to make. I speak as someone who, although he is on this side of the discussion, is a European, has always been a European and hopes always to be a European.

When the time came for us to try to make sure that the British people were persuaded that Britain should stay in the European Community, I took a very expensive three weeks away from my practice at the Bar in order to spend every day, as in a general election campaign, persuading people that we should stay within the European Community because of the many advantages to them if we did so. My bona fides, therefore, are clear.

I want the United Kingdom to remain part of the European Community. If we do not give our approval to Maastricht, we shall stay part of the European Community. I do not wish the United Kingdom to leave it, but I do not think that the way in which the European Community is going is necessarily the way that would meet with the agreement of the British people. I want this country to stay in Europe, but I ask: what kind of Europe do we want to stay in? I am not sure that I want the kind of Europe that Mr. Delors, with the support of a large number of people in the European Community, is marking out for us.

The Government say of the citizenship proposals in the treaty, "We are British citizens and we will always remain British citizens." I assume that the Government intend to convey the meaning that, for us, British citizenship will be first and foremost. I ask, will it be? The Government say, "European citizenship is additional to British citizenship. It simply confers extra rights on all EC national citizens. Does it? Is that all that it does? That is certainly what is suggested in the Government's booklet. As far as I can see, there is not one mention of duties which will be imposed upon us by being members of this European citizenship.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, for whom I have the highest regard, said in an earlier intervention that there is no question of us wanting a European state or of there being a European state. What, then, is the purpose of citizenship? Citinzenship is all about allegiance to the state. It does not mean anything else but allegiance to the state. I shall return to that point in a few moments because I believe that these Government statements or interpretations are very misleading. They imply to those who listen to them and who look no further under the meaning of the words that nothing very much will change from what it is now, except that we shall have the benefit of an additional citizenship—citizenship of the union.

Such manifest nonsense is spoken about it that one wonders whether the Government can be serious. Euro-citizenship confers not only extra rights but extra duties; there is no doubt about that. Article 8(2) states explicitly:

"Citizens . . . shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby."

We shall have duties imposed on us as citizens of the union; but what are those duties? One will be the duty to pay taxes to the union, or state. If there is a Euro-tax regime, as there will be if we ratify Maastricht and follow the route planned for us, we shall have to abide by it. Britain will be forced to adopt that regime whether or not the British people or the British Parliament want it.

6.30 pm

If the Euro-tax regime demands that we do away with zero rating because it does not want to zero-rate children's shoes, or books, transport or food, we shall, in the interests of the whole Community, have to agree to one value added tax regime. We shall not be able to argue that we cannot implement such a regime, because we should be taken to the European Court and fined if we did not. The new Euro-state will therefore be able to impose that duty on us.

One of the fundamental duties of the citizen is to defend the state. If the state is the Euro-state, defence of the Euro-state will be an obligation placed on British citizens, whether or not they agree. If the British citizen or the British Parliament, has doubts about whether it is sensible to send an armed force to Iraq or for an armed force to go to Bosnia but the Euro-state says that that is Euro policy, we shall have to conform because our Euro-citizenship will place a duty and an obligation on us to abide by that demand.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): As my hon. and learned Friend knows, other European Community countries operate conscription. Does he think that Scots, as British citizens, can look forward to the delightful duty of being conscripted into as future European force?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I was going to deal with the question of conscription, but now I need not do so. My hon. Friend makes a valid point, which is why the preamble about a common defence policy is so important to the debate on citizenship. Few things are more important to citizenship than the obligation to defend the state.

Mr. Knapman: Greece is a member of the Community, but Turkey is not. Would my hon and learned Friend care to consider what would happen if there was trouble in Cyprus, for instance?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend puts his finger on one of the dark points—the relationship between Greece and Turkey and the way in which it will bear on the future of the European Community. I have an immense regard for Greece and Turkey. As hon. Members may know, when I was a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, we produced a report on the future of Cyprus. There are immense problems for a union which excludes Turkey but retains Greece, and which may or may not take

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

in Cyprus. It has many other ramifications, but I do not wish to pursue that subject. My hon. Friend has made a sensible point. Such a state of affairs might involve decisions contrary to the feelings of the British nation, but, because we shall be citizens of the state, we shall have to conform.

Duties are nowhere expressly defined in the Maastricht treaty, but we can be perfectly sure that what is and what is not a duty will be interpreted not by a British court but by the European Court of Justice. In the fulness of time, because that is in the nature of things, we shall have additional duties loaded on to our shoulders which we did not dream of when we first discussed these issues. They will be loaded on to our shoulders by interpretation of the European Court of Justice.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department must take on board on behalf of the Government, the fact that when we visited electors in our constituencies during the general election, if we had knocked on doors and said, "Excuse me, I want you to vote for me because I want more duties loaded on to my shoulders as a result not of what the British Parliament and Government have decided but of what other Parliaments and Governments in the rest of the European Community have decided", no one would have voted for us.

Mr. Marlow: Front-Bench Members have mentioned the various benefits arising from this part of the treaty, including petitioning, the appointment of an ombudsman and being able to vote. We can discuss whether or not they are benefits, but would it not be possible to have those benefits, or disbenefits, without having to be citizens of the European union and having citizenship imposed on us? My hon. and learned Friend talks about duties. Could we not have the benefits without citizenship and imposed duties? Why do we need them? Why did the Government agree to them?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend makes another of his excellent points. Intergovernmental co-operation can achieve the benefits. What worries me is the forcing of our will into a Community decision of the state with an obligating citizenship. That was the issue that I began to explain in response to the hon. Member for Norwood, who has been so disgusted by my remarks that he has left the Chamber.

Mr. Jessel: A minute ago my hon. and learned Friend mentioned canvassing in the general election. Does he agree that, in the general election, the Maastricht treaty was hardly an issue at all because there was agreement between the three main political parties on it, and certainly agreement between the two Front Benches, so that it was a matter of controversy between the political parties? There was much dispute in the general election—we can all remember disputes about the health service, rates of income tax and so on—but if one looks at, say, the headlines of all the main newspapers throughout the three weeks of the campaign, Maastricht hardly featured and was not an issue on which people voted.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I agree with my hon. Friend, and that is precisely why a referendum is necessary. I am one of the members of the Conservative party who do not believe that, in the normal way of things, a referendum is an acceptable way to proceed. We are Members of Parliament, elected by the people to represent their views, and we cannot go through the whole catechism of issues for a referendum, but, on a matter of constitutional importance about which the people have not been given a specific opportunity to say yes or no, a referendum is required.

Mr. Shore: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the fact that the treaty was not published until May whereas the general election was held on 9 April greatly reinforces the case for a direct reference to the British people?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Not only was the treaty not published but the explanation was not given. As I hope to point out in due course, the explanation that has been given is even now misleading and should be corrected before the British people have the right to decide in a referendum whether they want the treaty.

My second point about the misleading nature of the Government's assertions, no doubt made in the utmost good faith, is that Euro-citizenship is not just an additional label and does not simply provide additional duties; it changes the nature of our relationships. Acceptance of Euro-citizenship is not a voluntary matter. We will have to accept it; it says so in article 8. That means that we can no longer renounce our citizenship and move to France, Germany or elsewhere within our cultural area. If we want to renounce anything, we shall have to live outside the European Community, in America, the old Commonwealth or the new Commonwealth—if we can get in. Euro-citizenship changes fundamentally the relationship that we had with the state when we could decide voluntarily whether to stay or go.

Moreover, questions regarding the position of Her Majesty the Queen under a system of Euro-citizenship require some answers. Her Majesty has British citizenship. She will no doubt become a citizen of the union and presumably will be subject to the duties conferred on her by the treaty. Does that mean that she will be obliged to pay Euro income tax or any tax that the Euro-state requires her to pay?

Mr. Rowe: I am listening with avid attention. I am not in any sense a constitutional lawyer—I know that my hon. and learned Friend is a lawyer of great excellence—but it seems to me that, arguably, Her Majesty the Queen is not a British citizen, in the sense that she is not allowed to exercise many of the attributes of citizenship.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: It is generally accepted by international lawyers, as well as by the Home Secretary and the Government, that Her Majesty the Queen is pre-eminently the British citizen and is therefore subject to the law of the land as any citizen would be. The last member of the royal family who said that he was not a British citizen and that he was not subject to the laws and obligations of the land had a little walk further down Whitehall, which ended in the loss of an important part of his body and a number of years of civil war.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Of course.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman, whose speech should be carefully noted because of his experience in these matters and the office that he holds. He may recall that, earlier this afternoon, the Home Secretary feigned ignorance when asked about the position of the Queen. The Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary have repeatedly been asked about the position of Her Majesty—or, to be more accurate, the monarch of the day—and have repeatedly failed to answer.

Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, unlike legislation of the Community, which would bind the duty of the monarch or legislation of this House, consequent on a legislative programme of the Community, under the intergovernmental parts of the treaty that require a single process, it would become the duty of the Crown and its prerogative—meaning government, which traditionally has not been completely within the grasp of this House—to concur with whatever the intergovernmental institutions. decreed? For the first time, the prerogative of the Crown, as well as the Crown itself, would become subject to the macro-treaties of which we speak.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right; but I will not hear criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. He is one of the busiest and most preoccupied Ministers in the Cabinet. Morning, noon and night, he has to apply his mind to the problems of the police, prisons, immigration, the fire service and a whole range of activities that are totally time-consuming. I will not accept any criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend for not having accurately considered every single matter in the treaty. I merely make the point that, to reassure those who are concerned about these matters, it is most important that Ministers should be present who have had time to consider them in greater detail and can answer questions concerning, for example, the role of the Queen.

6 45 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I see that my hon. Friend can answer the questions that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary could not.

Mr. Wardle: I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will appreciate the manner in which my hon. and learned Friend catalogued his many responsibilities, which do, indeed, make him a busy man. Let me clarify the point that is of concern to the Committee. The Maastricht treaty does not in any way affect the constitutional position of the monarch. Her Majesty as an individual would of course enjoy the same rights within the EC as any other United Kingdom citizen.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. In view of what the Minister has just said, why is it that the Queen's consent is required on Third Reading? If what the Minister said was correct, it would surely not be necessary for Her Majesty's consent to be signified.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is not a point of order for me; it is a question for the Minister.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I accept what my hon. Friend the Minister said—that Her Majesty the Queen has the same rights as any other member of the Community. That being so, it must surely follow that she would have the right to vote in European elections and to stand for the European Parliament. She would even have the municipal right—it is clear from the treaty that that right is regarded as important—to vote and stand in local government elections. If she wished, Her Majesty could stand for election to Westminster city council. Those are rights and duties that I believe Her Majesty would gain under the Maastricht treaty. I merely make the point that the treaty alters the relationship that Her Majesty has with her citizens and with the rest of the European Community. The treaty changes the basis of citizenship as we know it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Surely the whole point is that, although we are debating a Bill that imposes upon all the citizens of the United Kingdom a new duty—and the word "duty" ought to be underlined—Ministers are still receiving advice from the Box on fundamental matters. It is all very well for the Home Secretary to come here and joke about the gullible Danes—who, incidentally, follow the democratic process—but the fact is that the Committee is being asked to vote on a number of basic duties of citizenship without any clear idea of how far the provision goes, of what is involved or of the commitment that we are making on behalf of our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Frankly. I find that both frightening and irresponsible.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I agree with the hon. Lady. We have just seen what can happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) had one view of the Queen's position and that view was corrected by my hon. Friend the Minister.

These matters are important to the British people. It may be nostalgic and old-fashioned—the result of some feeling rather than of rationality—of us to feel so strongly monarchist and to have such regard for the royal family. Nevertheless, the provisions of the Bill affect the rights and duties of the royal family for the future, and those rights and duties must be clarified so that the British people can feel confident about the future.

My hon. Friend the Minister says that Her Majesty will have the same rights and duties as any European citizen. In that case, it is in the nature of that relationship that she must be a citizen of the Euro-state. As she is a British citizen, she will become a citizen of the Euro-state and subject to the Euro-state, whose leader—the President—will presumably have rights similar to those that Her Majesty enjoys in Britain at present.

Is it seriously suggested that the British people would have wanted Her Majesty the Queen to be a subject of Mr. Delors, remembering his thoughts about the future of Europe? By what right should we expect the Queen to be so subject? Would the British people have voted for us had we been able, with the right information and existence of the treaty, to ask them about such matters at the last general election?

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend is approaching a delicate and important point. By the kind courtesies of the government of the European state, Her Majesty will be a citizen of that state. She will be Queen but Mr. Delors will be President. He will be President of the whole organisation—President of Europe—while she

[Mr. Marlow]

will be Queen of a mere participant in Europe. Who will take precedence at official functions? Will it be Mr. Delors, with Her Majesty playing second fiddle to him? Does my hon. and learned Friend think that our constituents will be worried about the legislation if it turns out to have that effect?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Let us be realistic. Seldom does the Prime Minister go to a meeting of Staffordshire county council, so that the question whether he should have precedence over the chairman of the county council does not arise. Such events rarely happen now and they are unlikely to happen often in the future. The question of precedence is probably not of importance, though my hon. Friend's intervention underlines my point that the relationship of the British citizen will alter under the treaty, just as the duties imposed on British citizens under it will be greater.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My hon. and learned Friend said encouragingly that we should be realistic. We are debating the Maastricht treaty, which imposes no specific duties on individuals. The only duty is to obey provisions of EC law which impose an obligation on individuals. The rest must be speculation and, as we are considering article 8, that speculation would be subject to the double lock in article 18.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: But if the law being created by the European Community creates more duties, we are subject to them, for the very reason adduced by my hon. Friend the Minister—in other words, there will be more duties and a changed relationship.

Others will have rights to join in and interfere with British citizenship here in the United Kingdom. Citizens of other states will be able to vote in our municipal elections and Euro-elections. There are a number of marginal seats in this country, some with very small majorities. Consider one such constituency about which it is known from public opinion polls and canvassing that the result will be on a knife edge.

What will stop sufficient French farmers, for example, coming here, being here on the night that is necessary for registration as electors, perhaps by virtue of their European citizenship being able to come backwards and forwards for long enough to comply with the six-month residency in the constituency rule before voting, and thereby getting the MEP they want? Such an MEP might stand for policies which the Euro-farmer particularly wants but which the British farmer does not want.

Mr. Cash: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that there is no residential qualification in the treaty relating to citizenship? We should be told the latest Home Office thinking on the matter. After all, even the trespassing CND women at Greenham common managed to acquire a period of residence that was suitable for the purposes of the residential qualification. If that could be achieved, I have no doubt that all manner of people could be brought in from across the channel.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is right, because the law requires some residential qualification.

Mr. Wilkinson: We have recently enacted provisions by which British expatriate nationals have the right to vote in United Kingdom elections. I presume that EC nationals who have in the past acquired residence in this country could go to Timbuctoo or anywhere on the globe and vote in British elections. It is unsatisfactory that expatriate nationals who will acquire, by virtue of the treaty, citizenship of the European union will not have their rights clearly defined in electoral law.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend raises an interesting matter. We make to other groups all sorts of concessions that other countries do not make. Likewise, they make concessions to groups that we do not make. One such concession is the voting right given in certain circumstances to expatriates. Other nations in the EC may not wish to accept that type of regime and will test the issue in the European Court of Justice. We may find that a concession that the British people, through their Parliament, considered to be right is taken from us.

Another example is extremely worrying. We have made a special exception in relation to the Irish. They can come here and stand for election, vote and sit on juries. That was part of the agreement with Ireland in the post-1920 era. That concession may have served us well, and people have opinions about whether the Irish should have those rights. When we questioned the matter a year or so ago and asked why the same rights were not reciprocal with Eire, the Irish Government quickly changed the law so that anybody who wants to stand or vote in an Irish election can do so, and I believe that it is possible for anybody who wishes to do so to serve on an Irish jury.

I merely make the point that we are discussing one of those rules that the British Parliament has decided and has not revoked. Such a variation in our rules might not be acceptable to our partners in the EC, who might take the matter to the European Court. It might be ruled to be in breach of undertakings given in Maastricht and be contrary to the Euro-citizen rules laid down in the treaty. We would find ourselves obliged to change what had been a traditional attitude towards the people of Ireland.

I am not saying that that will happen. I am discussing a number of situations that could arise once we open the doors and allow them to happen, and that is what the Maastricht treaty does. Further, it does it without consulting the British people to see whether they want it to be done, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) pointed out.

The nationals of other countries and the citizens of the Euro-state will be able to come here and play their part in municipal—county, district and parish council—elections. They will be eligible to come here and stand and vote and thereby affect the future of British society. That represents a considerable change in the present situation and, by itself, contradicts the assurance we have been given that the treaty will improve matters and will not take anything away. Many people may not want the French to decide who our district, county or parish councillors should be.

I ask this question in all seriousness: can my hon. Friend the Minister give a guarantee that "municipal" means only district council, county council and paris council? *[Interruption.]* It is not a joke. It is clear, not simply from the case in 1972 but from a number of other references, that the European Community sometimes used the word municipal as the counter to community—municipal not meaning municipal elections to district

councils, country councils and parish councils but meaning pertaining to the nation state. It may well be that that is not the meaning which will ever be used in this case.

The question of what "municipal" actually means—whether it will be restricted in that way—may well have to be referred to the European Court of Justice. If the word "municipal" has been used time and time again in France, Italy and the European Court to mean national, can my hon. Friend the Minister guarantee that it will never give Euro-citizens a right to vote in our general elections? It is not such a silly question.

If there is a Euro-citizenship which entitles people to have a right to vote in parish, district and county council elections, what is the argument in principle about not letting them vote in a general election? I can see a difference in degree, but I can see no difference in principle. If there is no difference in principle, who will guarantee that the European Court of Justice will say that there is no difference in principle and that "municipal" must mean municipal in the way that we mean it?

Mr. Cash: My hon. and learned Friend is addressing what he and I regard as a serious point. I am sure many other people regard it in the same way. Unfortunately, the point is that, if the treaty is ratified, the cat is out of the bag and the Court of Justice has grabbed it.

It does not matter a fig what my hon. Friend the Minister thinks. What he thinks on this subject probably is not worth a row of beans, because he is not a lawyer who is likely to appear before the European Court. I am not interested in the opinion of his Foreign Office lawyers, because they are wrong more often than they are right. We found that out with the Canada Bill. I could give the Committee a list as long as my arm of the times when they have got things fundamentally wrong.

In this particular case, the matter can arise only after ratification. If the Court of Justice takes the view which it has taken in the past, it will not matter a damn what the Foreign Office lawyers and the Minister have said, because the Court of Justice will have the right, under the European Communities Act 1972, to decide the matter.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: As is often the case, my hon. Friend underlines and concludes the point that I am making much more effectively than I could have done, and I accept what he says.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I shall move on because it is important that I should do so.

Article 8b does not define the phrase

"residing . . . in which he resides"

before a Euro-citizen can cast a vote in one of our elections. Euro-citizens must reside in Britain under the rules which apply at present before they can vote in our elections. Surely that means that such citizens must be in the United Kingdom on a day in October or whenever and have been here for a period of residence. However, we do not know that, because it is not set out in the treaty.

7 pm

The question of who a resident is, who will vote or who can stand for election to the county council, district council or parish council may have to be decided in the European Court of Justice. That decision will be made not by a British court but by a European court. It will be made not by somebody who has been brought up in the history and traditions of the British system but by somebody or a number of learned men who have been brought up in a system in another country which bears no relationship to the traditions of British government.

I shall give another example of power being taken from us and residing in a body in which we will have some right to participate and perhaps some strong right to influence but not the right to make a final decision in the interests of the people. Article 8d gives Euro-citizens the right to petition the European Parliament. What will happen if such a petition succeeds? Will it succeed over the decisions of the British Parliament? Is that an example of the European Parliament taking power over the Westminster Parliament?

How many people would have voted for me if I had knocked on doors at the last general election and said, "Please vote for me because I want to surrender power to the European Parliament. I do not want the Westminster Parliament to have the powers which it has at the moment. I want fewer powers. I want to give people the right to petition a European Parliament and to oblige the European Parliament to oblige a Euro-citizen in Britain to go along such a path"? We are talking about the surrender of power away from a Westminster Parliament. That is my bottom line. What moves me most about the Maastricht treaty is the surrender of power away from the Westminster Parliament. People have not been consulted, and I know perfectly well that they do not want it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The interesting point is that we have the right to petition the European Parliament at present. Since there is no extra extension of advantage, why is the treaty written in such a way unless the unwritten intention is that the decision can be enforced? At present, after we have petitioned the European Parliament, a decision cannot necessarily be enforced. Are we to assume that in the future we shall have to conform with whatever decision is taken?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: It seems that the power to petition the European Parliament is excluded in the treaty because it will give more power than exists at present, or there would be no point in including it.

Mr. Rowe: In my general election campaign, I made it abundantly clear that I thought that the Maastricht treaty was a good thing and that the European Community should be strengthened. It may well be that my constituents share the opinion of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), whose views of our officials, our lawyers and our constitution seem to be so denigrating. For that reason, it may be that my constituents substantially increased my majority.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend's personal powers and charm must have persuaded a large number of people to give him the benefit of any doubt which they may have had because they could not have seen anything in writing and they would not know the explanation of the things in writing. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend's majority increased or decreased.

Mr. Rowe: My majority increased.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend's majority would have increased much more if he had been able to say to the

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electors of Mid-Kent, "I am standing up against the desire to grab the powers from the Westminster Parliament and give them to some Parliament elsewhere in Europe."

Mr. Cash: Is it possible—as it were, vicariously through my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence)—to remind the citizens of Mid-Kent that it was those massive marches to preserve their homes and so on which led my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent to charge up to No. 10 and so on? My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) will have an opportunity to prove his point when undoubtedly he will vote against the rail privatisation Bill tomorrow and sustain the reason why he got so much support in the 1992 general election in addition to the other support which he has already.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Again, I can only accept the observation of my hon. Friend. I make no comment about it.

So far I have said that, contrary to the assurances that have been given, there will be changes to the rights and duties of the British people as a result of Euro-citizenship. Maastricht will provide us with more duties, change our relationships and give other people the right to interfere in the rights and activities of the British people. That is what will happen.

Mr. Winnick: Before the hon. and learned Gentleman goes on to his next point, may I ask him whether he is aware that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who shares our views on this subject, said that the two Conservative candidates in Southend borough received more or less the same percentage of support? One was opposed to Maastricht and one was in favour. Is not the point that the treaty was not an issue at the general election for either of the two main parties? The British people clearly did not make up their minds on that issue. Hence the need, before power is taken away from the House of Commons to a much greater degree than previously, for the British people to say yea or nay.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: With great respect, we have flogged that one. We are talking about the need for a referendum. Although the point needs to continue to be made, perhaps it does not need to continue to be made so often.

One must ask two questions: first, will Maastricht as it is drafted be better for the British people? Secondly, will it be better for the British people if the intentions which are clear in the treaty are translated? I have just dealt with the question whether the treaty would be better for the British people in the form in which we have examined it so far and insofar as it diminishes the rights and increases the duties of the citizen in Britain. The answer to that question is no.

So what are the intentions for the future of the framers of the treaty and its signatories? It seems obvious to me that the intentions are to diminish the nation state and the concept of national citizenship in favour of the Euro-state.

I come to that conclusion for the following reasons. First, if all that were wanted were reciprocal rights, there is no reason why they could not have been provided without the concept of citizenship. All that would be required would be some such statement as, "The rights accorded under the French constitution are hereby accorded to the citizens of the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Holland, Spain, Portugal," and all the others. That is all that would be needed for us to enjoy each other's rights. But that is not want we have. We have the concept of citizenship.

The concept of citizenship came about because the Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, said that it would be a good idea if we could bind the concept of a union together with European citizenship. On page 79 of its opinion of 21 November 1990 to the conference drafting the Maastricht treaty, the Commission approved the concept because it would

"encourage a feeling of involvement in European integration."

Those are weasel words if ever there were any.

There is only one point in creating citizenship, and that is to set up an obligation to a state. So the Commission proposed that the European citizen would have a right of free residence and movement and a right to vote in local and European parliamentary elections. It said that targets for the definition of the individual's civic, economic and social rights would be set at a later stage.

Mr. Wilkinson: It is interesting that my hon. and learned Friend referred to the origin of the concept of European citizenship. He accorded the origin of the idea to Felipe Gonzalez, whom he said claimed that European citizenship would grant to the holders of that citizenship a greater sense of belonging and integration in the Community. Can my hon. and learned Friend clarify what the Gibraltarians might think of that idea and what their status is under European citizenship?

7.15 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence: No, but I can guess. As we are going into a little history, I might add that I was present with other colleagues from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in Strasbourg when President Mitterrand made a speech to the European Parliament in which he explained that he thought that the time was nigh for European political and economic union. I noticed a gasp of dismay among my Conservative colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee at that time, most of whom will troop through the Lobby with the Government for the very political and economic union which had them so aghast when they first heard it from the mouth of President Mitterrand in Strasbourg.

The intention is that targets for the definition of the individual's civic, economic and social rights will be set at a later stage. Everything is done by a step-by-step approach. We manage to tame the abuses of union power not by means of a massive change but by the step-by-step approach. Everyone has learnt that if one wants to achieve something, one does it by the step-by-step approach. One signals one's intention with weasel words, which can mean anything, so that people cannot say that they were not warned. We are warned that by European citizenship we will encourage a feeling of involvement in European integration. In years to come people will say that they made it clear that they wanted Euro-citizenship.

Targets will be set for the definition of civic, economic and social rights at a later stage. No one can say that he was not warned that we were going even further down the path of reducing our national rights and increasing our international burden, and changing the relationship

between the British citizen and the Queen or British citizens and other citizens of the Euro-state. No one will be able to say that we were not warned.

I looked at the literature which was circulated during the 1975 referendum campaign to see whether we were promised that something would not happen that subsequently happened. I wanted some ammunition. When I looked at the words, I saw that they could mean anything. They could mean yes and they could mean no. It was clear that those who used those forms of words did so in a way that would make it possible for them to behave or act in a different way later when the demand came.

Looking back at all those words, it is difficult to say that we were not warned. We were warned, but it depended on how one interpreted the words.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. and learned Friend is dealing with the important question of the dynamic nature of the treaty and the fact that it points to the future. Does he agree that it is because the treaty is dynamic that the exchange between my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) was so unsatisfactory? My hon. Friend dwelt on exactly the point that my hon. and learned Friend makes when he talked about defence. He talked about policies "which might in time lead" to a common defence policy. Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that that point was never properly answered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary? My hon. and learned Friend puts in context the questions that ought to be answered about where the whole thing will lead in the future.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I do not mean to be offensive when I say that civil servants, in their answers, must be as inscrutable as possible so that, in five years' time, a Minister will not be hauled over the coals for saying something quite different. Time and again in this debate we have heard answers that could mean yes or no, could mean one thing or another. If one were to ask, "Will the position of the Queen be changed?", one might be told, "No. She will be as any other citizen of the European Community. The position now is as before".

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): In this debate, Front-Bench Members are not coming clean with the Committee. Hon. Members are therefore unable to come clean with the people about the way in which citizenship is being fundamentally altered, ratchetwise—especially by this treaty. Will my hon. and learned Friend direct his attention to that matter? Surely it is quite wrong to change the status and role of citizenship without informing the people of what is being done in their name, especially as it appears that Front-Bench Members on both sides do not themselves know what is in the treaty.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The only answer I can sensibly give is yes.

On the question of setting targets at a later stage, I have to say that the Community will take over and define the key aspects of the individual's relationship with the state. That is what is intended. The Community will look at the matter again at a later stage. It is all set out in article 8e. There are to be reviews, at intervals of three years, of the rights of European citizenship. The Council of Ministers will be empowered to strengthen or add to the rights already laid down. When this legislation has been passed and the Maastricht treaty has been ratified, provision for those reviews will be in place.

Will that be done by unanimous decision or by majority decision? Even if it is to be by unanimous decision, the Minister may not by then have any means of signifying in advance what he wants to talk about and what decisions he will have to make. We have tried to make the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs the monitor of the intentions of Ministers. By contrast, a Scrutiny Committee can only consider matters after the event. I am not by any means convinced that we shall know sufficiently in advance what a Minister will do under the give and take and the compromise of the Council of Ministers.

However, it is clearly provided—no one will be able to complain afterwards—that the Council of Ministers can strengthen the rights and duties already laid down. That is what we will be agreeing to if we ratify this treaty. As the duties are not defined anywhere in the treaty, it will be for the European Court of Justice, which includes judges from several other countries—judges, I say with respect, who have no experience, knowledge, wisdom or understanding with regard to the day-to-day working of the British nation—to define our duties for us.

I do not want to labour the points that I am making, but I wish to summarise. The duties are more onerous, the relationships are changed, and there is potential for further change, yet these are matters that we are called upon to support in the context of citizenship. The "Encyclopaedia Britannica" defines citizenship as the

"relationship between an individual and state, defined by the law of that state, with corresponding duties and rights".

It is manifest nonsense to say that these proposals do not contemplate the formulation of a state. There is no point in having citizenship if there is no state. Euro-citizenship is the relationship between an individual and a Euro-state.

Chancellor Kohl had absolutely no doubt when he said:

"The European union treaty introduces a new and decisive stage in the process of European union which, within a few years, will lead to the creation of what the founding fathers of modern Europe dreamed of following the last war—the united states of Europe."

By "united states" he clearly meant states as in America. That European state will be superior to the existing nation states. It will have the power to decide and to enforce rights and duties. It is true that a person from the United Kingdom is now a citizen of the United Kingdom and a citizen of Burton-on-Trent, or Staffordshire, or somewhere else, but that is a confusion of the real meaning. Citizenship ought to indicate where ultimate power lies.

Can the Government put their hand on their heart and promise us that, if Maastricht is ratified, the importance of British citizenship will not be progressively downgraded, that Euro-citizenship will not become more important, or even all-important? The inability to give that undertaking will signify to the British people exactly what we are doing here.

The Government have introduced a citizens charter giving more power to the individual citizen and less power to the state. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said:

"It is a testimony to our belief in people's rights to be informed and to choose for themselves."

Do we have any right to choose or reject Euro-citizenship? Article 8 is not subject to qualified-majority or unanimous voting, nor is it subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers. It states unequivocally:

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"Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union."

People will not be able to say no. Things will be compulsory. People will not have asked for something, and will not want it, but they will get it anyway. There will be no referendum. So much for the citizens charter. It must be very embarrassing for Ministers to speak so highly in favour of the citizens charter, to speak brilliantly round the country about the free choice of citizens in John Major's Britain.

If it is clear that we shall not remain British citizens exactly as we are now, if it is clear that article 8 confers extra duties in many aspects of public life—and not just extra rights, as has been promised—if it is clear that we shall have no right to say no, it must be clear also that these amendments ought to be supported. They should be supported not just as probing amendments but as provisions that are necessary in their own right. If they win the day, there will be some hope of the Maastricht treaty's not being ratified. If the Maastricht treaty is not ratified, there will be some hope of the British people's being able to remain British in the full sense and of the Westminster Parliament's being able to retain powers that we are in danger of losing, powers that we know perfectly well we were not sent to this place to give away.

Mr. Gould: We are accustomed in these debates to complain about opacity of the Maastricht treaty provisions. Indeed, the comments of many outside observers almost exclusively concern the difficulties of understanding the arcane procedures that we are pursuing.

There can be no complaint about confusion or opacity over this issue. The treaty, which is entitled "The Treaty on European Union" is very clear in its opening words where it says:

"By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union, hereinafter called 'the Union'."

As we have heard, article 8 of the treaty provides that

"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union."

The remaining provisions of article 8 specify, or at least allude to, the rights and duties that pertain to that citizenship. The new rights are spelt out—rights to consular protection and to vote and stand in municipal and Euro-elections.

7.30 pm

Under the provisions of article 8e, the Council is given the right and power to strengthen and add to those rights as it sees fit. There can hardly be a clearer statement.

Of course, it is tempting—one knows of many hon. Members and people outside the House who are prepared to yield to the temptation—to say that the treaty is just a piece of Euro-waffle. We are accustomed to our continental partners talking in rather grand metaphysical terms. We are accustomed to telling ourselves, in our rather superior way, that we like to stick to black letter law, practicality and the pragmatic aspects of policy making. We tell ourselves that we can safely ignore all that verbiage.

Yet those opening words and the provisions of article 8 could hardly be more specific, deliberate, considered or portentous. They are meant to matter and, as so often in the past, we ignore them at our peril.

It is not even the case that the treaty is simply a restatement of something that has gone before. We are often told that what appears to be a major new step towards the creation of a European state is of no account because it was already implicit in something that we did before. However, the Home Secretary was right—at least he knew something about that matter—when he conceded that this is a new provision. It is an innovation and it sets out a new concept of centralisation. We have heard about the origins of that concept this evening.

There is no question but that the treaty of Maastricht does a new and important thing—it creates citizenship of something called "the Union". What does that mean? It is extraordinary that that apparently important provision is passed by with virtually no comment whatsoever. Until this debate I was hardly aware that anyone, other than one or two people who are interested in such matters, had ventured to comment on what might be thought to be a matter of some considerable importance.

Mr. Marlow: That is certainly true of the United Kingdom, but the hon. Gentleman will be well aware that the Danes were allowed to consider the treaty. In their referendum the concept of citizenship was of massive significance and importance to them.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right. I was directing my remarks to Britain. One might have thought that such concepts would have been of some interest and importance here, but it is here that the debate has been most notably lacking.

There has not even been much by way of explanation. The Home Secretary, representing the Government, spoke to the Committee on the subject and was unable to answer some of the most important and central questions that arise from the provisions.

Mr. Rowlands: While I accept the general tenor of my hon. Friend's case, and that the matter has not been properly investigated, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs took a considerable amount of expert legal advice on the matter, which I hope we shall be able to discuss this evening, to establish the concept of the union. A confusing concept emerged, but nevertheless we endeavoured to do so.

Mr. Gould: I wish that the Home Secretary, among others, and even the Minister of State, who is with us, might have familiarised themselves with what the Select Committee was able to do.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most disgraceful aspects of this entire farce is the fact that there has been no White Paper? Whereas the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was right to refer to the fact that some extremely good evidence is scattered among Select Committee reports and so forth, there has been no clear and coherent attempt to bring it all together in about 20 pages for the benefit of the British people, which is quite possible. That negligence lies behind the whole of this farce.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because that is the central point, and what I am seeking to explain in this part of my speech. Other people may well have dealt with the question, but the Government have not done so and they have offered no explanation, by way of

a White Paper or statement of any sort, to suggest for a moment that they recognise the importance of what they are proposing to do through the Bill. Given that the concept of citizenship is newly fashionable, as several hon. Members including the Liberal Democratic party's spokesman, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) have said, it is surprising that the Government have not done so. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) mentioned the citizens' charter. Citizenship is said to be the basis of a raft of new rights and duties. It is the current fad, is it not?

A year or two ago the present Foreign Secretary was full of ideas about something called "active citzenship", although I confess that we have not heard much about it recently. That was to be the basis of a new contract between the citizen and Government, but we hear nothing about that from Ministers. They even seem to be embarrassed when they are asked simple questions about what the change—the creation of a new citizenship—may mean.

As other hon. Members have said, the truth of the matter is that citizenship in a vacuum is a meaningless concept. It only means something as part of a relationship —the relationship that links the individual to the political structure in which he or she lives or is governed. Citizenship links the individual to the monarch, to the Government, but most of all to the state. Citizenship without a state—in this case, without a union—is meaningless.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: One should be cautious about laziness and the slipping of language when referring to the citizens charter. That only serves the new Conservative-Labour Front Bench arrangement. It is not a citizens charter but merely a customer or consumers charter. The distinction must be made and we have to be precise because we are talking about the most intimate relationship—that of the individual and the state—and not about the relationship between a customer and a business.

Mr. Gould: I agree and I am seeking to argue that. It is precisely that relationship which is at issue.

The terminology is difficult. We have had to grapple with concepts of nationality and with being a subject. When I arrived in this country I was a New Zealand national but a British subject. I am glad to say that I have gone through the process of naturalisation, and I am proud to be a British citizen. Nationality, citizenship, subjecthood, the citizenship of the citizens charter are all slippery concepts that have been chopped and changed to such a degree that it is sometimes difficult to know what is intended when the terms are used. Even the treaty is obliged to talk of citizenship as it has to define the citizenship of the union by reference to the nationality of member states.

Let us be under no illusion: citizenship in terms of the treaty is, to all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from nationality as it applies to the nation state. How does that change affect the rights and obligations of British citizenship or nationality? It is tempting to say—we hear the argument advanced all the time, especially from the Front Bench teams—that we have nothing to worry about and the changes make no difference to British citizenship. It is suggested that we are being offered a sort of add-on extra—a bonus, a sort of Green Shield stammp that brings only benefits, no duties. The terms of article 8 give the lie to that suggestion.

It is not a provision for a shared arrangement or reciprocal swapping and exchange of rights and duties. As others have said, that could have been done without creating a citizenship of the union. The Home Secretary professed that the provision simply created new rights. He glossed over the issue of duties and said that there were no new duties, but massive new duties have been created that are now owed, not just to a British nation state, but a totally new organisation: the European union—whatever that may be.

Mr. Winnick: The Government sometimes argue that the treaty will not make that much difference. They say that, whatever their views on Maastricht, all Labour Members of Parliament are and always have been enthusiastic about the United Nations. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and I certainly are. We also accept our obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. We are not little Englanders, and have made that clear on numerous occasions, and we carry out and recognise our international obligations. Is not there a fundamental difference between all that I have mentioned and the new scheme in the treaty that completely changes the concept, both of citizenship and the authority of the House? I am not aware that the authority of the House has been diminished as a result of our involvement with the United Nations and the rule of law on the international scene or our membership of NATO.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is right. It astonishes me that there is so often a failure to distinguish between the obligations under international law taken on by the Government through signing treaties and the creation of a new political entity with its own Government, structures and, we now discover, citizenship.

How will such citizenship impinge on British nationality? Is there any competition between them? What happens if they are in conflict? What I am about to suggest may seem far-fetched and hypothetical, but one of the acid tests of citizenship or nationality is that it defines the duty of allegiance. If allegiance is ignored, it gives rise to serious charges such as treason.

Let us imagine that, in a far-fetched scenario, the issue was tested in a court case. Other hon. Members may say that that is unlikely, but there are cases of treason charges. What if the defence offered in the British court were to the effect that the allegiance owed to the British state was superseded by a superior allegiance owed to a different political entity and that the action complained of was not regarded as treasonable under that superior law? What would be the outcome of such a case? Would such a defence succeed?

It is important to understand—as has been made clear on numerous occasions—that the par excellence would be decided by the European Court of Justice, which regards itself as the instrument of European union and a constant upholder of the superiority of Community law. Can there be any doubt that, given the right case, that defence would succeed and immediately establish as a matter of principle that citizenship and allegiance are, at bottom, in conflict and cannot be held together. Such a conflict would be resolved in favour of citizenship of the union.

Mr. Budgen: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that, in fairness to the European Court, all the statutes of the European union speak of a progressive move towards the union? It is only here in the House of Commons that Ministers pretend that we can accept one measure and that will be the end of it. I am sorry to refer to the bad old days of Lady Thatcher, but she used to be so unwise as to talk about the ratchet effect. May I remind some of her erstwhile supporters—I do not want to embarrass anyone —that she used to be cheered when she talked about the ratchet effect. As we all know, the party has grown out of that vulgar and silly way of talking about things now that it is a pragmatic party, but it may have a certain truth to it. It is the ratchet effect to which the constitution of the EEC assigns the European Court as an essential instrument.

7.45 pm

Mr. Gould: I certainly intend to come to precisely that subject later. I merely observe in passing that I wish that Lady Thatcher had sometimes been a little more aware of the ratchet when she was turning it.

I am still engaged in an exposition of the case, and have yet to comment on the desirability or otherwise of the developments. I shall now mention another aspect that has rightly attracted some attention——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to another subject and while he is still making his exposition, will he speculate for the Committee on why he believes that the Front Bench teams are not prepared to be honest with the people of this country about the fundamental changes that are being made in their name? Is not it wrong that we should bring about the changes by ratifying the Maastricht treaty without people being able to show that they sought those fundamental changes to our citizenship, which they certainly did not at the last election?

Mr. Gould: I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman's conclusion and shall speculate a little later on why we are confronted with so many people who seem unwilling or unable to recognise their true responsibilities in the House.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman—coming, as he does, from his wing of the Labour party—has difficulty with a new concept. It is undoubtedly true that citizenship of the European Community is a new concept. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that article 8 of the treaty makes it clear that there is a difference between that citizenship—there may be a better word for it—of the European Community and nationality as allegiance to the nation state? Article 8 makes that difference extremely clear, but the hon. Gentleman does not seem to have detected that difference. He now states that he or the European Court could suggest that European citizenship could be seen as superior to nationality. Will he say where, in article 8, even a hint of that possibility arises?

Mr. Gould: I am sorry to say that the hon. Gentleman either was not listening or was unable to follow my argument. I was saying that there certainly was a difference between citizenship of the European union and the citizenship of member states—the latter would be subordinate to the former. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me I will go on to develop that point.

I return to the example of a person who uses as his defence when the issue of citizenship becomes critical the fact that he owes a superior duty and allegiance to the European union. That displaces his duty to the British state. That may or may not be right, but it was an interesting illustration of how the conflict could arise. If it did arise there is no doubt that the European Court of Justice would find in favour of the superiority of Community law. If it failed to do so it would be breaking with the body of precedent that it had itself established.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, while it might seem far-fetched, there was a recent and relevant historical parallel? A number of brave nationals of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and the Ukraine owed allegiance to the nations of their birth but paid for it, in some cases with their lives, as they were not prepared to accept citizenship of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was imposed on them against their will.

Mr. Gould: I am happy to agree, and I hope to refer to a point of similar political significance in a moment.

I come to another aspect of the new relationship—one that has already attracted some attention and on which I propose to comment only briefly. I refer to the position of Her Majesty the Queen. The Home Secretary was quite unable to answer a question about whether the Bill, if it became an Act, would bind the Queen in any way. Would she, as a British national, become a citizen of the European union? The Minister of State read out what I imagine was a note prepared for him by his civil servants, but it hardly answered the question.

I suppose that it could be argued that the Queen is beyond the reach of this Bill. That would be odd, because I think that the Minister of State confirmed that she would be a beneficiary of the rights of European citizenship. It must therefore follow that she will incur the duties of European citizenship—that she owes some sort of allegiance by virtue of it. It is a remarkable thought that the Queen, the supreme citizen of our political entity, would owe allegiance to some higher, wider authority.

I profess no infallibility on these questions; I merely point to possible interpretations, and this is what the law and the treaty appear to point to. We must therefore imagine a sort of sub-monarch in a sub-state, owing allegiance to some wider state. It follows that the debate on which we appear to be embarking may be entirely beside the point. The issue of whether a diminished monarchy would be good or bad may be beyond the competence of this House and the British people. It may be resolved by the treaty of Maastricht and the introduction of the citizenship of the European union.

At the very least we should be clear that we have created a new form of citizenship which is a relationship with a superior body of law and a wider geographical entity: a super-state. That relationship must be superior to the relationship that we all enjoy with the British state.

In a curious way we can already see the practical effects of this change when we arrive at Heathrow and are required to submit our passports not as British citizens but as citizens of the European Community. In a sense that was jumping the gun, but it was a practical manifestation of the effects of the new citizenship.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend's speech deserves the widest possible subsequent publication—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on!"] Oh yes, this is the most important speech that we have heard so far.

Does my hon. Friend recall that when the original legislation was passed the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said that the position of the Crown was not affected, forgetting that direct legislation circumvented both this House and the Royal Assent—so the position of the Crown was most certainly affected? Does my hon. Friend agree that we are not only to take up allegiance to the constitution of this union but that, unlike the constitutions of states such as Australia and the United States of America, the union's constitution exhibits a particular political philosophy? That means that the allegiance is not just to the constitution but to the political philosophy as well. It is to be found in the preambles to the treaties, and they impose certain loyalties that may go beyond constitutional structures.

Mr. Gould: I am about to support the point to which my hon. Friend has directed me.

I have thus far not ventured an opinion on whether the changes I am seeking to describe are good or bad. I am merely saying that they are important. I shall go on to make the point that they are rather more important than many of those who would blindly accept the treaty realise. It is comparatively easy to sneer at terms which have a 19th century ring to them—allegiance, sovereignty and so on. They are wonderfully Diceyan in character. It is not so easy to sneer, however, at ideas like democracy and self-government—yet they are at issue if we are to impose on the British people or anyone else citizenship in a wider political entity than one which they have hitherto contemplated.

This is a matter of democracy, because there is an unfortunate tendency for many people to argue that democracy is merely a matter of elections—that the democratic process is no more than a question of deciding which of competing sets of people within a given political entity ought to form the Government. That is certainly an important aspect, but democracy is also a form of Government within a defined political entity. It is self-government if it is anything. What is at issue here is the definition of that "self". If the self which is the subject of a democratic government is to be changed without the consent or authority of that self, that is a development of the greatest significance.

We can elect representatives to our hearts' content to send to the European Parliament, from which, perhaps, a European Government could be drawn, but that will not of itself resolve the problem unless it is clear that the British people have signified their assent to be governed within the new political entity. Until that moment arrives —it cannot arrive until it is tested—those who would support the Maastricht treaty may sneer for as long as they like, but what they are doing is violating concepts that we are all in the House to verify, confirm and maintain.

These issues are not to be sneered at. They involve democracy, self-government and our consent to being governed by those whom we choose to govern us.

Mr. Marlow: I invite the hon. Gentleman to go further than that. If the treaty goes through without proper ratification by the British people in the form of a referendum, and if as a result obligations and duties are imposed from Europe on them, does the hon. Gentleman think it right and proper that the British people should feel obliged to observe those obligations and duties?

Mr. Gould: That takes us into deep waters. I fervently hope that we shall never reach the point where citizens of this country have to choose, as Germans did under the Nazi regime, between their preparedness to obey the law —which is the normal condition of citizenship—and their refusal to accept a legal system imposed upon them from outside.

8 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): The hon. Member mentioned the European Court of Justice and its role in these matters—a subject that interests me. I tried to raise the issue a couple of weeks ago and it is interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman mention it. He raises an area of conflict, and it is always such areas arising from the treaty that lead to that court. Does he agree that the natural progression is that it is not democratically elected Governments which will decide the issue but the European Court, whose boundaries and views have been clearly stated?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I suspect that he is a lawyer, but perhaps not. I used to teach constitutional law and international law. One of the interesting questions for courts is to decide the principles on which to interpret the provisions of statutes and treaties and so on. One such approach is described as teleological, in which the purpose and the end result of the process that is set in train by the treaty or statute is understood, and the treaty or statute is interpreted to conform to the accepted objective.

The European Court of Justice is interesting—I put it no more strongly than that—because of the overt way in which it has adopted, quite deliberately and self-consciously—this teleological approach. It interprets every legal question that is brought before it in order to further the cause of European union. I do not say whether that is good or bad: simply that we should understand that that is what confronts us. When any of these questions have to be decided by the European Court, we should not be surprised, because we are on notice, at the court's view.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the questions that we were all taught to ask about international law was whether it had the characteristic of being enforceable? If eventually, as is suggested in the preamble, there is a European army, it is possible—I am not being fanciful or over-excited—that it could be used to enforce federal decisions against nation states. That could bring in the classic conflict of loyalty that we saw in the battle between the north and the south in America.

Mr. Gould: I shall leave to one side the issue of whether there is to be a European army. In many ways the situation we are already in has progressed well beyond the situation that the hon. Gentleman describes. We are not discussing a relationship that is defined by the principles of international law: we are discussing a new system of national law is already enforceable. The whole system operates as a hierarchy, as a pyramid, at the top of which is the European Court of Justice which makes sure that the provisions are enforced.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way, because I wish to make progress. No doubt the interventions are well intentioned, but I have sat here for at least three or four hours and know how wearying it is for those who wish to speak to have to listen to a long list of interventions.

In my view it is no accident that the treaty uses the term "union". The term has caused a great deal of difficulty in translation between French and English for a long time, but it is used specifically and deliberately. We tend to debate these issues in terms of whether what is proposed is federal, but that entirely misses the point. We believe that somehow a federal structure will be produced by taking powers from the nation states and giving them to a new federal government structure.

That is not what the treaty proposes nor is it in the minds of those who are driving the whole concept of a European union. They have gone well beyond any question of a federation. They envisage, as the treaty makes clear, a union. For them that has to be, and as I hope to demonstrate is already, a unitary state. To them, federation is a derogation from that unitary state to subordinate authorities in the regions. They support federalism as a process that is entirely consistent with and demanded by the concept of subsidiarity, whatever that might mean. For them the starting point is the union. A federation is then achieved by taking judiciously and carefully a few minor powers and giving them to regional authorities.

In this country, in our naivety, innocence and wonderful state of confusion and ignorance, we believe that we are confronted by a federation that will be constructed at some distant point in the future whereby a few powers are taken from the all-powerful nation states and handed over to a body in Brussels. We think that that is what is in store for us.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: As one who has already contributed to the debate, I am conscious of the hon. Gentleman's comment about interventions. I acknowledge the force of his argument that perhaps in this country we misunderstand the direction of the traffic when we speak about federalist or the federal movement. If the hon. Gentleman compared our set-up with the set-up in Germany, would he not acknowledge that many politicians in Europe who think and act and desire federalism envisage a degree of autonomy at local level in the nation states that is far greater than that which the regions of the nation states in the United Kingdom currently enjoy?

Mr. Gould: I do not have the slightest difficulty in agreeing with the hon. Gentleman. I am a great exponent and supporter of regional devolution. My central point is that under these structures and concepts the starting point is the union. We must grasp that.

I should like to refer to a speech by the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). He is not in the Committee and I apologise for not alerting him to the fact that I would refer to his speech. It was a good speech and I mean nothing personal when I refer to it. It was intelligent and effective. The hon. Gentleman is a new Member and his speech showed that he is very able. I quote from it simply to illustrate how easy it is to misstate the situation. I also apologise to the hon. Gentleman because I freely acknowledge that I am using him as a surrogate for equally beside-the-point remarks by hon. Members on both Front Benches.

The hon. Member for Aylesbury said:

> "I hope that, over the next 10 to 12 years, we can move away from the federal model of Europe towards one which is more confederal, . . . and instead co-operate, one country with another, ceding limited and defined areas of policy, like the single market for decision on a supranational basis,".—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1207.]

On that interpretation of what was happening, the hon. Gentleman urged the Committee to support the Maastricht treaty. There was nothing remarkable about what he said: it is common currency in the mouths of almost all those who support the treaty. I quote it simply to show how mistaken such people are and how easy it is to assume that the process that we are describing and witnessing is one whereby power is being moved up to some federal structure whereas what is in the minds of the creators of the European union is a centralised unitary state from which minor derogations might be made.

The Europe in the treaty is not the Europe that we were promised. It is not an open, decentralised, democratic and welcoming Europe; instead, it is a centralised Europe, a European super-state. It is exclusive because it closes its boundaries to others, it has centralised political institutions and it has all the trappings of a state. People who sneer at those who defend the British state are unaware of the fact that what is being promised is not some wonderful, evolutionary development that will be superior to the nation state, but the nation state writ large.

That is a substantial claim, which I shall try to substantiate. Let us ignore the description "European union" and acknowledge, for simple purposes, that it has a head of state; a chief executive; a defined territory with a common external boundary; its own citizenship, by virtue of the treaty—a superior relationship between each individual and that union; its own Government; its own legislature, elected on a Europe-wide basis; its own supreme court, which is not just an ordinary court, but is the guardian of its own constitution; its own central bank, committed to enforcing its own economic policy; its own foreign policy—and is in the process of acquiring its own defence policy; a single market and, to all intents and purposes, a single economy.

Let us also acknowledge that it provides a common diplomatic and consular representation; that it conducts its external and other trade relations in international negotiations as a single unit; and that it has a comprehensive governmental competence. When Mr. Delors said that competence would extend to 80 per cent. of legislation in the Community, he knew what he was talking about; he did not exaggerate.

The Americans have a saying, "If it looks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, it's a duck." I say that the European union is a state—"federal" is a misuse of the language. We are being offered a single, centralised, unitary state. Whatever view we take of that development —and again I have not at any stage criticised or condemned that development, but simply described it—we are ill served by those who try to pretend—but who know or, even worse, are too ignorant to acknowledge the truth —that that is not what confronts us. I do not criticise or condemn, I seek only to identify and describe. I believe that what I am describing is of far greater significance than

the Prime Minister and his Cabinet or, indeed, those on either Front Bench, have so far bothered to tell the British people.

One of the most disgraceful aspects of this very long-running saga has been the extent to which we—and I do not mean just the House of Commons, but the peoples of Britain and Europe—have been edged along, step by step, always told that the next step is of little significance and was implicit in what we had done before. When we take that step we are told, "Surely, when you took that last step you must have known that implicit in it was that the next one was to be taken as well."

There are those who have always been honest about their desire for a European super-state. I disagree with them, but I do not complain about the honesty with which they put forward that proposal. Those for whom I reserve a special scorn are the dishonest, who know what is involved but do not want us to see the shape of the whole concept. Even more do I reserve scorn for those who delude themselves, avert their gaze and will not look at the evidence or listen to the argument, but instead prefer to go along with the process. They tell themselves and others that nothing is involved in that process; it is like the United Nations or NATO, just another set of international obligations.

I say to those people, "Delude yourselves as much as you like, but if you are Members of Parliament your self-delusion is unforgivable because not only are you deluding yourselves, you are denying those whom you represent the freedom and the power to make their own decisions. You are denying them the authority that they gave to you to come to this House to make decisions."

It is not too late, I am not a great optimist on this matter, but I believe that it is yet possible for those who will listen to the argument and understand what is happening at least to take the one basic step that should never be ignored—that no irreversible change in the nature of the political entity in which we achieve self-government should be taken without first consulting the British people. That is the real issue raised by the provisions in the treaty on European union.

8.15 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The House has been treated to three exceptionally powerful speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I am sure that my hon. Friends will not take it amiss if I say that the most impressive was the speech made by the hon. Member for Dagenham. It was a remarkable exposition of the truth about the state in which this country now finds itself, with the prospect of being taken yet another step down the road to European union.

My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench and others of my hon. Friends should breathe a sigh of relief that the hon. Gentleman was not successful in his attempt to become Leader of the Opposition. Had he been, the British people might have been offered the opportunity to choose between Europe and the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. As it is, as as most of those who have spoken tonight have said, no such choice existed at the last general election and, sadly, no such choice exists now. There is a unity of purpose between the two Front Benches, supported by the Liberal Democrats. They are determined to take us down a route that will be a disaster for the future of the United Kingdom.

Unlike the hon. Member for Dagenham, I do not for a moment believe that those who are leading us down that route know what they are doing. It is tragic that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and those right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken from the Front Bench during our debates clearly do not understand the consequences of the treaty or what European union means. They do not understand the consequences of citizenship of that union. It is a tragedy for all our people.

They are getting advice from many well-meaning and erudite lawyers, but that advice is wrong. The hon. Member for Dagenham, as an ex-teacher of constitutional law, is as qualified as any in the House to criticise what those lawyers advise. It would be otiose of me to add my voice to his. However, I have no doubt that he is right in what he has said—that the union proposed in the treaty is a union in fact, not a union in name.

The wording of article 8 commits nations within the Community to move towards an ever closer union. I know that mathematically it may be possible always to move towards each other but never meet—but in practical terms, that is not possible. Although I do not entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the stage that we have reached, there is no doubt that the definition of union that he gave is the one that we are heading towards and the one that will ultimately be our fate.

My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench deny that. They say that the union has no legal personality or meaning and that, therefore, to be a citizen of it does not matter. Having heard the arguments against the proposals made by my right hon. and hon. Friends, I want to hear their arguments—because they are flying in the face of something that common sense and our constitutional history and law tell us is fact.

The European union defined in the treaty has a legal reality, because it is justiciable by the European Court of Justice. As the court is supreme, the British Government alone can do nothing to go against the court's findings on matters concerning the rights and duties of a British citizen.

I have exchanged extensive correspondence with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and clearly he has been advised that the duties under the treaty do not exist. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said as much earlier, when he claimed that the duties added nothing to those that already exist under our domestic law. Clearly that is untrue. As was rightly pointed out earlier, the European Court is not answerable to any nation state —in fact, it is answerable to no one—in the findings that it reaches. It decided of its own volition to see itself as a tool for the creation of that which other member states would describe as a federal Europe, and which we call a united Europe or a union of Europe.

As that tool, for that purpose, the European Court would not be an independent judicial body. It would be unfit to sit as the ultimate arbiter in legal disputes between nation states or individuals within them; yet, under the treaty of Rome as amended in 1986 and again now, the European Court will enjoy that status.

The duties to which we as citizens of the European union will be subject have yet to be decided. They will not be decided by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, Whitehall, the Government's legal advisers, any

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

system of British justice, or the terms of any British constitutional past and historic tradition. Instead, they will be decided by a European Court determined to develop the European union—and in so doing, it will supersede and crush the independence of the union's member states. It will be extremely difficult for my hon. Friend the Minister to argue otherwise, but I look forward to hearing him try to do so later.

As to voting in municipal elections, I should like a proper answer from the Minister to the question that was twice asked and twice dismissed with laughter by those who see themselves as European fans. "Municipal" has been determined by the European Court before as meaning "national". That may seem absurd to the Committee, as it does to me, but that is a fact. I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Minister can guarantee that, when the European Court considers the treaty, it will not decide likewise. If it decides likewise, voting rights will be extended to national parliaments as well as, in British terms, to municipal elections.

It is wholly illogical that someone can reside in this country and vote in all municipal elections and in the elections for the European Parliament yet not be permitted to vote in the parliamentary elections for Westminster. Where on earth is the logic in that?

What advantage does article 8 offer the British people? It gives them rights exercisable in other countries—the right to vote in municipal elections in France, Greece, Italy, Germany, Ireland, or Luxembourg. Marvellous. I cannot see any use to the British people in that right. Where is the advantage to counteract the many disadvantages and dangers described this evening? Where is the advantage to the British people in agreeing to become citizens of Europe?

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend's argument influenced by the fact that there are far more British citizens living in France than there are French citizens living in Britain, and far more British citizens in Spain than there are Spanish in Britain—and that they want to retain their national citizenship but pay national and local taxes, and would like a say in the local councils that govern them?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: No, I am not in the slightest moved by my hon. Friend's argument. I believe that British people living in Spain are happy to vote in British parliamentary elections. Many do so, and all those who corresponded with me want to do so. If they live in Spain as British citizens, their allegiance should still be to Britain. Neither their allegiance nor their voting rights should be transferred.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): There is a distinction to be drawn between a national and a local election. The reason is at the heart of the European Community's constitution, in which the Council of Ministers is the pre-eminent institution. It is therefore the expression of and subject to the views of the national Parliament—through its Ministers, effectively making decisions.

On the other hand, those of our own citizens who can, under the Single European Act, live anywhere in the Community have a right to protect their interests in terms of local voting. I see no danger or difficulty about voting in local elections—but I can understand why the Maastricht negotiators restricted voting to national citizens in national elections.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend will remember that my original point was that they may not have done so, and that the interpretation of "municipal" may yet give the right to vote in national elections. As to the distinction between municipal and national voting, I can see better arguments for saying, to use British terminology, "You can vote in the parish in which you live." However, it is not a right such as counteracts the article's dangers. If that is the only advantage to British citizens, against giving away all the sovereignty and right of the House to determine and to secure their rights and liberties, it is a poor trade.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it not more likely that we shall find ourselves moving rapidly towards some system of proportional representation? For the past 15 years, it has been Community policy to impose a uniform system.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I must avoid the temptation to be led down an entirely different road, but I take the hon. Lady's point and agree. If we take the Maastricht treaty route, I believe that proportional representation will come to this country.

One danger that has not been directly addressed this evening arises from the provision to use other states' consular representation in countries where we do not have our own. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) rightly pointed out, in any case in which a friendly nation did not have representation, it would be astonishing if our consuls and ambassadorial activities were not placed at its disposal, in the event that its citizens ran into trouble.

The danger is, however, that, once the system has been formalised and the resource has been pooled to some extent, it will be agreed as soon as possible to pool it entirely. The Treasury is very keen on such a move, which would lead to our having far fewer consulates, and probably far fewer embassies, than we have now. We are in grave danger of losing our truly British representation overseas, and of being represented only by the magnificent Greeks and others when our citizens run into trouble. I do not think that most British people would support that, or vote for it. Nor do I think that any of the rights in the treaty benefit British citizens—and, as for the duties, I believe that they could cause enormous pitfalls.

8.30 pm

Earlier speakers mentioned the monarchy. When anyone says that the monarchy, or the monarch in person, is put at risk by the treaty, the response is derision. When, not long ago, I suggested privately to the Prime Minister that the Queen might be brought to book under a European mandate, he said, "I'd like to see them try." The fact is, however, that, if we sign the treaty, the rights and prerogatives of our monarch will be brought into question by some European authority, perhaps even the European Court of Justice—not tomorrow, not next month, but some time in the future. I do not think that the British people want their monarchy to be put in that position, and I personally do not want our monarch to be put in that position.

Is it correct, or—as has been suggested—not correct that the Queen will have a right to vote in municipal elections, in other countries if not in this one? If so, does

she really want that right, and do her people want it for her? What will be the consequence for the role of our monarchy of signing the Maastricht treaty, agreeing to a European union and citizenship of that union and possibly making the Queen a citizen by default?

None of us wants to be made a citizen of Europe at all. I have yet to meet one person who does—apart from one or two Conservative European fanatics, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who seems to think that he is Europe. I should not say that, when my hon. Friend is not present, especially given that his son and mine are great friends at school. I do not regret saying it, however, and I shall repeat it to my hon. Friend when I next see him.

Some hon. Members are fanatically determined to take us all the way down the European road, and see a federal Europe, a united Europe or a state of Europe as a natural historical consequence; but they are few and far between. That is not the official position of our Government, or of any Minister in our Government, and it certainly is not the position favoured by the people of this country.

Mr. Gill: Surely, under the citizenship provisions, our monarch would no longer be sovereign in this nation. My hon. Friend has some experience of the armed services. To whom, in his opinion, would our service men give their oath of allegiance in such circumstances?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Others have mentioned that subject, in the context of split loyalties and service in our armed forces, or possibly in a European armed force. Although it will not happen overnight, if we go further down the European path, the loyalty of the British subject will clearly be split between Britain and Europe. That will be true not only of members of the armed forces, but of every citizen who takes the oath.

Which is more important, citizenship of the United Kingdom or European citizenship? As the hon. Member for Dagenham pointed out, there can be only one answer: citizenship of Europe must come first, because of the supremacy of the European Court of Justice if for no other reason, but also because it is the larger unit. There will come a time when, for both those reasons, European citizenship will override citizenship of Great Britain.

I do not think that the House—or the other House, or even the monarch—has the right to do that without consulting the British people.

Let me return to the point at which I began. The Bill attempts to remove the sovereignty of the House, and our right to represent the people and defend their liberties as we have done for more than 1,000 years. There has never been a time when we have given foreigners—other nations—the right to determine the laws of this land: the right to say what is and is not a crime in our courts, and to say what can and cannot be done in every aspect of British life. In a newspaper article, the Prime Minister said that he had no intention of doing any such thing. I accept that, but he is doing it. He is doing it because he is thoroughly badly advised, and because he and the Government do not understand the danger of the road down which they are taking us.

I have to add that one of the villains of the piece is Lady Thatcher. In 1986, she forced through the Single European Act, refusing a referendum, refusing to lift the whipping system from any of the votes, refusing to tolerate any opposition to the terms of the act and refusing to acknowledge that all that took us down the road to what was then called a federal Europe. She believed, and led us to believe, that the Single European Act was no big deal, and that it did not take us further down a road which she herself professed not to favour. Because of that, I—like others—am deeply sceptical about the message that I am receiving seven years later about the next step along the road to European union.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I thought that the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) had reached his peroration. He is out of order, in that he is developing what has effectively become a Second Reading speech. We are dealing with a specific amendment on citizenship.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I take your point, Mr. Morris. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) should rephrase the intervention that he is about to make, to bring it within the rules. I was becoming carried away by generalisations, but what I was saying is relevant to clause 1, which is critical to both the Maastricht treaty and the Bill.

We are discussing citizenship of this European creation, and that prompts us to ask what we have created. Of what are we making the British people citizens, without so much as a by-your-leave? Peroration or not, I think that what I am saying is very pertinent to the decision that the House must make: do we or do we not ratify the Government's attempt to create a citizenship that will ultimately override and supersede citizenship of our country? I believe that we should not do so.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend and I have been friends for a long time. We were at Oxford together, and we have discussed this matter on many occasions. When he refers in this context to Lady Thatcher, would he be good enough to remember that the Foreign Secretary at the time was Lord Howe? I engaged in some illuminating correspondence with him and with Lady Thatcher.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: That was an intriguing intervention, Mr. Morris. I am sure that you were greatly relieved by the last sentence. I take on board what my hon. Friend has said, and thank him.

Let me summarise what I have said. If the amendment is accepted, we will alter, dramatically and irreversibly, the way in which the country is governed, now and for all time. If the British people are to become citizens of a Europe and of a European union that develops in the way that those who have created it wish it to develop and that we, as a Government and as a people, will be powerless to prevent, we shall have given away all the rights that this House of Commons fought so hard to achieve over so many years: to represent the people of this country and defend them.

I end with a quotation from a poem by G. K. Chesterton which sets out, better than I could, the exact character of the people to whom we shall be handing over the people of our country;

"They have given us into the hand of new unhappy lords,
Lords without anger and honour, who dare not carry their swords.
They fight by shuffling papers; they have bright dead alien eyes;
They look at our labour and laughter as a tired man looks at flies.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

And the load of their loveless pity is worse than the ancient wrongs,
Their doors are shut in evening; and they know no songs."

What a fate for a great people. What a definition of a European bureaucrat.

Mr. Shore: My remarks can be brief. The essence of the matter has been brought out in the last two speeches, in the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenam (Mr. Gould).

One of the great contrasts in the debate is the approach of Back Benchers on both sides of the Committee, compared with that of those who sit on the Front Benches. I do not mean that those who sit on the Front Benches have entered into a cosy conspiracy, but it is perfectly obvious from the intellectual and analytical approach to the debate that those who sit on the Front Benches do not wish to consider the real meaning of citizenship and union.

In their remarks, they have excluded these two dangerous areas from analysis and discussion. All they want to do is look at the 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d of article 8. I shall refer later to 8a. It was one of my problems when I last debated this matter when the Home Secretary was in the Chamber. I tried to press him about the real meaning of article 8a. He said that we should be coming to it later. However, he said nothing about article 8a earlier today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) pointed to four or five features of citizenship under article 8a. In particular, he pointed to the right to petition the European Parliament. He referred to the establishment of an ombudsman under article 8d. He also drew attention, under paragraph 2 of article 8b, to the right to vote and stand as a candidate. Mention was made of diplomatic representation, or consular representation where we ourselves do not have a representative.

If we were concerned only with these five particular additions, as it were, there would be no reason to have a separate section on citizenship. The right to petition the European Parliament and an ombudsman could easily be included under a later section dealing with institutions. There could be a simple declaration that there would be a right to petition and a declaration that there would be an ombudsman. There is no need for a separate section in the treaty to bring that about. Similarly, in the few cases where we do not have consular or diplomatic representation and another Community country takes it on for us, a new declaration of citizenship is not needed. All that is required is an agreement between member states to be of mutual assistance to each other.

If they were concerned simply with the minor rights that are stated in article 8, there would be no reasons for a statement and a section under the heading "Citizenship of the Union." We are all in the dark about the real meaning of citizenship and the real meaning of union.

I make that point with some emphasis because, along with my right hon. and hon. Friends, I tabled amendment No. 115, which I am sure that the Committee will wish to support. What we call for in that amendment—I believe that our call is more than justified by the course of the debate—is a Command Paper setting out the implications of this section of the treaty—citizenship of the union—and for it to be laid before Parliament for its approval before this section comes into effect. We should then obtain from the Government what has so far been withheld from us—a serious explanation of the meaning of citizenship of the union. It is essential for us to have such an explanation.

In a way, this has been a disgraceful debate, in that the Government have not volunteered that explanation. Every now and then, under pressure from other speakers, a Minister has intervened to pull aside the curtain just to give us a glimpse of what lies behind it. That is all we have had from the Government.

8.45 pm

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it not equally shaming that there has not been a series of tough questions from the Opposition Front Bench demanding precisely why the Government do not intend, presumably, to push this amendment to a Division?

Mr. Shore: It is a great pity that the Opposition Front-Bench speakers have not been more critical, stringent, analytical and serious about the issues involved—that they have contented themselves, frankly, with the surface issues and the trivia of the section. They have not raised themselves to the intellectual level that this treaty requires.

All of us have a duty to do our best to understand the meaning and significance of the treaty. We have a duty to our constituents, to ourselves and to the future to do just that and not to be gulled and lulled into acquiescence and silence while great decisions and events proceed to roll over us, only to find, a few years later, that the people who denied the House of Commons the information at the time come forward and say, "Well, it was implicit. You had already agreed to what we knew was in the previous treaty, so why can't you go along with it a little bit further?" That of course will be the case in 1996 when the intergovernmental conference is written into the treaty itself—the next step forward.

Mr. Spearing: I hope that those who are sitting on both Front Benches have heard what my right hon. Friend has just said, but is not the picture even worse than that which he paints? Those on both Front Benches are not being fair to Parliament or to the people.

My right hon. Friend mentioned amendment No. 115, which requires the deposit of a Command Paper in the House of Commons setting out those duties. Is it not usual in Committee for those who sit on the Front Benches to indicate their attitude to serious Back-Bench amendments? Is it not a fact that neither Front Bench—I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is here and also the Home Secretary, because I do not like to say things behind people's backs: I always say them to their faces, if I can—made any attempt to address any of the serious amendments that have been tabled and that therefore they have not even dealt with in what is meant to be a serious debate? Do not those very facts bind, undergird and typify all the accusations that my right hon. Friend has just properly made?

Mr. Shore: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I hope very much that those to whom his remarks are addressed will respond to them. There should indeed have been comments from the Minister and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on what I believe to be a necessary amendment. I hope that we shall get them.

One largely ignored aspect of the paragraphs of article 8 is the right to move and reside freely. The Home

Secretary will have heard me speak on this subject on an earlier occasion. I recall that he made some attempt to assist us in a previous debate. However, he did not make it clear what were the rights, limitations and conditions set out in the treaty. I am dealing now exclusively with European Community citizens who have the right to come here, not with third-world people.

In an intervention on 28 January, the Home Secretary said:

"On the question of freedom of movement and right of residence here, the right hon. Member is correct that under this Bill, there is freedom for any EC national to live and work here so long as they are self-supporting".—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1167.]

He went on to say that there were one or two exceptions based on public health grounds. I find it very difficult to understand the meaning and implications of the phrase "self-supporting".

I know very well that such rules are made for people who come from third-world countries, but as all they have to do is to make what one Conservative hon. Member once described as "the Bangemann wave"—a bit of purple cardboard being waved as a person passes through Customs into the United Kingdom where he has the right to reside—how can such people be identified when they perhaps fall short of the necessary means of sustaining themselves in this country? If they have come here for purely frivolous reasons—for example, they merely want to spend some time here—what powers has the Home Secretary to remove those citizens of the union once they have come into this country? Some of them may be very undesirable.

The last time that I mentioned this subject, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to Mr. Le Pen, whom we might not wish to have in this country. There are many other undesirables, such as those carrying drugs or those whom we suspect of having a criminal record. How can we control their entry if this ambiguous and almost unqualified right of entry, movement and residence is allowed? I hope that we shall receive further information about what exactly is being granted to such people.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see that the right hon. Gentleman is pausing and looking in my direction for an intervention. As I have just been criticised for not replying to some questions, I shall intervene this time. Previously, I do not think that either the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) or I were allowed to utter two sentences in succession without being interrupted by people pursuing us about the problem of conscription into a European army, which rather got in the way of dealing with the amendments.

Any EC national is free to live and work in the United Kingdom and, as long as they are self-supporting, to remain here as a student, a retired person or for any other purpose. The only exceptions are those

"excluded on public policy, public security or public health grounds."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1167.]

That flows not from the Maastricht treaty but from three directives on the subject of rights of residence which came into effect on 30 June 1992 and which we are about to put formally into domestic law. Contrary to what some hon. Members asserted earlier, the power remains, if necessary, to deport an EC national on the grounds of public policy, public security or public health, or if they do not qualify for residence here under the directives that I have just cited.

Mr. Shore: That is a helpful reply, and I am grateful to the Home Secretary for making plainer what has been pretty obscure so far. However, the right of free entry into this country, unrelated to employment here, simply to reside here, is a considerable right to grant to people, even subject to those conditions. I have a strong feeling that restating it in the context of citizenship of the union is to make a claim for the new European union that it is something like a state.

I know that we shall get into some difficulties about defining a state, but I have often said that the treaty of Maastricht makes it plain to anyone who wishes to observe it that its real character and objective is a union, a state. The citizens of the union are one of the first and most obvious claims for it being a state. One is a citizen of the union and therefore one has rights.

Only a few rights are established under article 8(a), but the important 8(e) states:

"The Commission shall report to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Economic and Social Committee before 31 December 1993 and then every three years on the application of the provisions of this Part. This report shall take account of the development of the Union.

On this basis . . . the Council, acting unanimously . . . may adopt provisions to strengthen or to add to the rights laid down in this Part, which it shall recommend to Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

Clearly, it is envisaged that there will be an extension of the rights listed under article 8(a) to (d), but we do not know the nature of that extension or what the reciprocal duties are to be.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman and I were members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs when it reviewed the working of the Single European Act. We did not always agree, but the concept of the right to move freely within the single market derived from the Single European Act. He is building a defensive argument against the concept of citizenship rights but, in many ways, his argument stems from the principles in the Single European Act which the House agreed. The entitlements of people who are now free to move around the Community are surely welcome—they are certainly welcome at the meetings at which I speak—because they give a clearer understanding of people's protections and expectations, wherever they happen to work and live in the Community.

Mr. Shore: I suspect that the new union is claiming the powers of being a state. It claims the right to give citizenship to all the 300 million people of Europe. As the Home Secretary said, one cannot renounce that citizenship. The people of the nations involved have not been asked. I am not aware of any approach being made to anyone about becoming a citizen of the European union —it is a top-down, not a bottom-up, system. However, we are all to be brought within this chapter.

The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) says that some of these rights were previously legislated for or given treaty form under earlier provisions, but, in a sense, that makes it even stranger that a separate section headed "Part Two—Citizenship of the Union" should now be included in the treaty.

It is right to re-examine the common provisions to ascertain their purposes. Part two states that the union

[Mr. Shore]

shall set itself up—I shall not read all the provisions—but there are four essential objectives. The first is the introduction of a citizenship of the union. Another is to "assert its identity" on the international scene. I have not yet heard anyone explain what that identity is or what is the relationship between the union and the Community. Will it be the union that will sign treaties in future and act for the whole Community? We have not had an explanation of those matters from the Attorney-General or the Home Secretary. I think that we should. That adds still more relevance to amendment No. 115, which stands in my name and to which I have already drawn attention. I strongly recommend hon. Members—including those on my own Front Bench—to support that amendment.

9 pm

Mr. Rowe: When you were in the Chair earlier today, Mr. Morris, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) described you as part of the procedural police. I must say that I am grateful to you for fingering my collar at this moment.

The Maastricht treaty is a treaty, and treaties mark a particular moment in an evolutionary process. History shows just how often treaties are abrogated if they are seen to be unduly oppressive or if it is deemed to be to the short-term advantage of one of the signatories to abrogate them. The treaty of Union between England and Scotland has lasted nearly 300 years and has evolved remarkably successfully into something different from what the original signatories envisaged. As some Opposition Members constantly remind us, however, if sufficient numbers of Scots chose to rewrite that treaty, it would be possible to rewrite it.

What has been the keynote of today's debate? Speaker after speaker has created a totem—a Baba Yaga—to inspire fear about what might happen. We would be a greater deal better off if we discussed the treaty as it is rather than its possible long-term evolution into something that frightens children.

Mr. Sweeney: Does not my hon. Friend agree that we should discusss such matters because article 8 provides for the scope of rights and therefore of reciprocal duties to be extended? It is our duty to look ahead.

Mr. Rowe: I have no doubt that there are merits in looking ahead to some extent but, after each treaty that has been made so far, the European Community has evolved in a very different way from the way in which the signatories to that treaty expected it to evolve. It is always enjoyable listening to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and others creating wonderful chimeras only to shoot them down later, but it is not necessarily particularly illuminating.

On the 50th anniversary of the opening of the second front, we should consider for a moment what the concept of citizenship in the European context is all about. Ours is a position of extraordinary luxury. We are the first generation this century that has not been involved obligatorily in a major European war. Millions of people have been killed and injured or have had their homes destroyed, and the legacy of those conflicts is tearing mainland Europe apart yet again.

It is in that context that, by hook or by crook, we need to find devices to prevent that from happening again. No one with any idea of how human nature works or how political processes create institutions would suggest that what the Maastricht treaty postulates is perfect or could be perfect or is thought to be perfect even by those who signed it. It represents one credible way of diminishing the risk that our children and grandchildren may once again be faced with a holocaust of the kind that has set Europe on fire twice this century.

We have heard some persuasive but, I believe, not wholly well-founded arguments about citizenship. Two powerful ideas about citizenship have held most of Europe in their grip for centuries. The first was the idea of the civitas dei—the city of God. In political terms, all those who subscribed to the Christian Church—whether they believe in its principles or not—were citizens of the city of God. That was an attempt by philosophers and politicians to overcome the tribal and national battle lines that were constantly threatening to plunge, and often plunging, parts of Europe into war.

Similarly, the holy Roman empire was another idea which ended in complete mockery, described in the end as being not holy nor Roman nor an empire. But it had existed as an idea for about 1,000 years. The idea of it was the same—that somehow, if only there could be sufficient agreement among the great powers of Europe, they might be prevented from plunging one another into war.

For that reason, the Maastricht treaty creates a citizenship of the union. There is no shame in saying that it is, at least in part, powerful as a philosophical idea and that the rights and duties attached to that citizenship are of less importance than the philosophical concept that we in the European Community are all citizens with equal rights and importance, and that if it is made to work it will protect minorities, remembering that the dreadful failure to do that has torn Yugoslavia apart and bids fair to tear apart other countries, inside and outside the European Community.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: My hon. Friend is drawing some interesting parallels. What is so unstable about our belief in the concept of citizenship of the existing nation states in Europe that makes us feel that we must enable others to feel on a parity with us, or we with them, when all of us could exist in the single fact that we are equal and not greater than?

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend asks a good question which must be answered on the ground that many people, particularly the younger generation in all the countries of the European Community, have a growing understanding of the fact that the problems with which we must grapple are greater than the problems that can more easily be faced on the basis of the nation state alone. When considering matters of environmental pollution and the protection of wildlife—two matters that particularly concern the young—or the question of education and training for a market that enables people to work from one end of the EC to the other, it is believed that there is something greater than the purely national dimension.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that another lesson to be learned from European history, from the holy Roman empire right through to the Austrian Hapsburg empire that collapsed in 1914, is that attempting to push in an imperial fashion the differences of culture,

policy, politics, ethnic divisions and everything that constitutes the nation state is as much the cause of war as nation states themselves?

Mr. Rowe: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I take issue with the implication of his question, in that I do not believe that there is such a great push. This is a question of politicians from all over the Community coming together in the knowledge that large numbers of their constituents care about a stable, peaceful, prosperous Europe working together.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): My hon. Friend should bear in mind the practical point that, under the present Community arrangements, many British citizens choose in their retirement to live in various parts of Europe. They want to use their right to vote in a local election if they are currently resident in, for example, Spain. There is absolutely no reason why the add-on of European citizenship should not be of enormous practical value to those who choose to live anywhere in the Community.

Mr. Rowe: That is absolutely right. Increasing numbers of people will be working on long-term contracts and in many other ways playing a major part in countries other than the country of their birth. One of the great features of citizenship is that it is valueless unless it secures some protection for the citizen.

One of the points about the Maastricht treaty is that the whole idea of seeking diplomatic protection from a country in the European Community in which one's own country has no diplomatic representation seems to accord directly with the concept of protecting the citizen. It is an exciting concept. What is more, when two nation states or 12 nation states come together in such a treaty to create the sort of common citizenship which we are now adumbrating, it does not by any means necessarily carry with it a loss.

Over the centuries, the Scots have gained considerable benefit from being citizens of the United Kingdom rather than simply of Scotland. Some Scots disagree with that, but there are so many of them on the Labour Front Bench that I am sure I shall command some support.

We must remember two things when we attack the concept of European citizenship simply on the basis of the nation state. The first is that the nation state is a relatively modern phenomenon. The suggestion that nation states survive and prosper only if they can enslave or, at any rate, take over large parts of the rest of the world to finance themselves is arguable. What has happened is that the great nation states of Europe have been forced to withdraw to their own frontiers. They have lost their imperial back-up and are now—in my view, sensibly—looking to see whether there is some other way of organising their citizenship and general political relationships which will supervene and prevent yet again such appalling competition.

There is no inherent reason why citizens should necessarily treat one another well. One need only watch in microcosm the way in which hon. Members treat one another from time to time to realise that being a citizen of a single entity is by no means a guarantee that people will necessarily get on especially well together. However, it substantially increases the chance of co-existence in a peaceful and stable way. That is what we are talking about in this debate.

The concept of the European citizen is one which will help us with one of the other great problems which the European Community faces. Let us not kid ourselves that at present there is a mixture of detachment and glee when we learn that there are terrorist gangs in Germany and that ETA, in the Basque country, is blowing up people. The detachment is that it does not really matter, it has nothing to do with us, it is a long way away and is it not reassuring that other countries have the same sort of problem as we have in Northern Ireland?

Hon. Members are looking at me in shock. If they are honest with themselves, they will know that, when they see something going wrong elsewhere, many people think, "At least it means that we are not as bad as we thought we were. We are not alone in the problem." Until we can overcome that, and until we genuinely care as much when things go wrong for citizens of the rest of the European Community as when they do for citizens of our own country, we shall never have the wholehearted European co-operation which is necessary to eradicate such menaces. European citizenship is a concept on which we can build to educate our children into thinking about foreigners, and in particular European foreigners, in a way different from that which we have suffered so far.

The rights which we are accorded under the European citizenship provisions are good things. It is a good thing that we can go to a European ombudsman. It is a good thing that we can turn to diplomatic representatives in countries where we have no representation of our own. It is a good thing that we can involve ourselves closely in the local affairs of the country in which we reside so that we feel able and want to take part in local politics. Those rights are of value, and I strongly support them.

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. Friend makes a case for European citizenship on the basis that it will make us more internationalist and overcome national boundaries and national enmities, but does he agree that the main force for European citizenship and European federalism is a sense of competition and fear of the Americans and the Japanese? Should not the conclusion of my hon. Friend's argument be that, if we are to have a great international utopia, one thing that we should not have is a federal Europe which will stand out against and compete with other countries, particularly perhaps third-world countries?

Mr. Rowe: At no point in my remarks did I mention the word "federalism". One of the important features of the Maastricht treaty, the negotiating procedures that led up to it and the negotiating machinery on which it and its successors will depend is that it leaves plenty of room for change and evolution. The Maastricht treaty is not the type of treaty which the people who signed the Single European Act expected it to be. The European Community which the Maastricht treaty envisages is not likely to be exactly the type of Community which will emerge in the end. It is a staging post to a destination which we cannot precisely define. The instability in the present exchange rate mechanism is a good demonstration of how it is extremely difficult to predict exactly how man-made political structures will evolve.

There has been a lot of talk about the possibility that various unwelcome duties will be forced on European citizens. One example is conscription. The only occasions

[Mr. Rowe]

on which there was conscription in the United Kingdom were when twice this century we were forced into it to repair the damage done by treating other Europeans as alien, strange, hostile and bloody-minded. In the end we came into conflict with them. There is much greater danger that conscription and other duties will be forced on us if we fail to make the concept of European citizenship work than if we do not.

Mr. Winnick: This is undoubtedly one of the most important parts of the treaty. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) referred to it as a staging post. In my view, it is a paving measure for a federal union—certainly a federal arrangement along very centralised lines, in some respects like the federal arrangements in the United States of America. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)—during the Second Reading debate, I believe—illustrated the situation with reference to the United States, which, he said, had an arrangement suitable for Europe. That is the right hon. Gentleman's view, but it is certainly not mine.

Citizenship of the union will be automatic. There will be no opting-out provision. No one will be in a position to say, "I do not want to be a part of this union." When the question of the Queen's position was raised, the Home Secretary said that he was not sure about it. But then he confirmed what the position must be. Would not the situation be odd and invidious if the Queen were the only United Kingdom citizen who was not a citizen of the union? Obviously she, like all her subjects, will be involved. Duties will be set out, and it is clear that there will be obligations.

This is undoubtedly the most fundamental change in citizenship, yet the Government do not have any mandate whatsoever to proceed. When the Prime Minister is questioned about the matter of a mandate he refers to the last general election. He said that during the campaign it had been made clear that the Government were in favour of Maastricht. But everyone knows that that was not an issue in the general election. Can anyone—and we were all candidates—recall any clash between the two main parties about this issue? Indeed, it is difficult to recall a particular mention of it in any party political broadcast. Any reference to it was made in passing at most.

No one—whatever side of the argument he takes—says that this is not an important issue. No one—not even the hon. Member for Mid-Kent—says that it is a relatively minor matter. What we have been arguing about for some time is whether this treaty is in the interests of Britain. Everybody—whatever position he takes—agrees that this is an issue of the greatest possible constitutional significance. It cannot be said too often that such a step requires some authority or mandate from the British people.

The Chairman: Order. Indeed it cannot be said, as it is not relevant to this amendment, which is specifically about citizenship.

Mr. Winnick: I accept your ruling, Mr. Morris. I have been making the point merely that, in respect of this issue, some mandate or authority from the British people is required. That will continue to be my view, as it will continue to be the view of others.

Some hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Mid-Kent and the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), have made much of the failure of the nation state. If the hon. Member for Mid-Kent was implying that peace will be firmly established in Europe only if we proceed along the Maastricht road, I find his case difficult to accept. We had the cold war for more than 40 years, and it did not become a hot war. Fortunately, Europe was not destroyed, as the super-powers were determined, even at the height of the cold war, that it should not become a hot war. Korea was the nearest we came, in a limited way, to having a hot war. I cannot accept the argument that this is the only way of guaranteeing peace and security in Europe.

In some respects suppose that I disagree with other hon. Members who are against the Bill and who may be described—fairly or otherwise—as little Englanders. I am not a little Englander and no one has ever accused me of being one. I hope that the stand that I took on the Gulf war and other issues well before that demonstrates that it has never been my view that Britain should adopt an isolationist stance. Britain fought a war and stood virtually alone for two years because we were determined not to remain isolated and because we recognised our role in Europe.

I also accept the obligations and duties that arise from our membership of the United Nations. NATO and the rest. We should not cut ourselves off from Europe or the continent and go into a corner and stop worrying about the rest of Europe. That is not my point of view and I doubt whether it is that of any other hon. Member.

Although I was not enthusiastic about our membership of the European Community and had strongly disagreed with it and campaigned against it—I hope this is order—once the British people had decided by a majority in June 1975 that they were in favour of our continuing membership, I accepted the decision. Moreover, having been in the Community for some years it would not be in the national interest for us to leave. I therefore accept that we should remain in the Community.

The argument is not about whether we should remain in the Community, but about whether we should proceed along a road that would seriously diminish the independence of this country. Bearing in mind our membership of NATO and the United Nations and the obligations that they impose, some people have said that we should not worry over much about the treaty because it is virtually the same. It is nothing of the kind. Our membership of the United Nations dates from 1945, and I believe that NATO was started in 1949, but they in no way diminish the independence of this country. There was no question of our having any duties that would diminish the authority of this House and the independence of this country. If that had been the case there would no doubt have been bitter controversy at the time. Therefore, it is not an honest argument to say that the road that we are taking now is virtually the same as our membership of the United Nations and NATO. It is nothing of the kind.

To a large extent we are debating whether Britain shall remain an independent country in any meaningful sense. I am not saying that we are going to become a sort of satellite. I have no desire to exaggerate the argument. I do not doubt that, if the treaty becomes law, the House will continue to debate all sorts of issues. It would be odd if it were otherwise. However, on many issues of fundamental importance, including defence and foreign policy, the final

authority will no longer rest in this House but outside it. If that is not a matter of supreme constitutional importance I do not know what is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) seems surprised by what I have said. I am only surprised at his reaction. I do not believe that I was elected to——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a Second Reading speech. He has hardly mentioned the word "citizenship" and has not referred to amendment No. 12. I understand that he feels strongly about the issues, but he must address the amendment.

Mr. Winnick: I accept what you say Mr. Morris, but the citizenship of the union, as set out in the article that we are discussing, would severely diminish the independence of this country and the authority of this House and that is part of my argument.

Article 8b relates to candidates for municipal elections and European elections. It is argued that it will not apply to those outside the United Kingdom who wish to stand for election to Parliament. Why not? I do not see the logic in that. If it is argued that someone outside the United Kingdom has a right to stand here for local elections or the European Parliament—as set out in article 8b—how can it be argued that he should not also stand for Parliament?

9.30 pm

Even if, in the context of today's debate, municipal does mean local, surely once the law is passed, the obvious logic is that, if people outside the United Kingdom can stand for local elections and for a British constituency in the European Parliament, they should be able to stand for Parliament. Once we pass certain measures, it is not long before other measures are taken which further diminish and erode our independence.

It is dangerous for Parliament to be out of step with the wishes of the majority of people on a major constitutional issue. It is for that reason, among others, that I fully support the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), under which the Government would be asked to set out in a Command Paper the duties and obligations of citizenship of the union. That is a reasonable amendment, and it is unfortunate that the Government are unlikely to support it.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What is the point of having a White Paper when article 8e states that, every three years, the Council can add to the rights and duties of European citizens? We are not debating a static position involving merely the right to vote. Under article 8e, the duties and responsibilities can be extended every three years. Would it not be better to have a White Paper published every three years to take account of exciting new duties and responsibilities that the EC decides that we have to undertake?

Mr. Winnick: I agree. The Government's first step should be to adopt the amendment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, but I agree with the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that that should not be the end of it. If the treaty becomes law, the least that we should require of the Government of the day is that there should be a continuing review of the position. We should press for that.

I am sufficiently pessimistic to accept that the Bill and the treaty will become law. If that happens, the controversy will not end. Hon. Members who support the Government and the Labour Front Bench team believe that by the end of February or March the Bill will have completed its Committee stage, then go to another place and afterwards receive its Third Reading, but the controversy will not end. The issue will become and remain a festering sore in British politics. If authority and independence is taken away from Britain and the House without the consent of the majority of British people, the issue will remain one of great importance and controversy, and will undoubtedly cause many sharp clashes both inside and outside the House.

For those reasons, I believe that the Government should recognise the depth of feeling among many of us. I do not know whether we are in the majority, but to take the steps that the Government propose, as set out in article 8, without the mandate or authority of the British people is wrong, and can only cause tremendous resentment outside the House. Therefore, I hope that at least the amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend and others will be accepted by the Government.

Mr. Shepherd: I rise to speak in support of amendment No. 12, which is why I listened with particular care to the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I expected an analysis of the text of the article, given that the Opposition propose to remove all the citizenship provisions.

What I found, however, was that the hon. Member for Sedgefield advanced with a powder puff and caressed the provisions set out in the treaty. So reassuring were his arguments for the removal of this part of it that the Home Secretary thought it unnecessary to argue in favour of the treaty thereafter. We witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of the Home Secretary expressing his admiration for a speech by an hon. Member who was trying to remove the citizenship provisions from the treaty and who did it so persuasively that my right hon. and learned Friend was able to curtail his own speech.

We have heard no analysis, either by Ministers or Opposition spokesmen, of what citizenship means or how it affects the Queen in Parliament. When asked, the Home Secretary was not sure whether the Queen would become a citizen of Europe. Very little thought has been given to that when preparing the briefings that the Home Secretary receives from the Department. We know from the fanciful little cards sent to Members of Parliament from the Home Office that royal matters concern the Home Secretary, yet no inquiry has satisfied him to enable him to answer with confidence questions about the position of the Queen under the treaty.

We all know that we are forming a union. If I were a bureaucrat, the one provision of the treaty that I would want to secure above all others would be that governing citizenship. It is the one that tells us our relationship to the state, and it is the one that I want to discuss this evening.

I was elected as a Conservative, and as such I have always believed that, at the heart of our philosophy—to this I subscribe wholeheartedly—is the maintenance of our constitution, which is a democratic, self-governing constitution. That is the fundamental line of trust linking all Conservatives. But the Government propose that we

[Mr. Shepherd]

become citizens of a new political structure in which, as if by an afterthought, the Queen is apparently to become a citizen.

These are profound matters, touching on the heart of nationhood and citizenship. Ultimately, they are a question of sentiment. Despite the arguments of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) about international law, we all know that what lies behind these relationships is the question of who we are—our sentiment. I am glat to be a citizen of the United Kingdom. I am one by birth, but more importantly by sentiment. The Government trivialise that.

I suggest that from sentiment follow all manner of things. I support the laws of the state of which I am a citizen. This I do gladly and by an exercise of free choice. When I am told that I am to be made a citizen of anywhere else, I feel like Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians must have felt when they were told that they were to be made citizens—to use the language of this treaty, irrevocably and irreversibly—of the USSR.

So there is no choice in these matters, and it is impertinent of Front-Bench spokesmen to tell Parliament, which is the sovereign representative of the will of the people, that the Government propose to make us citizens of somewhere else without seeking our advice first. That was the point made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who asked by what mandate such an important change was to be made.

This is the one proposal in the treaty above all others for which I suggest the sanction of the individuals who will be most affected—the citizens—must be sought. There has been no mandate on that.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Gentleman's sincerity and passion are well understood in the Committee. Two matters in his speech puzzle me. He says that at the heart of his understanding of British citizenship is the concept of being, within the constitution, part of a representative governmental system. As a result of that system, we have a Government who won an election and who made clear their commitment to the treaty. That is my first puzzle about what the hon. Gentleman places at the centre of his thinking of what it is to be British—he rejects the result of the election.

Secondly, we live under a constitutional system in which the rights of citizenship are not defined. The hon. Gentleman describes them in almost metaphysical terms, and that is correct. There is a much greater definition of what citizenship might mean in the context of a framework constitution for the European union than we have had in 700 years of British history.

Mr. Shepherd: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not the maker of the speech for the Liberal Democrat spokesman, because at least his intervention contained some reflection. I was speaking about democratic self-government being the heart of our constitution. I am truly surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that an election is the end of the democratic process or the conferment of a mandate as such.

All that was achieved at the last election was what in constitution terms is referred to as a general mandate. I am arguing for a specific mandate, and I thought that the hon. Gentleman would have understood that. That is a constitutional concept in our history. It is referred to by authorities, and for the past 25 years this country has sought to exert it on profound constitutional issues. That happened first under my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), secondly under the premiership of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, and thirdly under the premiership of Mr. Callaghan.

For every major constitutional change during those periods, it was considered necessary to seek a specific mandate from those who would be affected. Therefore, that is part of our constitutional requirements. The fact that it was fudged in 1985 and the fact that the Government run away from it now is understandable. We are in the hands of ideologues who wish to force through this measure without regard to the—*[Interruption.]* We know the fashions as they come and go, and I well understand why we had South Sea bubbles.

I have watched the Government come to their knees on the ERM, and I watch them now as they prepare to force through a contention of citizenship for which the Home Secretary could not even wave a concept. We have not had one testing thing about what it amounts to, nor did we have any indication as to where it leads.

Each of us in his heart—because it is a metaphysical concept—must ask, what is nationality, what is citizenship, to whom do we owe allegiance, and why? I owe allegiance because I am confident that all the laws and rules of this land are ultimately under the control of the citizens. It has nothing to do with the mere sanction of an election, because if I as a Conservative am allowed to misappropriate Burke yet again, I would say that it was the process of consent and acquiesence that Governments and laws seek. Without consent, they have no foundation, and they are seen to become unjust.

When my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) was advancing that argument, in essence he was saying that these matters cannot be processed without the consent of the people. Citizenship is the relationship of us to the state. How can it be that the Government cannot advance one argument in favour of the necessity to subordinate current citizenship, given by birth and allegiance, to European citizenship?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Shepherd: I should like to continue.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about the construction of the state. If the United Kingdom, as one of the high contracting parties, is a subordinate constituent of what those high contracting parties are forming—the union of Europe—the citizenship of one of those subordinate constituents must be subordinate to that of the greater proposition. That is the only point that has been established this evening.

Therefore, in all matters that affect the union, where it has competence which is not a settled and finished matter, which is extended—I would say grotesquely—in the treaty of Maastricht, there has been a profound change. That means that United Kingdom citizenship must of itself be

subordinate. Therefore, my first duty to support the laws and maintain the structure will be to the union of Europe rather than to the United Kingdom.

9.45 pm

Mr. Whitney: Earlier in his remarks, my hon. Friend asked himself two questions—what is nationality, and what is citizenship? He was right to ask those questions. However, he should accept the definition of European citizenship, which, as we all agree, is a new concept and something that we must learn to develop and understand. He should also acknowledge that the treaty clearly defines nationality. I understand his propensity——

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It is well known that it was anticipated that most hon. Members would be here at 10 o'clock for a vote. Because the Government have got their people here first, they are trying to have the Division early. Why cannot we keep the debate going until 10 o'clock, when most hon. Members will be here?

The Chairman: The timing of the Division is nothing to do with the Chair.

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I will take it later.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order. I will take it in a minute— *[Interruption.]*

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Some of us have been here for 28 years. Do you really think that it is adding to the dignity of democracy that, for the fifth time, we have had a major debate but no ministerial response? How on earth is it possible for you to consider a closure motion when there has been no ministerial reply to fundamental and important issues raised in the debate?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not give reasons from the Chair.

Mr. Rowlands *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I have a simple question. When will you refuse a closure motion from the Government?

The Chairman: I have already said that the Chair does not give reasons, but I have refused a number of closures.

Mr. Budgen *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I would be very grateful—and, indeed, you might be very grateful—if you took the opportunity to explain what you meant when you said that the question of the time was not within the discretion of the Chair. There is a rising sense of frustration on the Conservative Benches. We feel that you should explain your position so that we may decide our action——

The Chairman: Order. It is very clear. I do not choose the time at which a closure motion is moved. That is the point.

Mr. Budgen *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Surely you decide when to accept an application, and the time may be relevant to your consideration.

The Chairman: I accept a closure motion when I believe that there has been a full and fair debate.

The Committee having divided: Ayes 285, Noes 267.

Division No. 136] **[9.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*

Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 75, Noes 280.

Division No. 137] **[10.1 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Gardiner, Sir George
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Knapman, Roger
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Madden, Max
Marlow, Tony
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Pawsey, James
Pickthall, Colin
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Leighton and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger

Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

COMBINED TRANSPORT NETWORK

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8066/92, relating to the establishment of a combined transport network; notes that the growth of a combined transport network is in line with Government objectives, provided that it is consistent with the need to ensure fair competition between freight transport modes; and endorses the Government's aim of seeking agreement to cost effective measures aimed at promoting efficient combined transport services.

TIMESHARE

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8403/92, relating to the protection of purchasers in contracts relating to the utilisation of immovable property on a timeshare basis; and supports the Government's view that the draft directive is a necessary measure of consumer protection which, subject to some amendment, will be acceptable.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Bomb Damage (Newtownbreda)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I am delighted to be called at this early hour, albeit to talk about treason in the United Kingdom. Treason has just been committed by the Government in the earlier debate on Maastricht—*[Interruption.]* I am now referring to a second aspect of treason.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly?

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. David Lightbown): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) used the word "treason".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I did not hear what the right hon. Member said. If he used that word, I have no doubt that he will wish to withdraw it.

Mr. Taylor: I am talking about treason in the United Kingdom by the IRA, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Tonight's debate is about bombing by terrorists in the United Kingdom, especially in the village of Newtownbreda, in my constituency. Treason is bad, and that is why hon. Members in all parts of the House deplore treason when it is committed, and we know when it is committed.

On 23 September last year I left my constituency and caught the evening plane to come to the House for a special sitting to debate the decision by Her Majesty's Government to leave the exchange rate mechanism, a decision which most hon. Members welcomed, even though at the time some people opposed it. Those who opposed it and referred to it as black Wednesday now gratefully refer to it as white Wednesday. Such is the change in politics in this country.

As I arrived at my home in Westminster that night, I switched on the 11 o'clock news to learn that there had been a major explosion in what was described as south Belfast. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) in the Chamber. Naturally, I was anxious to obtain more details about the explosion, so I listened to the midnight news. To my horror, I discovered that the explosion was not in south Belfast but in Strangford, in my constituency, at the forensic science laboratory in the village of Newtownbreda.

It was a major explosion, one of the largest to have occurred in the United Kingdom. It resulted in damage to 1,002 homes in my constituency, in Brerton crescent, in the large Belvoir estate and in widespread areas of Newtownbreda. I came to my office at 6.30 the next morning. I went on Downtown Radio and BBC Radio Ulster to broadcast to the people in my constituency concern about what had happened and to advise them what should be done. We then had the debate in the House on the economic crisis facing the United Kingdom.

On the next day, Friday, I flew back to Northern Ireland with the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), who visited Belvoir. I am glad to say that on the following day, Saturday, she visited Belvoir for another three hours, accompanied by the local Presbyterian minister, Rev. Brian Black, who took her around many of the homes. For the first time she saw the reality of IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland. I shall quote what the hon. Lady said at that time:

> "It is just devastating. One had to be on the spot to really appreciate the cruelty of this terrorist attack in a residential area. I am overwhelmed by the kind welcome given to me and by the sheer guts of the people of Newtownbreda to overcome this criminal attack. I am very impressed at the quick response of the various support agencies, but obviously much more needs to be done."

That IRA attack on the forensic science laboratory in Newtownbreda damaged 1,002 homes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that had happened in your constituency or in any constituency in England, it would have caused a national crisis and would have attracted the Government's urgent attention. It certainly would have gained the headlines in all the national newspapers. I am sorry to say that such a major event in Northern Ireland is almost dismissed in London.

Elderly and young people were made homeless. Forty-two houses were totally destroyed and made uninhabitable. Five months after the explosion, many people are still not back in their homes.

The IRA commits outrages almost daily in Northern Ireland. It has been happening for 23 years. The majority community in Northern Ireland is critical of the Government's failure to bring the terrorists under control, but that is not the subject of tonight's debate. The subject is the specific problem in the Newtownbreda and Belvoir area. The people of Belvoir were by far the largest section of the community affected by the bomb. They have responded magnificently to the challenge from the IRA.

On the Sunday after the bomb explosion, I went to the united church service in the Presbyterian church hall. The Presbyterian church was destroyed, as was the Methodist church and the Church of Ireland parish church. The Church of Ireland parish church is now in ruins, but I am glad to say that it is rising from the ashes. The other two churches are now back in operation.

I went to the united church service and was greatly encouraged by the spirit of the community. At the same time, a second service was held in the Belvoir activity centre. That service had been organised by the Church of Ireland. My wife attended the service. She came home with the same experience of a people who would not be beaten into the ground by the IRA terrorists, but it is easy to say that. None the less, families had great economic and social problems and stress was placed on them. Those are challenges which the Government and politicians face.

Of the 1,002 houses which were damaged, 42 were damaged to the extent that the people had to get out. Many of those people are still not back in their homes. I have a parliamentary reply to confirm that 10 per cent. of the houses—more than 100 houses—were badly damaged. Of the 1,002 houses that were damaged, 428 were privately owned. Belvoir is a mixed estate in which some houses have been acquired by the residents and are now privately owned. The others remain under the ownership of the public housing authority, which in Northern Ireland is called the Housing Executive.

I must place on record the appreciation of the community at large of the response of the public authorities. Under the leadership of Castlereagh borough council, of which the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and I have the honour to be members, the Belvoir activity centre became the nerve centre for the

[Mr. Taylor]

reaction to that IRA terrorist outrage. The council is particularly proud of that centre, which opened one year ago.

At the centre, the Housing Executive, the Law Society, the social services agencies, the Northern Ireland Office and other public institutions set up offices to help and advise people on how best to respond to their terrible experience. I understand that experience because I have had five properties bombed by the IRA in the past 23 years. I know exactly the procedures through which one must go. In the early 1970s, when I was a member of a firm of consulting engineers and architects, I acted in a professional capacity on behalf of more than 500 claimants for compensation and settled their claims, I hope successfully. We dealt with the old county councils and subsequently with the Northern Ireland Office.

I have praised the various public agencies. I should also like to mention the Royal Ulster Constabulary. If the two local community policemen had not seen the bomb in the van outside the forensic department, tragedy would have taken place. Bad as the bomb was, the great thing is that no lives were lost. We can replace bricks and rebuild homes—it is happening—but we can never re-create lives. Luckily, lives were not lost. That is why religious services were held in Belvoir. They were services of thanksgiving that, despite the misery of the bomb explosion, no human life had been lost.

Those who live in privately owned homes are still suffering. The Housing Executive carried out a first-class operation. It moved in immediately and made all houses, rented and privately owned, watertight by putting tarpaulin over the roofs. It then proceeded to concentrate on repairing its houses—about 500 out of the 1,002. It rightly took pleasure in stating before Christmas that all its 500 houses were repaired and the people were back in them. That was to the credit of the Housing Executive. That must be placed on record, because the bomb damage was a major challenge for the executive. It was a major crisis.

I am sorry to say that the problem continues for the private owners. I foresaw that and stated it on the radio at 6.30 on the morning after the explosion, fewer than 12 hours after the explosion. I warned that the problem would be the owner-occupiers. From my experience of dealing with such problems, I realised what the problems were. I realised, such was the extent of the damage, involving more than 400 private owners, that there would be a major problem.

On 23 October 1992, one month after the bomb exploded, the Northern Ireland Office had received claims for compensation from the occupiers of 890 out of the 1,002 houses damaged. I am sorry to say that, a month after the bombing, each claimant had received an average of only £30. On 6 November 1992, of the 42 private house owners, only five had received more than £2,000 in compensation. Yet on 24 September, one day after the bombing, the Government were able to state that 10 per cent. of the 1,000 houses had been badly damaged, and that 42 were wrecked.

Anyone with experience in the construction industry, or in the allied professions, would have known from walking around those homes that many would need expenditure of between £20,000 and £30,000 for them to be restored and made habitable again. Given that, the Northern Ireland Office should have been able to make an immediate interim award of £10,000 or £15,000 to the people concerned so that they could start to rebuild their homes. People had lost their roofs; their ceilings had caved in; their kitchens were wrecked; their beds had been destroyed; their sitting rooms were in crisis. Some were sleeping on the floor, with water dripping on them. Emergency action was required in the form of interim compensation awards; but such action was not taken.

No ordinary person in Belvoir, Newtownbreda, Belfast or anywhere in England can produce £30,000 overnight to restore his home. A person who loses his home, as a result of a bombing or any other tragedy, will need money with which to restore it; but after securing that money, he is caught in a trap—unless he has a very kind bank manager.

The public authority homes—the Northern Ireland Housing Executive homes—were being repaired steadily and efficiently; all credit is due to the executive for that. Meanwhile, the owner-occupiers were waiting for their interim compensation awards, and receiving very little. As I have said, they were receiving an average of £30 each a month after the bombing, and on 6 November five had received just over £2,000 apiece. Even on 10 December —just before Christmas—only three applicants in Belvoir had received an interim award of more than £10,000.

When I went to the midnight Church of Ireland communion service on Christmas eve and met the people again, they confirmed that little progress had been made. Of the 42 who had lost their homes, 14 were living in caravans on that frosty night, in dreadful conditions—surrounded by muck and quagmire, running up big electricity and heating bills in the mobile homes to which they were not used, and still waiting for major compensation.

The Government must respond quickly to the needs not just of those in Housing Executive homes but of those in privately owned homes. The Northern Ireland Office, and the Northern Ireland compensation agency, must adopt a new approach to home owners. To its credit, the Northern Ireland Office recognises that a problem exists; but it was caught unawares by the bombing on 23 September. It emerged that the Department had no policy to deal with a bomb that affected such a large number of privately owned homes.

Eight days after the bombing—not the day after, but eight days later—the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced a new policy: the Northern Ireland Housing Executive would take over responsibility for reinstating the privately owned homes. But it was too late. Not one person from the 428 privately owned homes took up that offer. Why? Because it was too late.

The law in Northern Ireland is simple. When one suffers damage because of a terrorist bomb or an illegal organisation, one must serve notice, within 10 days of the atrocity, that one intends to apply for compensation. As a result of the enterprise of Castlereagh borough council at the Belvoir activity centre and the various agencies that were working so well in the community centre at the time, the people were well organised.

The Secretary of State has complimented the borough council and the people for being so well organised and for responding so efficiently to the outrage. They had appointed their solicitors, quantity surveyors and builders, as they were told to do. Having made those commitments, and knowing that they had to serve notice of a claim within

10 days, they suddenly read in the *Belfast Telegraph*, nine days after the explosion, that they need not have done so at all. I see that the Minister is nodding his head——

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): No; I was shaking my head.

Mr. Taylor: The proof is in the pudding, and not one person from the 428 privately owned houses took up the offer from the Housing Executive to fix their houses because it came too late.

Regrettably, the Government did not have a policy. They have one now and have applied it to other major bomb explosions—for example, recently at Glengormley, in the constituency of Antrim, South. Private owners there have taken the opportunity of getting the Housing Executive to repair their houses. That could not apply in Belvoir because it came too late. That is why the way to resolve the problem was to get urgent interim compensation awards made to the house owners.

Four months after the bomb, people are still living in caravans and running up large bills. I want the Minister to explain to the House and to my constituents whether those electricity bills, which are much larger than the bills that they would have received had they been in their homes, will be considered when the final compensation awards are made.

I also want the Minister to reconsider the operation of the Northern Ireland Compensation Agency. I am not criticising the staff of the agency, who have worked hard during the past three months and have had to deal with 2,500 compensation claims during that time, which is 50 per cent. of their normal work load for a year. The limited staff in the Northern Ireland compensation agency were extended to the limit because of the lack of staffing and the increase in republican terrorism in Northern Ireland. I know that that costs money, which is always a problem in public life.

If the Government are presiding over increased republican terrorism, they must provide more staffing for the Northern Ireland compensation agency. Without adequate staff it cannot respond quickly in a case such as Belvoir. Four months after the bomb people are still living in caravans. The tarpaulins that were put on their roofs on 24 September 1992 have finally been removed during the past two or three weeks. Therefore, much as we appreciate the work of the compensation agency, we hope that the Minister will increase its staff.

Finally, will the Minister remove the forensic science institution from Newtownbreda? It is the second time that we have had a bomb explosion. The people of Belvoir, Brerton crescent and the surrounding district cannot be asked to endure the possibility of a third explosion at those premises.

10.40 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): I am glad to have the chance to reply to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), and I shall try to cover all the issues that he raised, although he has left me very little time.

More than 1,000 tenants and owner-occupiers suffered damage to their homes as a result of the outrageous attack on the forensic laboratory, and it is right that the right hon. Gentleman should be concerned that everything possible has been done to alleviate the problems that were, and are still being, faced by many of his constituents.

By that callous act, the Provisional IRA has demonstrated yet again its utter disregard for the lives and property of ordinary people. It was mostly fortuitous that nobody was killed or seriously injured. I join the right hon. Gentleman in paying tribute, not only to the two members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who warned people and saved lives, but to the two local security guards inside the forensic laboratory who raised the alarm. They acted with great courage and speed, which is why we are not discussing the deaths of many people.

As the right hon. Gentleman will know, I visited the scene on the day after the incident and saw the destruction, pain and suffering at first hand. It is a tribute to all the people in Ulster that they continue to be so resilient in the face of such acts, not just in Ulster but elsewhere.

The right hon. Gentleman was wrong when he said that the Government had no policy. They have a perfectly good policy, which was created when the right hon. Gentleman had some responsibility for such matters and set out rules on criminal compensation for damage. Although they have been varied, they remain roughly unchanged.

The Newtownbreda incident was exceptional because, as the right hon. Gentleman said, there were involved many Housing Executive houses and many private houses, most of which had been purchased from the Housing Executive by people in the middle to late stages of their lives. We faced a problem, and the first thing that happened on the morning after the incident was that an executive decision was taken that instant repairs would be made to private houses as well as Housing Executive houses. Clearly it would have been wrong if panes of glass and leaking roofs were not mended as an emergency action.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly paid tribute to the Housing Executive, which took on that job. I join him in paying tribute to all the agencies—local government, Northern Ireland Office and voluntary organisations—that quickly set up shop and remained there throughout the weekend. They all did a marvellous job—from the solicitors who advised people to the volunteers who provided creche facilities for the children. Other services, including the social services, were present. People who had suffered trauma were counselled. The people charged with responsibility in such a major disaster came out of it with great credit.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that on 1 October my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that the Housing Executive could carry out repairs for owner-occupiers in the district in return for an assignment of compensation. That was in response to the massive amount of damage, and to give owner-occupiers the opportunity to have the same service as had been available to Housing Executive tenants who were living beside them.

It was an unusual situation as one house was a Housing Executive property and the next one was private, the next Housing Executive. After consultation we took the decision that it would be right to offer them all the same treatment. It has been suggested—I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman suggested it again—that the announcement came too late for the owner-occupiers because of the statutory requirement that a notice of intention to claim compensation should be lodged within 10 days.

[Mr. Michael Mates]

However, the timing of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's announcement had no bearing on the matter as it was made perfectly clear that anyone intending to have their repairs carried out by the Housing Executive had to make an application for compensation. Therefore, the claim for compensation had to be made, no matter who was to carry out the repair. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that those who had taken advice and potentially spent money on lawyers, architects and accountants would have received the same service. The money would have been repaid to them. We were taking on the offer to repair the houses and agreeing to treat them in the same way—the Housing Executive would have been repaid by the compensation agency.

None of the owners took up our offer. That was their right; it was their right to make their own decisions on who should carry out the repairs. Having taken all the advice available to them, they chose to stick with the private sector, and I do not argue with that decision. However, they cannot blame us for not having made the offer, because our offer was clearly made.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I would not want the Minister to get the impression that the policy, as it is now stated, does not work satisfactorily. Although it was not taken up in the Belvoir case, largely because people had committed themselves to builders and others, the Minister should not do away with the policy. He should publicise it and make it better known so that in other incidents—please God that there be no more—the offer can be taken up more quickly.

Mr. Mates: We were attempting to make the peculiar circumstances of that disaster match the Government's response. The right hon. Member for Strangford said that the policy has been used since, but the following bomb to which he referred largely affected commercial property and caused very little private damage. Each case is different. The Government are trying to approach each problem sympathetically and to provide a solution. The right hon. Gentleman is right——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 4 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

English

1. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the implementation of key stage 3 of the national curriculum in English.

4. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will undertake a pilot project in the 1993-94 academic year to test further the most appropriate way of delivering key stage 3 English in the national curriculum.

5. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on progress in introducing English tests in secondary schools.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): Tests provide vital information about children's progress. This is nowhere more important than in English, which is the bedrock of the curriculum.

The preparation of the 1993 English tests by the School Examinations and Assessment Council has been scrupulous. The tests have been tried out in hundreds of schools over the past two and half years. SEAC itself has responded to teachers' concerns by providing all the information that teachers need about the tests in January —a good five months before they are taken.

The tests will go ahead as planned; anything less would be to let down pupils who have been following the national curriculum in English for the past three years.

Mr. Bradley: The Secretary of State clearly does not realise the anger and despair that he is causing in local schools by pressing ahead with key stage 3. Will he not today announce the postponement of the tests for at least one year and pick up the phone and talk to some of the teachers in my constituency at local schools such as Oakwood and Parrswood about the total lack of preparation time that they have been given? There has also been a complete lack of consultation on the adequacy of the tests, which are inadequate in relationship to the national curriculum. The Secretary of State should today call for a postponement, not for his sake or for my sake, but for the sake of our children's education.

Mr. Patten: Over the past two and a half years the tests have been piloted in more than 500 schools, involving more than 45,000 children. There are two separate issues. First, the tests are new, and all new tests cause problems with people who have not conducted them before; there are alleged teething problems, and I respect the views of teachers, including secondary school heads, who are always interested in getting the tests right.

Secondly, there is a totally separate agenda characterised by the National Union of Teachers which, in its "Anti-SATs News", states that it wishes to undermine the whole of the Government's testing regime. It states:

"The boycott of the Key Stage 3 English tests is the first step on this road."

Mrs. Campbell: Given the Secretary of State's well-known reluctance to listen to anyone with misgivings about the direction of his education policy, may I ask to whom he listened when he decided to change the national curriculum for English well before the time it was due for review and against the recommendations of the report of Warwick university?

Mr. Patten: The National Curriculum Council—professional advisers to the Secretary of State in England —felt that the English curriculum needed a review and that there should be much more concentration on the basics in the English curriculum. It is important that we do all that we can to ensure that the English national curriculum and the testing regime run as smoothly as possible. There are more than 4 million adult illiterates in this country, and the number has been rising since the 1960s—hence the critical importance of the testing: we need a benchmark against which to judge children's improved performance.

Mr. Milligan: I welcome what my right hon. Friend has just said. Is it not vital to introduce proper testing to reduce the number of illiterates in Britain, which is one of the most serious problems that we face? Will he recognise, however, that some head teachers in my constituency who support the principle of testing are concerned at the relatively rapid speed with which the English tests have been introduced? Is there not a case for a dry run this year, as was done with the maths and science tests last year?

Mr. Patten: Those are the kind of arguments that were put forward by head teachers, a great number of whom I have met in recent months to discuss those and other issues. In the run-up to the first ever proper tests in English for children aged seven in 1991 there were the same kind of fears and inhibitions, but the tests went ahead. They have given us a benchmark and have shown that, while between 1991 and 1992 the performance of children in English improved, lamentably, about one quarter of our children are still not performing adequately in English. We must begin to ensure that all our children get a fair deal, and testing is critical in that process.

Mr. Madel: Will my right hon. Friend consider sympathetically representations made to him by schools that have suddenly had to buy additional books for key stage 3 for which they had not budgeted?

Mr. Patten: I know the particular problems in Bedfordshire. My hon. Friend has been an assiduous

promoter of the interests of schools in his county and his constituency. This year, there has been about £15 million additional support for books. Every time there is a new syllabus—it is the same with GCSE and A-level—there can be additional demands. That is why I urge all local authorities to delegate as much of their budget as possible to schools, because less money spent on bureaucrats equals more money spent on books.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State correct his statement a few minutes ago that the tests have been piloted in hundreds of schools? Is it not a fact that the University of Cambridge local examinations syndicate obtained the contract for the tests last summer and that the tests have been piloted in only 32 schools involving pupils of the wrong age—15-year-olds and not 14-year-olds? Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge the point made by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and realise that it is not just in Bedfordshire that schools face financial problems as a result of the imposition of the tests? What does he intend to do about the fact that some of the books on the recommended list are out of print? Will he acknowledge that he cannot say that he respects teachers, parents and governors and then always refuse to listen to them?

Mr. Patten: No, and if the hon. Lady goes on like that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends will be putting in claims for damages for passive boring. The key stage 3 English tests have been prepared with more care and over a longer period than any other public examination.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend join me in supporting those teachers and their organisations who have set aside the idea of a boycott because they feel that that is not the right way forward? Does he agree that a boycott goes against the whole idea of teachers' professional standards and is not the right way to conduct a debate on this or any other issue?

Mr. Patten: Any boycott would do great damage to the teaching profession. Head teachers, whom I met as recently as last Friday in a group to discuss just this issue, all said that they did not wish to see any boycotting of the tests. However, I happen to know from the evidence that I put before the House a moment or two ago that the NUT now wishes to go completely against testing. I happen to think that that is becoming Labour party policy as well.

Grant-maintained Schools

2. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the procedures associated with ballots for deciding whether schools become grant maintained.

Mr. Patten: My Department receives a number of letters, telephone calls and other representations concerning the procedures associated with ballots for deciding whether schools become grant maintained. Since the Education Reform Act 1988 came into force, we have received many useful suggestions about ways in which the grant-maintained ballot process could be improved. The Education Bill now before the House contains measures to smooth the process and to assist governors in putting their case to parents.

Mr. Madden: Is the Secretary of State aware that despite the political vendetta that he has waged against Bradford local education authority—*[Interruption.]* Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that opting out by schools in Bradford has been a complete and utter flop? Does he also accept that, however much he attempts further to rig balloting and other procedures, most sensible parents, when the full facts are placed before them, will reject the prospect of placing the fate and funding of local education authority schools in the hands of the Secretary of State or any of his successors?

Mr. Patten: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is extremely important that parents, governors and the local community should have the full facts put before them in the most unemotional and non-political form possible. When information is presented in that way and parents have the chance to vote, we see the result in schools in Bradford such as Oakbank, which I can announce today has just become grant maintained. In Blackburn yesterday, a school voted to become grant maintained with a 70 per cent. turnout of parents and a massive majority in favour of grant-maintained status. Well-informed parents with the information before them should be left to make up their own minds and not be subjected to political bullying and harassment.

Dr. Spink: In view of the ever-increasing number of parents who are voting for their children's schools to become grant maintained and, therefore, to take control of those schools with true local accountability, what does my right hon. Friend think of the remark by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), the Labour Front-Bench education spokesman, that it is Labour's intention——

Madam Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman's remarks are completely out of order —and he paid no attention to me when I told him so. I call upon the Secretary of State to give a limited reply, provided that it does not relate to that part of the hon. Gentleman's question that was out of order.

Mr. Patten: That will be quite difficult, Madam Speaker. However, I hold my hon. Friend—the pride of Essex—in great esteem for the way in which he attempted to put on the record the fact that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has come out on grant-maintained schools—[HON. MEMBERS: "Order".] This is on grant-maintained schools solo—honest John Patten —honestly, Madam Speaker. Following the question of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), the hon. Lady said that it is now Labour party policy to return all grant-maintained schools to local authority control.

Special Needs

3. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funds available for special needs education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): It is for local education authorities and schools with delegated management to decide on the level of funds to devote to special education. Well-run local authorities and schools should be able to fulfil their duties in respect of pupils with special educational needs.

Ms. Walley: Although the Minister's answer sounds all well and good, does he not realise that the competitive direction in which he is leading local schools is causing anxiety to the parents of children requiring special needs education? Is he aware that in Staffordshire there has been an 18 per cent. increase in requests for formal assessment and that the average increase is the same throughout the country? Is it not the case that, as a result of the Government's so-called education reform, the budgets of local schools are so stretched and stressed that they cannot deal properly with special needs education?

Mr. Forth: I do not accept that. There is ample evidence that special educational needs are being well met by schools up and down the country, and by most local education authorities. Because the hon. Lady's authority, Staffordshire, started off with a somewhat lower percentage of statemented children, it has scope to catch up and there is evidence that it is doing just that. Although there is some evidence that more parents are asking for statements, there is also evidence of an increase in the amount of statementing done by that local education authority.

There has been a widespread welcome for the huge step that we are taking in the Education Bill now in Committee. We are introducing many radical new provisions for children with special educational needs and they have been welcomed throughout the community involved.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is not just a question of money? The provision of specialist help is also vital. Can my hon. Friend assure me that his Department is discussing the matter seriously both with health authorities and with social service departments, which are also purchasers of services such as speech therapy and psychology, so that the partnership between the three publicly funded bodies can be maximised?

Mr. Forth: Indeed. My hon. Friend has raised an important point. We are constantly aware of the need to ensure, wherever possible, that all authorities involved in and concerned with the meeting of special educational needs—for instance, education authorities, health authorities and social service departments—work co-operatively to ensure that they all discharge their various responsibilities together in making the best possible provision. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the matter.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that, although organisations dealing with special educational needs welcome a number of aspects of the Education Bill, they are nevertheless very fearful about funding levels? They have already presented evidence of a drop in provision of learning support services. With 120 cases involving statements going to judicial review, this is but the tip of the iceberg. The Minister's Department must take seriously the evidence of underfunding and lack of services for children with special educational needs, whether or not they have statements.

Mr. Forth: I do not think that that is right, although I accept part of what the hon. Gentleman has said—that the mechanism for providing statements for children with special educational needs has let down many children and parents progressively over the years. That is exactly why we propose to introduce, in the Bill now in Committee, a new code of practice to give guidance on the statementing procedure, new time limits and a tribunal to provide an independent source of appeal. I believe that all those measures will go a long way towards enabling the statementing process, which is vital to a small but important number of children with special educational needs, to work properly. As for the other children involved, we have strengthened the Bill's provisions to ensure not only that all schools are aware of their responsibilities, but that they spell out those responsibilities clearly. They will be inspected in regard to their responsibilities. That is the way in which to proceed.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although resources for special educational needs must be kept under constant review, the clear message from the Audit Commission was that the problem was not lack of resources but the fact that some local education authorities did not give high enough priority to the statementing process? Will my hon. Friend send the message to every education authority in the country today that authorities should not wait for the measures in the Bill, good as they are, but should get on with the process now and protect the children currently in need?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend, who takes a great interest in such matters, is absolutely right. It is not so much a matter of the resources available as a question of how they are deployed. Many local education authorities have demonstrated that, with the right sense of priorities and the right management practices, they can fully fulfil their obligation to children with special educational needs. I believe that the Bill will provide the proper framework to ensure that all authorities do that in future; in other words, it will enable us to raise all of them to the excellent standard of the best.

Graduates (Employment)

6. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of university graduates left university last year and went straight into full-time employment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Of those first-degree students whose first destination is known, about 50 per cent. went into full or part-time employment in the United Kingdom or overseas in 1991, the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that the figures that I have obtained from the Library are very different? According to my figures, of 70,000 graduates, only 32,000 obtained jobs; the rest had to go on studying, because they could not find work—apart from the 7,000 who were still on the dole six months later.

Is the Minister aware that unemployment among graduates has risen by 50 per cent. in three years? Why are we training these youngsters? Are we doing it to provide the best-educated dole queue in the world so that the Japanese can come in and exploit them as there is no minimum wage? What is the purpose of it all?

Mr. Boswell: The purpose of education is long term. It is to secure a trained, skilled and motivated work force in which graduates will play a leading part in terms of their chances of employment and their salary structure in the years to come. The hon. Gentleman has taken the worst

possible construction of the figures. He has not, for example, looked at the "Graduate Employment Prospects Review" for the current year which, while stating that this is a difficult year, says that we are in a difficult but not impossible situation and that employers are optimistic about the future. The hon. Gentleman should not use the disappointments of today to dissuade people from going to college to build for their tomorrow and for the country's future.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that there are more than 40 per cent. more students in higher education now than there were in 1980? Will he also join me in condemning the reduction in grant for students, especially mature students, by the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council?

Mr. Boswell: I accept my hon. Friend's first point. There has been a huge expansion in graduate numbers, and I make no apology for that, as I do not want to return to elitism—I want people to go to college if they are qualified to do so.

As for further education and the discretionary awards in Lancashire, that is a matter for the council but also for the electors in May. I am sure that the electors of Lancashire will draw the appropriate conclusions.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that investment in higher education is investment in the human capital of the nation, but that there may be a threat to the quality of that investment in higher education and to the quality of future graduates if the funding council is given control of quality in universities? Will not that pose a threat to academic freedom throughout the country—a threat which is as unacceptable from the right as it would be from the left? Self-regulation is good enough for the City, and in respect of quality it is better that self-regulation comes from the universities rather than being imposed on them by the funders, which would pose a threat to the quality of future graduates.

Mr. Boswell: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about one objective—that investment in higher education is clearly an investment in the country's future. That is right. With respect, however, I disagree with him on his point about quality and the analogy that he drew with the City. So far as I know, the City does not run on taxpayers' money—*[Interruption.]* Higher education is financed with several billion pounds of taxpayers' money and we wish to ensure proper value for money—not on my account, but through the Universities Funding Council, which is to establish an independent and proper system of assessment of the quality delivered.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that since the introduction of student loans there has been a substantial increase in the number of students going to university? Does that not give the lie to the prophets of doom whose forecasts were as inaccurate as their policies are unacceptable?

Mr. Boswell: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. We want people to go to university. We are delivering that, and the quality and standards in universities to go with it. We have no apology to make.

Teacher Morale

7. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the morale of teachers in local education authority schools.

Mr. Patten: Teachers have responded admirably to the challenge of raising standards and extending choice, and the Government and the country are grateful to them. The Government's reforms have helped parents to appreciate how much good teaching contributes to their children's education. Effective management at school level is the key to motivating teachers and ensuring that good performance is identified and rewarded.

Mr. Jones: After the waves of change and legislation, why do Ministers not slow down and, in particular, listen? It would help. Why has the right hon. Gentleman been so rude to parents and so condescending to the profession? Does he not know that he is seen as a posturing and dictatorial figure in education—in fact, as a sort of Mussolini of the school service?

Mr. Patten: I shall not take that accusation of fascism to heart, Madam Speaker, and nor will you. I suppose that it is the kind of thing that we expect to hear from the hon. Gentleman Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who is a parliamentary consultant to the National Union of Teachers. It is always important to know which hon. Member is the parliamentary consultant for the National Union of Teachers because he or she will remain a marked person for the rest of this Parliament.

Since last April, my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Blatch in the other place, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and I have been to more than 75 schools, not talking at teachers but listening to them. Perhaps I could give the hon. Member an example. When Baroness Blatch, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire and I visited those schools, we were told by a number of primary school teachers that they felt that the national curriculum was a bit overcrowded.

In response to listening to teachers, we announced two Mondays ago that we would introduce over a period a review of the national curriculum. There is no going slow on the Government's schools policy.

Mr. Barry Jones: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not a parliamentary consultant for the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Patten *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Clappison. *[Interruption.]* Order. How can I hear unless hon. Members are quiet?

Mr. Patten: Further to that point of order——

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no point of order in the middle of Question Time. Perhaps we can deal with the matter at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Clappison: Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing concern at the destructive effects on the morale of teachers, parents and pupils of the small minority of teachers who undermine testing and water down standards in our schools, as in the case of the small minority of

English teachers who want to set aside our rich literary heritage and abandon Shakespeare? Is that a case not so much of morale as of fitness to teach?

Mr. Patten: I think that we should be grateful to all teachers who work hard. There is always a small group of people who simply do not like the way in which a Government conduct their education policy. It is those people, especially in the National Union of Teachers, who have been waging such a battle against testing. I predict that we will see the Labour party fight hard in an attempt to undermine our education reforms. It was from the Register of Members' Interests that I took the attribution to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside.

Grant-maintained Schools

8. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements will be made to protect the interests of staff at a school that transfers from local education authority control to grant-maintained status.

Mr. Boswell: The contracts of employment of staff automatically transfer from the local education authority to the governing body of a grant-maintained school, which is required to observe all aspects of employment law. Staff at grant-maintained schools have the same rights as other employees to take their case to an industrial tribunal or to the courts.

Mr. Pope: Does the Minister accept that there is a legal obligation on GM schools not only to accept the terms and conditions that exist for teaching and non-teaching staff but to maintain the union recognition agreement when there is evidence—and I have evidence—that conditions of service for teaching and non-teaching staff in GM schools are worsening? Can he give an assurance to the House, which he would not give to the Standing Committee, that the Minister has not only the power but the political will to intervene?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman is referring to the acquired rights directive which is under consideration in another Standing Committee of the House. Whether or not the directive is enacted in our domestic legislation, it already requires that grant-maintained schools must recognise unions for the same purposes and to the same extent as they were recognised by the local education authority until such time as the agreement is amended or terminated.

Dame Angela Rumbold: Can my hon. Friend advise my local authority, the teachers who work therein and those people in schools who are considering going grant maintained what protection there is for teachers who wish to participate in, or at least give their assent to, becoming grant maintained against the local authority that indicates that they may be acting contrary to its wishes?

Mr. Boswell: I had the opportunity to attend a college in Surrey yesterday, and I know of the good reputation that my right hon. Friend's local education authority generally holds. I emphasise, however, that in the Education Bill, which is currently under consideration, we have taken steps to ensure that obstruction and interference by the local authority—whether Surrey or elsewhere—as they may bear on individual teachers involved in a compaign, should be reduced to a minimum and, if possible, eliminated. I am sure that no hon. Member would wish to sanction or condone such unfair and inappropriate practices.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister is telling the House about unfair and inappropriate practices. He must be aware—the Standing Committee considering the Education Bill has certainly been made aware—that grant-maintained schools have already sacked teachers and altered their contracts of employment, refusing, for example, to recognise length and continuity of service or to allow maternity and other benefits to be properly enjoyed. Is it the Government's intention that grant-maintained schools should erode the employment conditions of teachers to save money? If, as the Minister implies, the answer to that is no, will he take steps to prevent grant-maintained schools from doing that?

Mr. Boswell: The purpose of the discussion in the Standing Committee was to consider the effect of the acquired rights directive on conditions of transfer. If the hon. Gentleman is inviting me to say that no grant-maintained school may ever dismiss a teacher, I must remind him that, under the local management of schools arrangements, the governors of schools within the maintained sector already have the power to hire and fire, and I know of at least one locally managed school where two teachers have been dismissed through redundancy. There is no essential difference between the two sectors in that respect.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, with children queuing up to get into grant-maintained schools and with strong community and parental support for them, the morale of teachers in such schools is unprecedentedly high?

Mr. Boswell: As ever, my hon. Friend is exactly on the point. The survey recently conducted by Grant-Maintained Schools Ltd. shows a positive side on employment practices as well as on the delivery of education. My hon. Friend is right: staffing levels are generally better and staff turnover is very much lower than in the equivalent maintained schools.

Teaching Practice

9. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his Department's policy and role in respect of instructing teachers *(a)* what to teach and *(b)* how to teach it.

Mr. Patten: I have recently brought to schools' attention advice from the Office for Standards in Education—the inspectorate—and the National Curriculum Council on strategies for improving curricular organisation and classroom practice.

Mr. O'Brien: Is not there a real danger that the Secretary of State will become too involved in the way in which things are done in the classroom and too prescriptive and rigid about the way in which teachers teach? Should not we trust teachers, governors and heads to decide how teaching should be done in the classroom, rather than the state being involved in every single decision?

Mr. Patten: I agree with some of what the hon. Gentleman says. There is a wide spectrum of opinion

among those interested in education—from right to left and from traditional to progressive—that regulation should not be too prescriptive and that there should not be too much interference in what happens in the classroom. Nevertheless, the National Curriculum Council and the inspectorate made individual reports to me at the same time saying that they felt that a number of practices that had largely been dropped in primary schools in the 1960s and early 1970s, such as setting and whole-class teaching, were practices from which children should benefit. It was important to draw the conclusions of those two bodies to teachers' attention.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is pure common sense, as the National Curriculum Council and OFSTED said in their reports last week, that primary teachers should do more whole-class teaching, that they should have an idea of exactly the curriculum that they are meant to be teaching and that it is not in any way ideological to set or stream pupils according to their ability? Does not the fact that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), the Opposition spokesman, calls those common sense remarks "fanatical doctrine" show the extent to which she is out of touch with parental opinion in Britain?

Mr. Patten: I cannot improve on what my hon. Friend has said about the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). It is very important that when parents make up their minds about the school to which they wish their children to go, they know not only what the examination results are and something of the ethos of the school, as well as how religion is taught and what sports are available, but what teaching styles are used in the classroom. I am sure that parents have a right to such knowledge. They have a right to know whether setting is used and whether there is whole-class teaching. I intend to make certain that in their prospectuses for next year all schools will be required to give an accurate description not only of what they teach but of how they teach.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Secretary of State accept that his Department, in addition to having a policy about instructing teachers, should have a policy of listening to teachers? Can he give us any evidence that his Department is doing that?

Mr. Patten: There is a range of evidence from my meetings with teachers, parents and governors during more than 75 visits to schools since last April. Week after week after week, individuals and groups of teachers come to see me and my ministerial colleagues to discuss just these issues.

Grant-maintained Schools

10. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers are now employed in grant-maintained schools; and how many children are educated in such schools.

Mr. Patten: It is estimated that some 14,000 qualified teachers were teaching more than 236,000 pupils in January 1992 in schools in England that are currently grant maintained.

Mr. Pawsey: These are indeed impressive figures, which underline the success and the importance of grant-maintained schools. Can my right hon. Friend speculate about what the reaction of teachers and parents will be when they discover that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has said that if the Labour party were elected to government they would abolish grant-maintained schools?

Mr. Patten: When I left the Department to come to the House today there were 622 yes votes for grant-maintained status. We are well on target towards the projected 1,500 by 1 April 1994. I can only imagine the despair in the hearts of teachers, governors, parents and others connected with the growing number of grant-maintained schools at the pledge of the hon. Lady—a pledge now on the record, including television—that if she ever gets into power she will abolish all grant-maintained schools straight away.

Mr. Steinberg: May I inform the Secretary of State that I am the consultant to the National Union of Teachers —and proud of it. Now that the policy of having an avalanche of schools opting out has failed, do the Government intend to force schools into grant-maintained status?

Mr. Patten: It is very interesting that the hon. Gentleman has come out as the NUT's representative in this House. He has taken up the battle from his hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) who, I understand, laid down the burden a few weeks ago, although his name is still in the Register of Members' Interests, which is where I got the information. I apologise, of course, for the inaccuracy. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman is next consulted by the National Union of Teachers, he will advise it how out of touch with the general public is its campaign against testing.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how welcome today's announcement of grant-maintained status will be to the teachers at Frances Bardsley school in my constituency? It will enable them to continue to provide the excellent education that girls receive there and, perhaps more important, will ensure the continued availability of badly needed single-sex girls' places in the borough. If, as I hope will happen, the school bids to retain its sixth form, will my right hon. Friend give that proposal his most sympathetic consideration?

Mr. Patten: I, too, hope that grant-maintained schools and county-maintained schools will continue to diversify their spread of interests and to offer the choice and diversity in education that many of us wish to see.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State withdraw the remark—a remark that he has made on several occasions—that in ballots concerning grant-maintained status, "no" votes arise only because of intimidation by local education authorities? Do the ballots of the last few days—in Conservative North Yorkshire, a school voted no by 67 per cent.; in Conservative Cambridge, a school voted no by 72 per cent.; in Conservative East Sussex, a school voted no by 80 per cent.; and in Conservative West Sussex, a school voted no by 90 per cent.—indicate intimidation by local authorities?

Mr. Patten: I congratulate the hon. Lady at having a second go during Question Time and I answer her question

by making only two points. On eight out of every 10 occasions when parents are asked whether they wish their schools to be grant maintained, they vote yes, as they voted yes in Blackburn yesterday.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: In view of the outstanding success of grant-maintained schools in Lancashire, where the teachers are only too happy to come out from under the bureaucratic Lancashire county council, may I ask my right hon. Friend to suggest to any teachers who may be apprehensive to visit some of those schools to see how successful they are?

Mr. Patten: It is always good for hon. Members in all parts of the House to visit grant-maintained schools. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Dewsbury and her hon. Friends have ever been to a grant-maintained school. They should do so, because they would find queues of parents outside wishing to send their children there and they would see the walls bulging and standards improving continuously.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ms. Lynne: Will the Prime Minister confirm that he is aware of the case of my constituent Stefan Kiszko, who was wrongfully imprisoned for 16 years for the murder of Lesley Molseed? An inquiry is being conducted by the Lancashire police into the investigation of the case by the West Yorkshire police. Will the right hon. Gentleman give a personal commitment that when that inquiry is completed, the full facts will be made known to Stefan Kiszko and his mother and to the relatives of Lesley Molseed so that they will at long last know why there was a miscarriage of justice?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of that distressing case and I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me notice that she would raise that specific point. As she will know, the then Home Secretary acted to refer the case to the Court of Appeal as soon as he had received and considered the results of the police inquiry that he had ordered. As a result of that, Mr. Kiszko's conviction was quashed.

The Home Secretary has agreed that compensation should be paid to Mr. Kiszko. I shall ask my right hon. and learned Friend to pursue with the police—whose responsibility it is—the question of publishing information about the case with the objective of publishing as much information as possible, subject of course to the need to avoid prejudicing criminal proceedings.

Q2. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Fox: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the news that Oman has ordered 36 Challenger tanks and Saudi Arabia 48 Tornado jets is extremely welcome, especially in the west country, where many jobs rely on the defence industry? Is he further aware that the chairman of British Aerospace has said that those deals would not have been concluded had it not been for the direct intervention of my right hon. Friend?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments. Those successes by British companies show precisely what British exporters can achieve and underline the importance of the partnership between the Government and business and industry. The orders and other business concluded during my visit to India are worth literally billions of pounds and will sustain about 20,000 jobs in this country. They also reflect the close relationship between this country and the other countries concerned. But one of the most important aspects of such visits is not necessarily the business gained on that occasion but the opportunity for business that may result in the future.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister consider it to be satisfactory that many economic commentators regard the *Sunday Times* as a more credible guide to Government economic policy than his Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The Prime Minister: Unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I shall deal with realities—*[Interruption.]* It may be that many people would like to find divisions between my right hon. Friend and me, but there are none.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister read the newspapers in which city commentators say, and I quote one:

"It comes down to a question of whether people believe the Government or the Sunday Times. Frankly, they believe the Sunday Times."?

How can people be expected to comprehend Government intentions when the Government and No. 10 deliberately brief the press to undermine the Chancellor on Saturday and then on other days go into reverse because of the damage done to the economy? Is it not the case that the right hon. Gentleman supports his Chancellor in public while undermining him in private, just as his predecessor did?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is clearly in the business of mischief-making, but he is wasting his time. My right hon. Friend and I are not going to be pushed around by that sort of remark. My right hon. Friend has cut inflation to 2½ per cent; has continued our tax reforms; has introduced an autumn budget which was widely welcomed by business and industry; and has cut interest rates to 6 per cent. That is a record which he can be proud of and which I fully support. It is the essential prerequisite for growth, and the fact that it has been achieved is largely due to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. John Smith: Despite the Prime Minister's bluster, is it not clear that the events of last weekend show once again that we have a Chancellor with no credibility and a Government with no economic policy? Does the Prime Minister not appreciate that the people of this country, who face increasing recession and rising unemployment, are appalled to see the Prime Minister and the Chancellor behaving like two ends of a pantomime horse?

The Prime Minister: I am astonished that the right hon and learned Gentleman should say that, in view of what his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), said only yesterday about Labour's recent budget for jobs. He said that it is

"already sinking without trace as virtually all of Labour's economic policies have sunk without trace in recent years"

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman was shadow Chancellor he said:

"The Opposition will not be satisfied until interest rates in this country are roughly equivalent to interest rates in other competitor countries in the European Community".

Now our interest rates are below those of other countries and the credit for that goes to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Q3. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. Friend recall that when he kept Britain out of the social chapter President Jacques Delors accused him of having made our country a paradise for foreign investment? Has the decision by Hoover to move its factory from France to Britain proved that Jacques Delors was right in what he said and that my right hon. Friend was quite right in what he did?

The Prime Minister: I do agree with that reported quote by Mr. Delors. I also agree with the union leader, Mr. Airley, who in a newspaper article in the last few days said:

"We have secured one of the best pieces of news we have heard on the Scottish industrial front for many years."

I agree with him about that. The fact is that industry will locate where it can be most efficient and most competitive. No one compelled our partners to sign up for the social chapter and they were amply warned by me and by others of the consequences if they did so. The social chapter adds to costs, destroys jobs and destroys competitiveness. That is what the Labour party would sign up to. It was vital that we stayed out of the social chapter. We did. We have done. We shall continue to do so.

Q4. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Campbell: Will the Prime Minister tell the House what advice he will give to the 1,200 small businesses that went bust last week, including that of his constituents Doug and Eileen Belcher who run the post office in Great Stukeley and delivered the Prime Minister's newspapers until they went bust?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady would know if she had her facts straight—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Gentlemen resume their seats.

The Prime Minister: I would say to the hon. Lady that what is needed to make those small businesses grow is precisely the economic ingredients of low inflation and low interest rates which we have now produced in this economy. What would destroy those jobs is the social chapter and the additional imposts that the Labour party would place on small, medium and large businesses.

Mr. Willetts: There are more than 7,000 regulations affecting businesses in this country. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread support for his initiative to cut back on red tape which is essential for small businesses and consumers, and can he assure the House that progress was made on that subject at his meeting this morning?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that progress was made on that this morning. I met colleagues from every Government Department, and we have agreed a way in which to examine each and every one of 7,000 individual Government regulations. We agreed that in future any proposal for new regulations will have specifically to spell out the cost to British companies. It is a huge task to review the regulations, but it is necessary and it is very much in the interests of British business and the creation of jobs that we do so.

Q6. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bayley: Three weeks ago when the pound stood at 2·51 deutschmarks, the Prime Minister said, and I recall his exact words, that Britain had the right exchange rate for recovery. Now that the exchange rate is 2·38 deutschmarks, will the Prime Minister tell us what has gone wrong?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly fails to notice what has been happening. He failed to notice the CBI survey that showed business confidence at its highest level for five years, he overlooked the 3i survey that showed a big increase in optimism in small and medium-sized firms, and he failed to notice also the change in the inflation rate and interest rate that are the essential prerequisite for sustained growth with low inflation in this country.

Q7. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest contributions that the House can make to the success and enterprising spirit of British industry is to do away with as large a number of petty restraints and regulations as possible? Will he reaffirm that objective, notwithstanding the preference for still more obstacles to businss shown by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right and he implicity spells out one of the differences between the two sides of the House. This side believes in cutting burdens on business and the Opposition side believes in adding burdens to business.

London Transport

Q8. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what further plans he has to meet any representatives of users of London underground trains and London buses.

The Prime Minister: Ministers in the Department of Transport and their officials frequently meet representatives of users of public transport in London.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to look at the problems of London's transport and recognise that the people of London do not want to see their bus service deregulated? They want investment in the underground service rather than the cancellation of the capital programme. They want cheaper fares so that less pollution should occur in the air of London and much less congestion on its roads. Will he now intervene to restore a decent public transport system to our capital city?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government are providing finance of close on £1 billion a year for London transport over the next three years—more than in any recent year. As far as London buses are concerned, we are fully committed to the privatisation of London bus subsidiaries, starting later this year, followed by deregulation as soon as legislation permits. We propose to do so because it will provide bus users with the benefits of competition from private operators keen to serve the market more efficiently than nationalised industries have done.

Mr. Budgen: While my right hon. Friend is identifying the reasons for the better propsects for the British economy——

Madam Speaker: Order. The question is a closed question. It has to relate to London transport.

Mr. Budgen: —in particular, the prospects for the buses in London, could he not also find time to say a kind word for the speculators and all those who took us out of the exchange rate mechanism on 16 September?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that many of those speculators would have used London transport.

Engagements

Q9. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gunnell: The Prime Minister will have noted that each time that his Chancellor lowers interest rates, the banks and building societies pass on a lower percentage to their customers and, therefore, increase their margins. What does the Prime Minister plan to do about that? Is it that his relationship with the banks is not cosy enough, or is it too cosy?

The Prime Minister: As far as the building societies and many of the banks are concerned, the hon. Gentleman is not accurate about the reduction in interest rates during the past few months. There has been concern about whether sufficient of the interest rate reductions have been passed on and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been in touch with the Governor of the Bank of England and with the chairmen of the main banks in the United Kingdom. I think that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that dialogue.

DAF Trucks

3.30 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston)*(by private notice)*: To ask the President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the cessation of trading of Leyland DAF and the possibility of Government assistance.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): The Government have been disappointed to hear about the financial problems facing the Dutch based company DAF NV, which today filed for a legal moratorium on its debts. We are concerned about the implications for its United Kingdom operations.

I regret that it has not been possible for the company and its bankers to put together a satisfactory restructuring package. We have kept in close contact with the company and with the Bank of England, which has been closely involved in trying to help the relevant United Kingdom banks come to an agreement with their Dutch and Belgian counterparts, which have led the consortium. The United Kingdom banks have done all that they were asked, but unfortunately not all the other banks have felt able to agree an acceptable financing package with the Dutch and Belgian Governments.

The legal position of Leyland DAF should be clarified this afternoon. We have not participated directly in the discussions on the financial restructuring, as that primarily related to the company's Dutch and Belgian activities.

The Government stand ready to work closely with Leyland DAF, the receivers, banks and other interested parties to mitigate, as far as possible, the impact on United Kingdom jobs. We hope that it will prove possible for all those involved to find a means of creating a business with a long-term commercial future out of at least part of DAF's United Kingdom operations.

While regretting the particular circumstances affecting Leyland DAF, we must remember that the United Kingdom vehicles sector has made excellent progress during the past few months. In the midlands alone, Rover recently announced a 5 per cent. increase in output for its four-wheel drive vehicles in 1992 and a new £9·5 million fleet deal; Jaguar will be launching a £560 million investment plan on the back of a sharp rise in sales in the United Kingdom and the United States markets; and Lucas is to build a new £3·7 million factory, creating 350 jobs. We must continue to build on those extremely encouraging prospects.

Mr. Cook: Will the President of the Board of Trade précis his answer by confirming that, when I asked what Government assistance may be available, the answer that we got today was that there will be none for Leyland DAF? Is he aware that the news that he has just confirmed is another bitter blow to Britain's shrinking industrial base? Will he try to understand that it is not enough to express disappointment for the work force, as he did today? The work force, who face the loss of their jobs, want to know what he is going to do to help save them.

Will the right hon. Gentleman remember that he prefers to be known as the President of the Board of Trade? Does he know that Leyland DAF is the leader in the British truck market? If that market share goes on imports, how many more millions will it add to the trade gap? Will he remember that he is the Minister responsible for regional policy? What help will he offer the communities whose local economy will be devastated if those factories and their suppliers close?

Will the right hon. Gentleman remember that he promised to intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before dinner? Why did he not intervene to stop that major British company going into receivership?

Why is it that the Belgian and Dutch Governments were willing to underwrite the loans that would secure the company's future but not the British Government? Why did the British Government not support that rescue package by underwriting it?

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that, as advised this afternoon by DAF, the minority who wrecked the deal in the banking consortium were all British banks—NatWest, Barclays and Lloyds? Why has he not had talks with them to press them to take the longer view of the Dutch and Belgian banks who want to rescue, not close, the plants?

Today 5,500 people face the prospect of redundancy. When they hear the Government talk about recovery, it must sound like a Government who do not know what is happening in the real world. Will the President of the Board of Trade do them the justice of now admitting that Britain faces a real industrial crisis and needs an industrial strategy that tackles it?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member practises his usual technique of undermining any British company or institution. He would have done well to read the press release put out by DAF, a copy of which I have. Perhaps I can quote from it in dealing with the serious allegation that the hon. Member made:

"However, both Governments"—

that is, the Dutch and Belgian Governments—

"have informed the Board of Management of DAF N.V. that they consider a further delay in a final decision on the restructuring and long term financing proposals to be unacceptable . . ."

I do not understand how, faced with that public information, the hon. Member can suggest that the British Government have been dilatory in performing their duties. Nor do I understand how he can name and single out three British banks which, he says, did not co-operate without, as far as I am aware, one shred of evidence to substantiate the charge. Does he understand the damage that he does to British banking interests by so careless a use of language?

The Labour party might have learned from its experience in putting hundreds of millions of pounds through the National Enterprise Board into the motor industry when it suggests handing out short-term working capital to a company of this sort that such action is unlikely to solve the problems that it ought properly to address. Will the hon. Member realise that my Department has done all that has been asked of it by the company itself? We have been in touch with the company, and it has made no specific request to us for specific financial aid of the sort that we are discussing today. We have been in touch with the Bank of England, and we know that it has been in touch with British banks.

All the hon. Member seeks to do is to make mischief out of a very difficult situation. He also fails to understand what receivership is about. There is every reason to hope that at least some of these jobs can be saved. What now must happen is an orderly process of analysis so that other

people in the market can make offers for parts of this company in order that there can, we hope, be a viable commercial opportunity for those parts of the business that can stand competitive strains.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Will the Secretary of State confirm that in Chorley and Leyland in Lancashire there is purpose-built accommodation, a test track for vehicles, a major assembly plant for vehicles which is the largest in Europe, and Multipart office and warehousing? Will he also confirm that the labour force in Lancashire is one of the hardest working, best qualified, most skilled and most co-operative and, therefore, looks forward to constructive discussions?

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) have been extremely energetic in making sure that the best interests of their constituents were drawn to our attention. I am delighted to confirm the references that my hon. Friend made to the work people of Lancashire. I am equally delighted to know that, while national average unemployment is 10·5 per cent., in the travel-to-work area of Preston it is 7·9 per cent.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Leyland DAF van factory in Birmingham increased its production, its sales and its market share last year in spite of the reduction in the market as a result of the recession, that 2,000 people work at that factory in my constituency, and that the factory has been forced to stop production this afternoon because suppliers have stopped deliveries, putting even more thousands of jobs at risk? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the factory has, in turn, been forced to stop its deliveries, including those of components of the Range Rover—the four-wheel drive vehicle mentioned by the Secretary of State—so putting yet more jobs at risk?

The Dutch and Belgian Governments have been engaged in direct talks with the banks in an attempt to save jobs in those countries. Why will not the British Government talk to the banks to attempt to save British jobs and avoid an industrial disaster?

Mr. Heseltine: I fully understand that the hon. Gentleman is deeply concerned about the large number of jobs that will be affected in his constituency. I can only repeat what I said in my first reply: my Department has been absolutely satisfied that the British banks and the Bank of England have been fully engaged in the necessary dialogue. It is now a matter of the administrators, the receivers and management of the company working out proper arrangements to secure, where possible, commercially viable jobs within the DAF organisation. That will not be helped by exchanges across the Dispatch Boxes of the House of Commons based largely on inaccurate allegations from the Labour party. We must let the receivers do their job. Jobs may well be saved as a result.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that many of my constituents live near the factory in Birmingham and, like the constituents of Opposition Members, have contacted me as they are greatly concerned about both the direct effect on their jobs and the indirect effects on the many component suppliers? Will he give me an assurance that he will do everything possible to facilitate a quick solution, whether partial or total, to the problem? The workers have literally been presented today with a closure.

Mr. Heseltine: I give my hon. Friend an unqualified assurance of the sort that he requested. My Department has kept in touch with DAF over this difficult period and will certainly continue to do so. Any proper assistance that we are able to provide we will provide.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): If, as the Government claim, the recession is at last gradually coming to an end, how can it make sense to allow the collapse of a company which, when recovery comes, would make a substantial contribution to our balance of payments? The Secretary of State will recall that he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that no request had been made to the Government for immediate emergency support to see the company through its difficulty. Were such a request to be made, what would the right hon. Gentleman's answer be?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the right hon. Gentleman will realise that the company has been seeking a solution to its difficulties over a significant period. Were there to be a request for the short-term working capital which is, as I understand it, at the heart of the dilemma today, such a request could be put to my Department by a myriad different companies in the motor industry and many others. It would be extremely difficult to find any argument that I could deploy for providing taxpayers' support for working capital for one company to enable it to compete more effectively with other British companies in the same industry that produce competitive products.

The second issue involves the development of an alternative product to the van, which is the principal product line of the DAF organisation in the midlands. That issue was discussed with my Department before the last election, when figures of the order of £450 million were suggested as the possible investment needed to deal with the long-term programmes. We made it clear that we could not contemplate a project of that sort. Under the regional assistance that my Department is entitled to provide, the maximum amount available would be £18 million. The House should understand that we are either talking about subsidising short-term losses and the implications of that for a wide number of companies in this country or we are talking about dramatically large investment capital projects, and the House having to decide why we should invest in one company when a range of other companies which have invested their own capital are surviving in the marketplace.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on resisting the ghosts of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. My right hon. Friend is aware of the large implications that this has for the engineering industry generally in the west midlands. Will he reassure me that he will place his office at the disposal of private sector bidders, who may be involved in quite complex negotiations across the North sea, in order to expedite such negotiations, whether purely British companies or British companies in alliance with European companies, so that we may have a speedy solution?

Mr. Heseltine: I welcome my hon. Friend's constructive approach, which is precisely the approach that is likely to

[Mr. Heseltine]

bring the best possible outcome for the large numbers of people employed by DAF and for the viability of the separate component parts of that organisation.

There is no question but that in Leyland in Lancashire there is a modern factory with order books for an important product, and one hopes that there will be alternative owners and capital for that product. It must also be self-evidently the case that the products sold by the company over the years leave considerable demand for spare parts which, again, must offer potential jobs in some companies based on what we have here today. But none of this can be dealt with without a detailed set of negotiations conducted by the receivers in the calm atmosphere that is essential to constructive progress.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Is the Secretary of State aware that compliments to highly skilled, hard-working workers will not be well received unless they are accompanied by some action? The right hon. Gentleman is apparently willing for taxpayers' money to be used to pay unemployment costs rather than invest in maintaining them at work. He casts scorn on short-term capital investment. Why does he not then find some long-term solutions to prevent the 2,500 workers in the Preston-Leyland-Chorley area from being put on the scrap heap? If the right hon. Gentleman is so scornful of short-term solutions, who does he not look for long-term solutions?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady should have more faith in the quality of the work people and the quality of the product in Leyland. She would do well to remember that her party has indulged in massive long-term investment in the automobile industry with scant benefit to show for it.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): My right hon. Friend will be aware that this company was set up by his predecessors in office at the Department of Trade and Industry, and he will recall the substantial losses that were written off at that time to enable the consortium between Leyland and DAF to survive in order to employ those persons in Lancashire whose considerable skills were at risk. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the project, which was initially to provide a trans-European prospect for commercial vehicles, where DAF would have the entry into the Community, still remains a realistic partnership on offer to any other company that may well seek to acquire the considerable assets which British taxpayers have supplied to that plant?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right. One of the arguments in favour of the DAF deal with Leyland in 1987 was that DAF would secure for Leyland greater access into the European single market. That it has done, and that is an additional asset now available within the negotiations that must come under way. It is obviously important that those negotiations are given a fair chance.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Is the Secretary of State aware that 500 jobs are at risk in the excellent Leyland DAF Albion works in Glasgow which makes axles for the company? As the Dutch and Belgian Governments are doing all that they can to help, will the right hon. Gentleman advise the Secretary of State for Scotland that the Scottish Office, Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow Development Agency will need to do everything possible to protect and maintain those vital, highly skilled jobs in Glasgow?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to what I said about the Dutch and Belgian Governments. They have made it clear that they are not satisfied with the arrangements that have been offered by the banks involved, so it would be wrong for me to suggest to any colleague of mine in the Government, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, that he should seek to act in a way that neither of those two Governments is prepared to do.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): While everyone is understandably concerned about the possibility of job losses, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind when considering requests for financial assistance the huge amount of Government money that the predecessor to Leyland DAF received in the 1970s? Does he recall that, under a Labour Government during the period that it received that money, manufacturing output in this country fell, whereas, despite the recession, it has risen under this Government? Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that any money that he might give companies such as Leyland DAF would have to be taken from other companies that might better be able to utilise it in creating jobs and products that can be successfully sold?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. I can only reiterate that the Labour Government's experience, through the National Enterprise Board, of investing huge sums of taxpayers' money in what was then seen as the creation of a long-term, viable automobile industry in this country was wildly unsuccessful. During the course of the 1980s, very largely as a result of inward investment in the industry, Britain can now enjoy the prospect of moving back to a trade surplus in the automobile industry. That is because we have viable companies with profitable records behind them. It is absolutely clear that no purpose is to be gained from trying to repeat the mistakes of the past and the Government trying to double-guess the commercial market in that industry.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) said, many people in Glasgow are dependent on the Albion motor works for employment. There are highly skilled engineers throughout the group, and if steps are not taken to protect their jobs Britain will lose an engineering base that has taken generations to build. If the right hon. Gentleman argues that the recession will soon be over, we shall need skilled men and women to cope with the new situation.

Mr. Heseltine: It is precisely because Labour tried to protect industry after industry from the effects of world competition that so much of Britain's manufacturing base was eroded. The then Government tried to protect it in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests that we should do.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend rightly said that he is willing to maintain a dialogue with interested parties. Will he discuss with his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence the military implications of the possible failure of Leyland DAF? As A. W. D. Bedford, another supplier of military vehicles to the British armed forces, failed only recently, will my right

hon. Friend and his MOD colleagues see whether some restructuring can be achieved, whereby the important indigenous capability to build military vehicles that Leyland DAF hitherto provided can be maintained?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the Army truck order that was won by Leyland with the help of DAF. That contract has about another 18 months to go. That supports the point that I was making, that here is a company with a good product and order books—and, hopefully, someone in the commercial marketplace will come to invest in it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the President of the Board of Trade recollect that at the time of the Leyland DAF merger I and others expressed concern about the long-term implications for the British truck industry? Admittedly, there has been investment, but the situation now is that a major sector of our industrial base faces destruction. Does not the right hon. Gentleman accept the inconsistency of his statement to the House? On the one hand, there are full order books and a competitive business; on the other, there is no rcle for Government in ensuring its continuity.

Mr. Heseltine: That is a classic example of the Liberal Democrats wanting it both ways. They claim to want a single European market and to believe in Europe, but the moment a company sets out to achieve a Europe-wide base they criticise us.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): If the right hon. Gentleman really believes that he and his Department were doing all that was necessary in the run-up to today's announcement, how does he explain the fact that last week there was speculation in the press, particularly in Holland, that jobs in Britain would be at risk because of the Government's failure to get involved in a rescue plan? Does the right hon. Gentleman dispute the figures and the effects on jobs in Birmingham, Glasgow and Leyland claimed by my hon. Friends? What does the President's statement amount to, other than a wringing of hands?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman can start with the employment of 5,500 people in Leyland DAF in this country. I do not accept that that automatically means that all those jobs are at risk. It is hoped that there will be commercial solutions, which will produce long-term, viable opportunities for at least parts of the company and, therefore, for a significant number of the work force.

I fully accept that there has been speculation about the company's future for some time. We were fully aware of that. The only issue is whether we should have joined the Dutch and Belgian Governments, and whether we would have reached a different decision from theirs. I do not think that it was necessary for us to join them, because they were dealing with problems that were largely located on the continent; but, in view of the advice that we have received from banking sources, I do not see any reason for us to have reached a different decision.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Was the Secretary of State aware of the existence of the Albion works in Glasgow? He did not mention it until he was prompted. When did his Department first learn the extent of the serious financial problems enveloping the company? Was an intervention package prepared by his Department at any stage, and was such a package then rejected by the Secretary of State on political grounds? Has the right hon. Gentleman tried and failed, or has he just failed?

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, I was fully aware of the existence of the Albion factory in Glasgow. I have before me a list showing the location of Leyland DAF employees, and showing that the axles for the van were produced at the Albion works in Glasgow, which at the time employed some 500 people. The number of employees may have changed since then, but it is of that order.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether an intervention package had been presented. If he was asking whether we were prepared to put money into providing short-term working finance, I can tell him that we were not asked to do that, and that, if we had been asked, we would not have done it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Was not selling off British Leyland to DAF an act of sabotage in the first place, and were not the Government warned at the time that it could lead to the extinction of a significant part of British manufacturing industry?

The Secretary of State keeps talking about refusing to put money into manufacturing industry. Given that he knows that between 10,000 and 20,000 jobs may be at stake—if the component manufacturing jobs are taken into account—why will he not argue the case for putting money into British manufacturing industry to keep our skills and our industry alive? He is prepared to put money into the dole queue to finance the millions who are unemployed, and to add to the queue at a rate of more than £9,000 per head per year. That simply does not make economic sense, or compassionate sense.

Mr. Heseltine: The simple answer is that, having been here as long as the hon. Gentleman, I have observed the track record of parties in government which have put money into what is called "manufacturing industry". It always results in mounting losses, and in Governments eventually having to face unpalatable conclusions. The Labour party knows that, but is not prepared to recognise it.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Points of Order

3.57 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will confirm that, from time to time, all Secretaries of State exercise quasi-judicial duties, and that they are also responsible for allocating funds without partiality or prejudice. Today, when I accused the Secretary of State for Education of conducting a political vendetta against Bradford local education authority, he shouted from a sedentary position, "You haven't seen anything yet." For as long as that statement remains on the record, many of my constituents and others in Bradford will believe what they have suspected for a long time—that the Secretary of State for Education is greatly prejudiced against Bradford local education authority and its schools.

What I would like to ask you, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order are now prefaced with such a long preamble that they are really an extension of Question Time. I hope that, from now on, every hon. Member who raises a point of order will come directly to the point of order itself. To do otherwise is to abuse the House's time.

Mr. Madden: What I would like to ask is this, Madam Speaker. Will you arrange for my concern to be conveyed to the Secretary of State for Education, and will you provide him with an opportunity to withdraw what he said earlier today?

Madam Speaker: I fear that that is an extension of Question Time. Of course, the Secretary of State and other right hon. and hon. Members will see in *Hansard* tomorrow what has been said. I am sure that it will be brought to the Secretary of State's attention.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The procedural circumstances surrounding the Secretary of State's statement have changed; indeed, they changed as he was making it. During the statement, we discovered that the Government are not prepared under any circumstances to provide the rescue package which might keep Leyland DAF in business. The statement having been made in reply to a private notice question, the conditions are now ideal, indeed typical—even irresistible—for an emergency debate as the Leyland DAF case now fulfils the three qualifications of the Standing Order. If you were to allow me to make such an application, Madam Speaker, such a debate would also enable us to clarify some of the discrepancies between the statement made by the President of the Board of Trade and that made by DAF. Will you allow me to make such a submission, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: As the right hon. Gentleman and the House will know, all Secretaries of State, and hon. Members for that matter, are responsible for the statements that they make. It is not for the Speaker to comment on statements made by Secretaries of State. If the right hon. Gentleman cares to make an application to me, I shall of course consider it on its merits. I must not, as Speaker of the House, concern myself with the argument. As the right hon. Gentleman will understand, I must concern myself with the merits and I shall always look at applications purely in that light.

Mr. Hattersley: May I make an application?

Madam Speaker: I must have it in writing.

BILL PRESENTED

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (TOBACCO SMOKING)

Mr. George Foulkes, supported by Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. David Alton, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. John Maxton, Sir John Stanley, Mr. Henry McLeish, Mr. Alistair Darling and Mrs. Maria Fyfe, presented a Bill to amend the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 so as to provide for the control of smoking in places of work; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February, and to be printed. [Bill 125.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

DEFENCE RESEARCH AGENCY

That the draft Defence Research Agency Trading Fund Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Maritime Safety

4.1 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make further provision regarding maritime safety; to regulate shipping flying flags of convenience; and for connected purposes.

As you will be aware, Madam Speaker, I am an ex-miner, not an ex-mariner, but I make no apology for introducing the Bill because we both fight mother nature to earn a living—or we did in the past.

The case for tighter safety standards at sea is overwhelming; the motor vessel Braer disaster brought that home to us all in this country, especially those in Scotland and Shetland. Ferries, cargo ships and other ships with hazardous cargoes are all covered in the Bill. We must demand a commitment to safety from the Government to be enshrined in legislation. We should not have to wait for disasters before action is taken.

Lives have been lost. European documents show that since 1986, on average 230 ships, or 1·1 million gross tonnes, are lost every year involving a loss of more than 1,000 lives. The highest percentage—46 per cent.—of accidents involves general cargo ships, 26 per cent. fishing vessels, 6 per cent. bulk carriers and 5 per cent. tankers. All the indicators are that the situation will deteriorate in the near future.

Approximately 35 per cent. of all bulk carriers sunk in the past 15 years have been lost in the previous two months. Seventy-four per cent. of all tonnage lost in 1991 was more than 15 years old, and the world fleet is growing and aging rapidly.

Many flags with good safety records are losing vessels to flags with poorer safety records. Statistics derived from port state controls show a ratio of deficiencies over inspections of almost 79 per cent. of the worst flags compared with 12 per cent. for the best. The average age of flag of convenience ships is 17 years.

The people of Britain, especially those of Shetland and Scotland, are looking for immediate action to protect them. I suggest an amendment to the memorandum on port state control and the public right to know. My proposals are: first, the explicit concentration of inspections of ships flying flags of convenience and, secondly, full publication of all inspections, including those requested by the crew or maritime trade unions.

At present, inspections are carried out at random and few are undertaken. The results of such inspections are secret. The captain of the ship and the flag of convenience country get a copy of the results. The Minister of Transport keeps a copy, but it is confidential. No one else knows the results of such inspections. Australia has a black list of ships of that nature, and the system is working. That is one aspect which I should like to envisage in my Bill.

Thirdly, there should be an extension of inspections to operations in piloted waters with specific emphasis on the competence and efficiency of the officers and crew and the ability to understand and converse with each other. That proposal comes from a recommendation in a House of Lords inquiry in the past. Fourthly, the restrictions to reinspect within six months should be removed; and, fifthly, all foreign flag ships entering a Paris memorandum port for the first time should be inspected. Through the European Community and the International Maritime Organisation, there would be a similar extension of port state inspections to all other countries.

I understand the complexities of maritime law. I see no reason why the Government should disagree with my Bill. I cannot possibly include in my Bill the proposal to route tankers and ships from critical zones in and around, for example, the Minch and other ports of Scotland such as St. Kilda because of a restriction of time and space.

The Minister and the Government have had 13 years. The Minister of Transport was president of the Transport Committee in Europe for a year. I shall quote a statement made by the Minister in the House on 11 January on the MV Braer:

"The hon. Gentleman asked about the salvage operations convention. We hope to be able to ratify it as soon as we can find a legislative opportunity; it requires primary legislation." —[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 613.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) wrote asking that the international convention on salvage operations be incorporated in my ten-minute Bill and has had no reply. The offer still stands.

Part of the agreement of the international convention is a proposal that, if a ship is in trouble at sea and a tug appears to give assistance, the line must be taken aboard immediately. At present, the skipper must confer with the owners and valuable time is wasted. He may even refuse to take the line on board. If we endorsed the convention, such ships could be saved, lives could be saved and both the salvage and rescue workers could be protected. Other nations have endorsed such an arrangement. We should endorse the convention immediately, and I am willing once again to allow the Government to use my Bill to ratify and adhere to the principles and directives contained in the document entitled "International Convention on Salvage 1989".

The proposal is common sense. A new ship can break down and drift helplessly in a stormy sea. Delays in notifying the territorial maritime authorities and refusals of help must be stopped. If ships are in our territorial waters, the captains and owners must adhere to the directive. The quicker the Bill is accepted, the better.

If the result of my Bill means clearing the seas of potential disasters called ships of covenience, so be it. If it means that freight rates increase, so be it. If it means a scrap and build policy giving orders to British shipyards, so be it. If more ship owners continue to fly the red ensign, so be it. If we save the lives of seamen, sea women and, obviously, passengers, flora and fauna and seals and otters and the livelihood of the fishing communities in Scotland and elsewhere, so be it. If the Bill gives the people of this nation access to information about what is going on at sea, so be it.

Above all, if the Bill brings benefits out of disaster and leaves my grandson and others like him with a sea and seashore environment that is guaranteed safer, it will have all been worth while. I hope that the House will support my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Eric Clarke, Ms. Joan Walley, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Calum McDonald, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. David Jamieson, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Alan Meale and Mr. Ian Davidson.

Maritime Safety

Mr. Eric Clarke accordingly presented a Bill to make further provision regarding maritime safety; to regulate shipping flying flags of convenience; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February, and to be printed. [Bill 124.]

Orders of the Day

Railways Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: The First Report from the Transport Committee, The Future of the Railways in the Light of the Government's White Paper Proposals: Interim Report, HC (1992-93) 375, and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Transport Committee, HC (1992-93) 246 i-xxi.]

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, I should tell the House that I have had to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm. I should be much obliged if those hon. Members who speak outside those times exercised voluntary restraint—as I appreciate they have in recent times—so that other hon. Members may be called.

4.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

British Rail has improved considerably in recent years in many of its services. But most people agree that there is still much room for further improvement. The Bill will make possible an historic change for the better in Britain's railway system. In moving its Second Reading, I propose to reaffirm the objectives of our policy; to announce further major decisions affecting the railways; to explain how the Bill will enable the necessary changes to take place; and to deal with some of the key issues that have been raised since we launched the White Paper last July.

We begin with a railways regime not fundamentally changed since nationalisation in 1948. It is not in the interests of customers—or of management and staff—to persist with that regime. As an organisation, BR combines the classic shortcomings of the traditional nationalised industry. It is an entrenched monopoly. That means too little responsiveness to customers' needs, whether passenger or freight; no real competition; and too little diversity and innovation. Inevitably, it also has the culture of a nationalised industry: a heavily bureaucratic structure; an insufficiently sharp awareness on the part of employees that their success depends on satisfying the customer—indeed, on attracting more customers; and an instinctive tendency to ask for more taxpayers' subsidy and to feel that public subsidy will always be there as a crutch whenever things look difficult. Inevitably public ownership also brings with it the constraints of public finance, not least given the many competing demands on the public purse.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I have hardly begun; I shall give way in due course.

All this shows up in public dissatisfaction with the railways. As I said, there have been many improvements in BR in recent years. The organisational changes that the present chairman, Sir Bob Reid, and his board have been bringing in are major steps forward. Many employees do a splendid job within the confines of a monopolistic

nationalised industry, showing much dedication and skill. A recent example was the way in which those in ScotRail kept the trains running during appalling weather in recent weeks. I should like to pay a particular tribute to Tommy Robertson who, in the foulest of weathers, and after already very long hours, discovered in the middle of the night that the bridge at Forteviot had been badly damaged. His vigilance and dedication deserve the highest praise.

I repeat, however, that those who work in BR and the system have been constrained by the nationalised industry form of organisation, which has now been found wanting for all the other industries that we have privatised. The railways and their customers will benefit as much as other industries from a change in the culture and the system under which they have to operate.

We therefore aim to create a new regime for the railways. Our objective is to improve services for passengers and freight customers, while maintaining high safety standards and other necessary safeguards, including a commitment to the provision of subsidy to maintain loss-making but socially necessary passenger services, such as commuter lines and rural services.

I see at least three advantages in getting as much private-sector involvement, attitudes, objectives and management into our railway system as we possibly can. First, there is the big issue of the change of culture. I have been struck by the reaction I keep getting from those who worked in former nationalised industries and who now operate, in a range of industries, in the private sector. Time and again, it is the galvanising effect on their attitudes that they highlight—the transformation in work practices and approaches that occurs when they realise that their success depends on always putting customer requirements first.

This is a fundamentally important point, which is stressed by many people. Always putting customer requirements first is a change that we need in British Rail. I was struck by the fact that, just after we published the Bill, no fewer than five of the many newspaper editorials that support our proposals highlighted this aspect. Secondly, what we are doing will help to create more competition and choice. Thirdly, it will enable private-sector capital to supplement the existing sources of British Rail finance.

Mr. Barry Jones: Has the Secretary of State had representations from former employees of British Rail about concessionary travel? Can he give the House a commitment in respect of this matter?

Mr. MacGregor: We have often made it clear that concessionary travel arrangements will continue. Indeed, hundreds and hundreds of letters on that very point have been sent out. The same applies to pensions, with which I shall deal later.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I have a great deal to say, so I must get on.

We shall achieve our objectives by a structure with the following key elements. They were first set out in the White Paper, but it is worth restating them today.

First, British Rail's freight and parcels services will be sold to the private sector, and there will be open access for new operators. I have noticed that there has not been quite the same concentration on freight services as on passenger services. They are very important, so I want to deal with them. Freight services will be provided competitively, with no monopoly for any operator. I am in no doubt that this is what freight customers and potential operators want, and that breaking British Rail's monopoly is crucial if we are to succeed in getting more freight back on to the rails. We should be quite clear about the fact that this is a challenging target.

However, I have talked to many existing and potential customers, as well as operators—for example, at a conference a few weeks ago attended by well over 300 people—and they all sing the same tune. They are saying, in print and, everywhere they go, verbally, that this is the right way to reverse the decline in rail freight, to attract more freight from the roads.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): How can the Secretary of State say that he has not heard us talk about freight?

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State was giving way to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman).

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Many Conservative Members warmly support the broad arguments that my right hon. Friend is adducing in favour of the Bill, and wish him well in his long-term project, but I have to ask him whether he is aware that the majority of my rail-travelling constituents and, I suspect, many of those of my hon. Friends will apply three tests to this legislation.

They will ask, first, whether it will make the trains more reliable; secondly, whether it will improve the infrastructure of tracks, rolling stock and signals; and thirdly, whether it will deal with the problem, which is very acute in the short-haul commuter services, of the non-availability, at critical times, of drivers and guards. If my right hon. Friend can satisfy us on those points, we shall be very pleased.

Mr. MacGregor: The answer to all three questions is yes—*[Interruption.]*—and I pick up the final point, in view of some comments that have been made in the press. Because of previous practices in British Rail in the way in which people were eligible to become drivers, BR currently has a considerable proportion of drivers over the age of 55, so there is quite a long retirement queue coming up shortly. That is a problem because of previous employee relations practices, with BR not recruiting enough drivers. Our proposals, by encouraging franchisees to come on to line, will undoubtedly help with that problem.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must get on, because I have a great deal to say.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I keep hearing the hon. Gentleman from a sedentary position.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is clearly not giving way, at any rate for the moment.

Mr. MacGregor: Secondly, existing passenger services will be franchised to the private sector. Franchising allows subsidy to be paid if subsidy is needed. So it solves the

[Mr. MacGregor]

dilemma of how to introduce private sector management and private sector capital into loss-making services provided for social reasons. Franchising also allows the public interest in particular passenger services to be protected through contract conditions imposed by the franchising director.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I warn the House that, were I to give way to all hon. Members who wish to intervene, I would make an extremely long speech, and I am mindful of what Madam Speaker said. In any event, I must finish the passage which I have begun.

We envisage that the franchising director will begin his specification of services from the basis of the present timetable—*[Interruption.]* I am making some important points, which I am anxious to get over. He will also be able in appropriate circumstances to impose conditions on fares and services as part of the franchise contract. Such safeguards are made possible by, and are one of the major advantages of, the system that we are proposing.

The third key element of the new structure is that responsibility for track will generally be split from responsibility for operating trains. A new public sector organisation called Railtrack will be responsible for track. That split has a number of advantages, on which I will expand later. Railtrack will be required to contract out as many of its services as it reasonably can. That, too, is a vital point and is laid down in the Bill. It will be vital in improving its efficiency and thus keeping its prices down.

The fourth element in our proposals is new arrangements to allow access to the track for passenger and freight operators. That will be supervised by the independent rail regulator, who has among his responsibilities that of promoting competition and ensuring fair play, and of promoting the interests of consumers and ensuring that network benefits are maintained. I have announced that, subject to Parliament approving the enabling legislation, I intend to appoint John Swift QC as the regulator.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the assurances that he has given me in writing about safeguarding existing passenger services, and obviously I have a particular interest in the line from Plymouth to Penzance and the maintenance of through services. Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that he as Secretary of State and his successors will have a power of direction over the director of franchising to consider in certain circumstances putting out the whole of an existing service for franchising, rather than allowing people to pick off just the bits of a service that they want to franchise?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made that clear to my hon. Friend and, as I said, we expect the franchises—indeed, it will be the case—to be on the basis of the present timetable. I hope that gives my hon. Friend the assurance for the future that he seeks.

So the fundamentals of the policy are exactly as set out in the White Paper of last July. We believe that that is the best way to get as full private sector involvement and approaches as possible. A conventional flotation, with the railways as a whole in the public sector one day and in the private sector the next, is not possible. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I will explain why. Outright privatisation of all the railway is not on the agenda for the foreseeable future, not least because subsidy from the taxpayer is needed, and we have made it clear that we shall continue to provide that. So the principles and main structure of the Bill are entirely consistent——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must make more progress.

The principles and main structure of the Bill are entirely consistent with the White Paper, because we believe it to have struck the right balance. Nothing I have seen in the comments since it was published has convinced me otherwise, but on the detailed development of the policy we have been consulting carefully and taking seriously the representations we have received.

We have issued a range of important consultation and other documents, as we have developed the details of the proposals. Documents on franchising, on safety, on pensions, on rolling stock procurement, on the British Transport police, and on consumer representations have all been published.

I shall shortly be issuing a detailed technical document on the access and charging regime, and today I will annouce the general principles on which it will be based. I aim to issue by the end of March a document on the restructuring of the freight business for privatisation. There will also be a number of detailed documents put before the Standing Committee to deal with the various issues in the Bill. We shall continue to take account of the representations which we receive on these detailed elements of the policy.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I have almost forgotten my point, but the Secretary of State began by extolling the virtues of the change of climate in which the railways will become private. If that is so, why will the change of culture affect only those who are franchisees and not those who still run track?

Mr. MacGregor: I am inclined to think that the hon. Member could not have thought it was a very good point, since he seems to have forgotten what it was. It was not a particularly good point. The change in culture will come about, not only by private sector companies coming in, not only from the fact that a considerable number of British Rail managers are keen to engage in management buy-outs and are well aware of the change in culture that that could bring about, but also through the proposals we have for RailTrack. The main design and objective is to achieve that, in the interests of passengers.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I will give way once more.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I am wholly in favour of my right hon. Friend's aims to change the culture and to harness private enterprise, with all its vigour, to public purposes. He must be right in the way forward he is going, but when it comes to the commuter services—I think particularly of Network SouthEast—he must recognise that we are looking not merely for improved services but for an entirely new and modernised infrastructure for the 21st century to provide a wholly new, enhanced and dedicated transport service for the area. This will require vast investment funds. Will my right hon. Friend assure us

that his new plans will open the way for mobilising those funds on a far bigger scale than anything we have been able to achieve under the present regime?

Mr. MacGregor: I was intending to come on to that later, but I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support and his understanding of what we are doing. We have record levels of investment going into British Rail at present, certainly the highest—*[Interruption.]* I am replying to my right hon. Friend—levels are the highest since 30 years ago. I believe, and I shall be elaborating this later if I have time, that our proposals also offer, in addition to present methods of Government support and the possibilities of investment through revenue, more private capital to come in and supplement the revenue coming in for the first time. Although inevitably it will take some time, I believe that, over the period, we shall see a considerable increase in the investment going into the railway system.

As so many people wish to speak, I think I should now get on, as I have some important announcements to make and I have given way a great deal. Some of the points that have been raised I am dealing with.

We have very deliberately proceeded in this way. First, we set out the main policy in the White Paper six months ago, subsequently filling out the detail as we went along. That will continue. It would have been wrong to inflexibly pin down every element in advance of parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill and in advance of implementation by BR, the franchising director and the independent regulator, who need and will have important elements of discretion.

I turn now to a number of announcements that I wish to make today. First, on Railtrack, in the White Paper, we said:

". . . The Government believes that track and train operations should be separated at an early stage and that a new track authority—Railtrack—should be established initially within BR with responsibility only for track and associated infrastructure".

The separation of track from operations is a key element in our policy. Since the White Paper, we have been reflecting on this further, taking into account a wide range of comments—I am mindful, for example, of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) in the debate on the White Paper in October. We have now decided that BR ownership of Railtrack is no longer necessary or desirable.

It is important for all passenger franchisees and freight operators to know from the outset that Railtrack will be a truly independent, commercially driven body, and that there will not be any possibility of a conflict of interest involved in its remaining in the ownership of a body which also operates trains. That means that it must be fully independent of BR. I intend therefore that Railtrack will be separated from BR and made a Government-owned company in April 1994, and that preparations should begin now.

The chairman-designate of Railtrack will be Mr. Robert Horton, whom I recently appointed as vice chairman of the British Railways Board. Mr. Horton will have principal responsibility for taking forward the creation of Railtrack as a Government-owned company. He will work closely with the chairman and board of BR. BR will retain full operational responsibility until April 1994.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State said that preparations are beginning now. He and his Department are undertaking actions now in anticipation of the Bill being enacted. We are debating the Bill on Second Reading. It is important that you make it clear to the House exactly what the position is in relation to the Secretary of State and his Department taking actions which anticipate the Bill.

We have far too much of that from this arrogant Government. It is about time that they had some respect for Parliament and waited until Parliament had scrutinised the Bill and until it became an Act of Parliament before carrying it out. Will you give a ruling that the Secretary of State must not undertake the expenditure of money or take action until the Bill becomes law?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Gentleman has made his point forcefully, but it is a matter for the Government, and the Government know the rules.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman made his point at great length, and I shall reply to him very briefly. Of course I have respect for Parliament, which is precisely why I did not introduce the Railways Bill until the paving Bill had achieved Royal Assent from both Houses. The hon. Gentleman is asleep. That Bill enables British Rail to spend money in preparation for privatisation. We waited until we had parliamentary authority before we did it.

I wish to announce the first groups of services which I am asking British Rail to reorganise and prepare for transfer to private sector operators under our franchising proposals, and I could not do that without the paving Bill. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales have been consulted throughout.

The groups of services will be: the InterCity east coast main line; the InterCity Great Western main line to south Wales and the south-west; ScotRail; the London, Tilbury and Southend line; the south-west division of Network SouthEast; the Victoria-Gatwick express; and the Isle of Wight line.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The Isle of Wight!

Mr. MacGregor: That is exactly the kind of sedentary intervention I like to hear.

We cannot establish the real franchises——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a lot of noise in the Chamber. I thought that I heard the Secretary of State say that the east coast main line has been franchised, but I did not hear him clarify whether that franchise extends to Aberdeen or stops at Edinburgh. Can you, through your good offices, ask him to repeat that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No doubt so that the hon. Gentleman can intervene, and if the Secretary of State gives way, all well and good.

Mr. MacGregor: That is a cunning way of asking a question, but I shall answer it briefly. Of course it extends to Aberdeen.

We cannot establish the real franchises until we have the parliamentary authority and have set up the franchising director, who will be responsible for negotiating the contracts. The precise nature of those will be dependent on the response to the tenders—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan

[Mr. MacGregor]

(Mr. Salmond) complained about noise, but he is making more noise in the Chamber than anyone else. I should be grateful if he would allow my hon. Friends to hear me.

It is important to organise potential franchises in an operational form now so that we can gain experience of the restructuring, management and accountancy issues and have the broad structure of some franchises ready for an early start.

It is the intention that all British Rail's passenger services will be franchised in time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: The time for hon. Members to raise matters is during their speeches. My hon. Friend the Minister will reply in his winding-up speech.

Selecting the franchises and determining the pace of franchising must——

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way one more time.

Mr. Walden: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Is he aware that people who are not normally opposed to privatisation are sceptical about this privatisation? They are saying that anyone can run a line, but that what we need is someone to run the railway.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, and I envisage that, by having a number of people operating the railways and getting the private sector in, the railways will be better run. I notice that more and more people are saying the same thing. Indeed, the vast majority of editorials that have commented on the Bill have said precisely the same thing.

Selecting the franchises and determining the pace of franchising must take account of the further views of the private sector. That is important, because we want to ensure that there will be competition for the franchise units to achieve value for money. We shall also continue to take account of users' representations and the views of others, including Members of this House.

In the light of those views, I shall publish a complete map of franchises within the next few months, although even then it will be desirable to preserve flexibility for the franchising director, when he undertakes the real process of negotiating franchise applications in response to tenders after Royal Assent.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear that I shall not give way, as I have already done so a great deal for Opposition Members and I have made my position clear.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State has said that he expects Members to mention detailed matters in their speeches, but given that our speeches will be set against the background of his announcements, we seek clarification. For example, it would be helpful if the Secretary of State, when referring to the east coast line, could say whether he includes Inverness in that line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State will have heard the hon. Lady.

Mr. MacGregor: There will be many months in which to go through the further details of all the issues in my announcement today before they become operational. There must be limits to what I give way on this speech —[Hon. Members: "Answer the question."] The answer to the hon. Lady's question is yes.

In the light of those views, I shall publish a complete map of franchises within the next few months.

Mr. Home Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—as that seems to be the only way to be heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mr. MacGregor: It is perfectly clear what the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) was up to. I certainly would not wish to answer his point of order.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is no good hon. Members saying that they have points of order when they are not genuine points for me. The rules of debate are clear.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that it is a genuine point of order.

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, it relates to my earlier point of order. The Secretary of State for Transport has said that there will be some months to discuss the details, yet in reply to my earlier point of order he said that he can make irrevocable decisions because of the paving Bill. The decisions will therefore have been made and implemented, and the House will not have had an opportunity to discuss them fully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order; it is a point of argument.

Mr. MacGregor: Not only is it not a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is wrong again, because the hon. Gentleman has not listened to what I said—that there would be no real franchise until we had got the Bill through Parliament. So there cannot be a real franchise based on any of these until the Bill has gone through Parliament.

If there are any more of these points of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will make my speech a very long one. I do not think that it is in the interests of others who wish to speak.

I was saying that I would put forward in the next few months a complete map of franchises, although even then it will be desirable to preserve flexibility for the franchising director when he comes to undertake the real process of negotiating franchise applications in response to tenders after Royal Assent. Private sector bidders, however, will wish to see some operational running in shadow form before making bids, and my announcement today enables that process to start.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I would like to get on. I have given way to my hon. Friend a very great deal, and I want to complete this speech. *[Interruption.]* I will give way, but I must make it clear that this is the last time.

Mr. Adley: My right hon. Friend has announced six franchises. Can he say whether it will be within his policy to agree that these six, or seven, franchises can be operable as vertical franchises, if that is what the private sector wants?

Mr. MacGregor: I am coming to that point now. I was about to say that one issue which has surfaced in public debate is that of vertical integration—the management and control of both track and trains by the same body—as against horizontal integration—separating the track authority from the operators. We concluded, and we made it clear in our election manifesto, that full vertical integration was neither practical nor desirable across the great bulk of the railway network. That is why we propose Railtrack as the national infrastructure authority. I want to deal with this because it is a very important point—I agree with my hon. Friend on that—and it is important to set out the arguments.

We decided not to pursue the alternative of a complete system of vertically integrated franchises, for a number of reasons. First, operators who run both the track and the trains would inevitably face a conflict of interest when others applied to run services on their line. We want to give everyone, including freight operators, a fair crack of the whip—they regard this as very important—but we could do it on vertically integrated lines only if we adopted intrusive regulation to ensure fair treatment for all.

Secondly, one of our key priorities is to secure suitable levels of investment in rail infrastructure. Investment on that scale requires a strategic view of the kind that only Railtrack can provide. Railtrack will focus infrastructure investment on the parts of the network where it is most needed. It would be unrealistic to expect individual franchisees to do the same. There could be a problem for individual franchisees in meeting the capital investment requirements in particular franchise areas.

Thirdly, Railtrack will have the key role in ensuring the safety aspects of track and signalling. The existence of a national track authority will ensure that safety standards and procedures are co-ordinated across the track in a clear and systematic way—a point that was of particular importance to the Health and Safety Commission in its consideration of our proposals. It would be much more difficult to achieve that if track responsibilities were spread across a large number of local operators.

Fourthly, we need a national track authority to ensure that operational timetabling is co-ordinated efficiently across the whole of the network.

Those are compelling reasons which led us to decide not to hand the whole railway, lock, stock and barrel, to local franchise operators. However, in a limited number of cases, particular features may suggest that it is right to make an exception and to allow a degree of vertical integration. I have decided, for example, that the Isle of Wight can be offered as a vertically integrated franchise —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—as it is completely separate from the rest of the network.

I recently announced that, subject to parliamentary approval of the enabling legislation, I intended to appoint Mr. Roger Salmon as the first franchising director. Meanwhile, Mr. Salmon will act as my special adviser on franchising and will therefore play an important part in the development of our approach to franchising in this transitional period.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I will not give way again. I have made that clear.

My third major announcement today concerns rail freight. Everyone agrees that carrying freight by rail usually offers environmental advantages as compared with using lorries. But translating that sentiment into practice is another matter. Rail freight has suffered from reductions in demand for the type of traffic for which it is best suited —heavy freight: aggregates, steel, oil and coal. In the fast-growing areas of consumer goods, new distribution and retailing patterns—just-in-time concepts, for example —are right for the consumer and for the marketplace but they are not easy for a monolithic industry to respond to. Under BR ownership, rail freight has not been as efficient or as responsive to that market as it should have been.

I am convinced that our policies offer the best prospects for halting the decline in freight by rail and seeing more freight switched from road to rail. By privatising existing freight operations, ending BR's monopoly and opening up the rail network to as many private sector operators as wish to make use of it, I intend to assist this process by introducing three new measures.

First, we will enhance the existing freight facilities grants scheme. The scheme provides targeted financial assistance to capital projects which demonstrably help the environment by switching traffic from road to rail or to inland waterways. I propose to expand the scheme in three ways. Grants will be made available to private rail freight operators as well as customers and consignors; grant will cover all forms of capital expenditure and equipment, including locomotives and track and structures specifically needed for freight; and grant assessments will now include traffic taken off inter-urban main roads and motorways. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nice little handout."] It is very significant, that derisory comment from hon. Opposition Members. The fact of the matter is that these enhancements will broaden the scope of this successful scheme and, I believe, will be widely welcomed by the industry and by all those concerned about the environment.

Secondly, I propose to issue a consultation document containing proposals to encourage combined transport movements, and to help keep down the number of lorries on our roads, but allowing lorries carrying goods in containers or swapbodies, to and from railheads only, to operate at up to 44 tonnes gross weight on six axles, provided they are specially equipped with road-friendly suspension and axle layout. That will give rail a competitive edge. It will be particularly important for the development of channel tunnel freight services.

My third proposal involves a new principle. I remind the House that all forms of subsidy to the freight railway ceased under the last Labour Government in 1977. That was based on the belief that rail freight should operate as a commercial business, and fundamentally that is right. But financial support can be justified where there are unambiguous wider benefits.

I therefore propose to introduce a new grant, up to 100 per cent. of the track charges if necessary, to contribute towards track charges for freight traffic which can be demonstrably proven otherwise to move from rail to road, or could not be attracted to rail without it. This even

[Mr. MacGregor]

means that, where the environmental and other benefits can clearly justify it, access to the network can be made free at the point of use for freight operators.

I must stress that the Government will expect to see clear returns for their money by way of these environmental benefits, and that the grant will be available only up to the limit of the track charges levied by Railtrack.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: The combination of our proposals for privatising rail freight, the introduction of open access to the network, the opening of the channel tunnel and the measures that I have announced today amounts to a major new opportunity for freight on rail. It demonstrates our determination to get the freight railway back on its feet.

Mr. McFall *rose*——

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: It demonstrates our determination to get the freight railway back on its feet.

I give way to my hon. Friend.

Sir David Mitchell: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Can he say whether he will take steps to ensure that open access to freight is brought in under his existing powers before the Bill becomes law?

Mr. MacGregor: I fear that I do not have the powers to do exactly what my hon. Friend suggests, nor can we introduce these measures until we have the Royal Assent. So I very much hope that we will get the Royal Assent as quickly as possible.

Mr. McFall *rose*——

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I want to turn to a very important point now, which I know concerns a lot of hon. Members and which has already been raised—the access regime for rail operators. I will be publishing a separate detailed document on this before the relevant debates during the Committee stage of the Bill. Access arrangements are central to the private sector operation of trains. There are two key issues: how operators will be able to get paths, and the basis of the charges they will pay. We also need a system which is simple for operators, which facilitates franchising and encourages rail freight, and which gives the right economic signals. This includes generating revenue for Railtrack sufficient to cover its costs and enable it to invest.

The independent regulator will be responsible for approving access agreements, and under the Bill he will have duties to protect users and encourage competition. All access arrangements will be subject to Community law. Within this framework, the Government see the system operating as follows.

Freight operators should agree paths and prices with Railtrack on a commercial, freely negotiated basis. It is particularly important for Railtrack to be able to charge market-based prices to freight operators, because it needs income to cover the common costs of the track—those which cannot be attributed to individual operators. Operators can afford to make different contributions to those common costs. If prices were based on average costs, marginal freight operators would be driven away. Conversely, if all prices covered only marginal costs, Railtrack would never cover its common costs.

The system we propose offers the best chance of keeping marginal freight traffic on the railway, and of allowing Railtrack to cover its costs. The alternative of posted prices, whether average or marginal, fails on those counts. The new scheme that I have announced today for assisting rail freight operators with track costs will also help the most marginal flows. The regulator will supervise the system to ensure that Railtrack does not abuse any monopoly power or unfairly discriminate.

A different regime is needed for franchised passenger services. Our longer-term aim is to adopt a market-based system of access for those services too, with increasing competition as the market develops. But for the first generation of franchises, the necessary trainpaths for franchises will be secured from Railtrack by the franchising director, acting under the guidance of the Secretary of State. Those trainpaths will then be offered to potential franchisees as part and parcel of the invitation to tender for franchises.

The price that Railtrack will receive for franchise train paths will be agreed with the franchising director according to economic principles developed by our advisers, Coopers and Lybrand. Those will be set out in the detailed document that we shall be publishing. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] I have already said that it will be published soon—in advance of discussion in Committee —I hope, early next week.

The prices for franchised trainpaths will be guaranteed by the franchising director—*[Interruption.]* I am covering an important part of the proposals, which I am sure many people will wish to study.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): We are discussing an important issue. Many people have demanded information on the criteria to be used for track costs. Am I to understand from what the Secretary of State is saying that the report is ready, in his hands, and will be published before the Committee meets, which is likely to be next Tuesday—within days of today's debate? Why could not the Secretary of State produce the report in time for today's debate?

Mr. MacGregor: We have produced a great deal for today's debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am outlining the principles in my speech now. We shall have the detailed document ready. We are moving as fast as we can, and hope to have it published and ready next week.

The task of bidders will be greatly simplified, as they will have only one bid to make, for the franchise. Therefore, if bidders cannot afford the access price, it will be subsidised by the franchising director.

The proposals give priority at the outset to franchises. I make no apology for that. If we are to change the culture, which I have stressed throughout is vital, it will be through introducing private sector disciplines or attitudes into as many passenger services as possible. That means not just a few individual services on particular lines—although I do not wish to underestimate the importance of such competition where possible—but introducing disciplines into whole franchised sectors. If competition has to be moderated in the early stages to achieve the successful

launch of franchising, some exclusivity may be necessary. On some crowded lines, there may also be technical reasons for doing so initially.

Finally, I should explain the significance of Railtrack's financial objectives for the access arrangements.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State has made a number of important announcements this afternoon that would normally form the basis of a ministerial statement, which would have allowed many Opposition Members to ask questions. He has effectively hidden his announcement in his speech on Second Reading and refused to give way to Opposition Members who have tried to raise important constituency issues. Is that not an abuse of the orders and procedures of the House designed to protect Back Benchers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is a Second Reading debate, in which the Secretary of State chooses what he wishes to speak about.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) made a ludicrous charge. I have been——

Mr. McFall: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been present since the beginning of the debate, and have been trying to intervene. The Secretary of State has three times said that he was taking his last intervention. I wish to pose questions on the issue of ScotRail. Do we have to occupy Conservative Benches before the Secretary of State will give way to us?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State gives way to whom he chooses.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Did not the Secretary of State mention my constituency not once but three times in the debate? I am the only representative of that constituency in the House, and I am not complaining at all about the fact that my right hon. Friend did not give way to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was not a point of order —I heard some cheers earlier on.

Mr. MacGregor: This is unlike a statement: we have made announcements in several debates and documents of our policy on this important issue, and shall continue to do so. We are today debating the Bill's Second Reading. The Bill will go into Committee and there will be many months in which to consider all the aspects. I am mindful of the need to get on so that other hon. Members may speak.

I should explain the significance of Railtrack's financial objectives for the access arrangements. We have deliberately chosen to provide subsidy to operators, not to Railtrack. That is because subsidy is best directed at its intended purpose—the continued provision of socially necessary passenger services which might otherwise disappear.

Therefore, Railtrack will operate on commercial lines, making an appropriate rate of return, which the Government will fix nearer the time that Railtrack goes live. But franchisees will have to pay only the track charges that they can afford. The proposals for charges for freight operators are specifically designed to maintain flexibility to protect marginal operators while charging more to those who can afford it.

Many people talk about level playing fields—it is a big debate. The House will recall that, last autumn, I announced that later this year I would produce a Green Paper on road user charging. The principle of that is that the costs of infrastructure should be covered by users. Therefore, one other element of the policy will be the Green Paper on road user charging.

Before I turn to the Bill's main provisions, I shall say a word about the ticketing and other facilities that will be available to rail passengers under our proposals. We believe that the injection of private sector marketing skills will increase the range of flexibility of the benefits on offer. Private operators will have the freedom and incentive to get more customers on to the railway, which will mean giving passengers convenient and flexible ticketing arrangements. It will also mean offering discounts to boost patronage on certain services and ensuring that all relevant information about services is available to the public. With the private sector in the lead, we expect that most network benefits will be promoted, either individually or collectively, by the operators, but fallbacks will be available.

The Bill will give general powers to the regulator and the franchising director to ensure that key network benefits are maintained. For example, we shall require through ticketing to be provided at all major ticket offices.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Only major ones?

Mr. MacGregor: Through ticketing is not provided at all ticket offices at present, which shows how ignorant the hon. Gentleman is.

We shall guarantee the publication of a national timetable. No less important, we shall require franchisees, as part of their contract, to provide common discount facilities for the disabled. I am sure that that commitment will be welcomed on both sides of the House.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, and I am sure that his answer to my question will be listened to with great interest by people both inside and outside the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to guarantee the continuation of a national network railcard for the elderly and for young people?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made the position clear on the disabled. There is no statutory obligation on British Rail to provide the railcard at present, and we do not propose to change the system. However, I have made it clear that I believe that it will be in the interests of franchisees to offer such facilities.

I shall turn now to the Bill's main provisions. Part I covers the provision of railway services under the new regime. It deals broadly with licensing, franchising and access, and the organisations to be set up to make those possible and effective.

Clause 1 and schedule 1 empower the Secretary of State to appoint the regulator and the franchising director. Other clauses impose duties on those office holders. The present consumer organisations need to be updated to play a similar role in the new railway. Clauses 2 and 3 achieve that, and various other aspects of clause 1—which I shall not go into in detail now, due to the pressure of time—cover licensing, franchising and access aspects.

[Mr. MacGregor]

Clauses 35 to 44 cover the important closure procedures. The existing procedures have to be amended to fit the new circumstances of the railway. They have not been weakened.

The remainder of part I contains a wide range of other measures needed to underpin the provision of railway services in the new regime.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Part II provides for the restructuring of BR. There is a crucial point here, because immediate and uninformed comment—including, typically, from the Opposition—suggested that we were taking covert powers to privatise London Underground among the transport undertakings. That is wholly wrong. It is this part of the Bill which covers privatisation as such. It does not apply to London Transport or any undertaking other than BR. The Bill gives no power to privatise London Underground.

Part II makes it possible for companies to be formed out of BR. Those companies will form the basis of key players in the future railway. Thus the freight businesses to be sold to the private sector will first be formed as companies, as will the passenger franchise units. Railtrack will also be created as such a company and transferred to the direct ownership of the Government under those powers.

Clause 82 contains a particularly important provision. It confirms, for the avoidance of doubt, that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 apply to transfer schemes under clause 75. That will make employees' rights clear in respect of every transfer.

Part III contains a number of miscellaneous, general and supplemental provisions, some of which are of great importance. Clause 107 applies part I of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to the railways. That will allow the new system for railway safety proposed by the Health and Safety Commission, endorsed by the chairman of BR and accepted by the Government, to be implemented by regulations under that Act.

Other clauses cover board pension schemes, the British Transport police, concessionary travel facilities for employees, and clauses 118 to 123 cover financial provisions to allow the continued provision of subsidies and grants in the new railway, including the improved arrangements for freight facilities grants to which I referred earlier.

I come now to some of the points that have been raised, including those raised in earlier debates, which enables me to deal with them briefly. I start with the interim report of the Select Committee on Transport. There is much common ground between us. For example, we are agreed that there should be a regulator. We have included provisions in the Bill for independent consumer committees. We agree that freight should be privatised. We are committed to continuing subsidy for passenger services. We have already clarified, as I have again today, other issues about which the Committee was concerned, including network benefits, pensions and access charges.

One concern that was raised in the early months in particular was safety. I spoke about that in the House the other day when I announced the publication of the Health and Safety Commission's report on safety. The safety concerns have now been fully dealt with. It is noticeable that they are not now being commented on. The Government accepted in full the 38 recommendations, and the chairman of British Rail agreed that the safety aspects of the new regime were fully satisfactory.

Pensions is the second area to be raised, naturally and understandably, with me, and in many other ways, by the railway unions. I fully understand their concerns about pensions for existing employees and for retired British Rail pensioners. We have produced a consultative document on that which makes it clear that we shall make available an industrywide pension scheme for which the unions particularly asked. I believe that that deals with all the key questions on pensions.

There will be controls on railway operators' freedom to increase fares where they might otherwise be able to take advantage of having significant market power to exploit passengers—for example, on London commuter services. Those will be exercised by the franchising authority for franchise services and by the regulator for fully privatised services.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I must get on—I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me.

Mr. Renton *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. friend and I have already corresponded on fares.

Mr. Renton *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate my right hon. Friend giving way.

I agree with much that he has said this afternoon, but it would be helpful if, before he finishes, he would explain why he is so confident that the combination of regulator and franchising director will solve the conundrum that we have had for so long on the commuting lines out of London. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, how can there be substantial investment in the infrastructure without excessive increases in fares? My right hon. Friend must realise that thousands of my constituents depend on his answer. They have to get to work every day in London, Crawley, Gatwick or Brighton—punctually, and at a price that they can reasonably afford.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already corresponded with my right hon. Friend on that. I see no reason why fares should increase faster under the new system then they do under the present nationalised industry structure. In many cases, they will be more flexible and will be reduced. I have already described how, through the franchising authority or the regulator, controls will continue on commuter lines.

There has been substantial investment in many areas of BR in recent years. For example, I know that it does not help my right hon. Friend, but, as I have mentioned, the Networker line has just received an investment of £800 million. That has been possible as a result of the increase in subsidies to British Rail despite the problem of declining revenue. Such support will continue. *[Interruption.]* It will be for Railtrack to decide its priorities. In addition, franchisees will be able to take advantage of the leasing

market and of private capital. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend will know that we now have a £150 million facility scheme.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a vital debate, and it is almost impossible to hear the Secretary of State. If the Minister does not intend to give way, will you at least encourage him to address the Chair?

Mr. MacGregor: I am happy to repeat what I have just said, because I know that it is important to the hon. Lady.

We shall be enabling and encouraging private sector capital. The £150 million leasing arrangement, introduced in anticipation of privatisation, is part of that. The prospects for increased investment are undoubtedly greater under the proposed system than under the present system.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I come briefly to closures, which is a matter of great concern to many hon. Members. I see no reason why privatisation should lead to a reduction in passenger services. I have made it clear that we shall continue to pay subsidies to support socially necessary railway operations on unprofitable lines. The availability of public subsidy will mean that the private sector can earn a reasonable return on services that currently make a loss.

In return for public subsidy, franchisees will sign legally binding contracts with the franchising director which will specify the quality and frequency of the services that they will be running. Franchisees will not be able to close down loss making lines. Where proposals for closures come in the future as they have in the past, the Bill makes it clear that we shall continue with the current strict statutory procedures.

Mr. McFall *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Finally, a point that has frequently been raised concerns what is described as the bureaucracy under the system. When the new system is up and running, it will be more streamlined and less bureaucratic than the present system. The reason for that is straightforward. The new system will have an independent safety authority. We have an independent safety authority now, and no one is suggesting otherwise. It will have consumer committees —the rail users committees. We have them now, and no one is suggesting otherwise.

It will have the franchising authority, which will carry out a function of the distribution of subsidy which at present is carried out between my Department and British Rail and so already exists. However, in future it will be more transparent and open for everyone to see, whereas now it is sometimes difficult to know where the subsidy goes. Therefore, that function basically exists at present. We shall have Railtrack, whose function exists now. The only new element is the regulator, which the Select Committee has said is necessary.

Therefore, there is no increase in bureaucracy. At the moment, British Rail has a heavily structured bureaucracy, and the new arrangements will move in the opposite direction. It is rich for Opposition Members to talk about bureaucracy when they are now proposing a new independent railway commission.

That brings me to the Labour party. Yesterday morning, I heard that Labour was launching that afternoon its 10-point plan for the railways. What an impact it had. I had to scour this morning's newspapers with a magnifying glass for even a mention. Then, courtesy of *The Guardian*, I found seven of the 10 points. No wonder the plan was ignored: apart from the usual more staff, more costs, and more subsidies to run the present system, only two points said anything new. I say this for the benefit of my right hon. and hon. Friends, because I am sure that they did not spot that report in *The Guardian* this morning.

The two points were a new independent railways commission with wide-ranging powers to oversee British Rail—who is talking about bureaucracy?—and powers for British Rail, still wholly in the public sector, to borrow from private funds free of all Treasury constraints, just as the French railways do.

What is the consequence in France? It is a total debt of £14 billion, compared to British Rail's £2 billion; an annual interest payment of £1·3 billion—*[Interruption.]* No wonder the Opposition do not like to hear this. That annual interest payment of £1·3 billion—a colossal burden on French taxpayers and rail users—compares with British Rail's £80 million. The result is that 20 per cent. of SNCF's annual costs are debt interest payments, compared with British Rail's 1·5 per cent.

If that is Labour Members' prescription for British taxpayers and rail users, I tell them to beware—it would be a total disaster. That would be the consequence of Labour's proposals—just throw more taxpayers' money at it; run the railways for the railwaymen; ignore completely the lessons of other privatisations and the benefit that they can bring to customers by better systems, greater motivation, innovation, and enterprise.

There are benefits to the customer. British Telecom's prices are down 27 per cent. in real terms since privatisation, with much better services, more choice, and further innovation. British Gas prices are down by 20 per cent. in real terms. There are the benefits of investment: in all the major industries, there was greater investment after privatisation than before. And there are the benefits to the taxpayer.

Each and every time that we embarked on the privatisation of an industry, the Labour party opposed it. Time and again on Second Reading, it said that it would reverse our proposals—as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will no doubt do today. Each and every time the Labour party predicted disaster, and each and every time we proved it wrong.

We proved—by the success of the British Airports Authority, British Airways, National Freight Corporation, National Express, British Telecom, the regional electricity companies, and British Gas—that the involvement of the private sector works, and works well, for the customer.

Each and every time, the Labour party had to admit that it was wrong—because one does not hear it say today that it will renationalise any of those ventures. So it will be for British Rail. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East or his successor will be forced to admit that our proposals, as outlined in the Bill, are the right way forward for our railways of the future in the interests of passengers, freight, and employees alike. That is why I commend the Bill to the House for a Second Reading.

5.12 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The Secretary of State said a considerable amount, much of which was of interest, and gave information and facts that we have wanted for a long time. However, it is extremely difficult to make a proper judgment on the right hon. Gentleman's statements without the documentation relating to complicated aspects—as I am sure he would be the first to concede.

The right hon. Gentleman followed exactly the same procedure in respect of the health and safety document, which he introduced in his speech but which was already in the Vote Office, ready to be distributed. The right hon. Gentleman could have paid the House the courtesy of distributing that document, so that we could have formed some judgment on his later claim that the railway system will be much safer.

We shall find the same with track charges. The Secretary of State has the track costs document printed and ready—is that not right? I ask the Secretary of State: is that document ready now? It is ready, printed, and available—we all know that. The right hon. Gentleman could have produced that document on an issue that is essential—as was pointed out by the Select Committee and by all who criticise the privatisation proposals. The right hon. Gentleman introduced it in his speech, which makes it difficult for us to reach a proper judgment. No doubt that document will be produced before the Committee meets, which will probably be on Tuesday. We could have had it in time for this debate. That shows the contemptible way in which the Secretary of State introduces material to the House.

The right hon. Gentleman could have been a little more sympathetic in respect of his new proposals on franchising and allowed hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies to intervene, particularly as he is subjecting Scotland's entire railway system to this experiment. That is one reason why the House is angry about statements in the Secretary of State's speech.

Mr. McFall: I thank my hon. Friend very much for allowing me to intervene. Last week, I spoke to commuters and concerned individuals in Inverness. They pointed out that the Ness bridge in Inverness was dismantled in 1989 but, because of floods, had to be rebuilt last year at a cost of £3 million. Scotland has 2,200 bridges. We saw the damage done by the Perth floods, which cost British Rail £1 million. The Secretary of State said that with the introduction of the private sector there will be private sector discipline. What guarantees can be given about those bridges and Scotland's social subsidy? It seems that the Secretary of State has no guarantees. That is no comfort to the people of Scotland.

Mr. Prescott: Clearly, we shall want to question the Secretary of State on that essential point in Committee. It is important to know where the money for the rail track costs and the necessary safety investment that he mentioned is to come from. I shall return to that point later.

The Secretary of State began his remarks by speaking of a historical change, and one is certainly being made. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that it will be for the better, but that is not proven—certainly not by the right hon. Gentleman's speech. The Bill's provisions seem to change from day to day. It has changed tremendously, from privatisation to commercialisation, due to one or two cherry-picking ventures. The Secretary of State stated today where they will be: they are the profitable routes —not a railway system. As was said by a Conservative Member, the Government should be more concerned about who is to run the railways than who is to run one or two lines.

The Secretary of State said that privatisation had produced better results, whether it be in respect of gas, electricity, or water. That is disputable, but we can have that argument on another occasion. I cannot use the hour that the Secretary of State has taken, because that would deny a number of Back Benchers an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh) *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: No, I will not give way.

A comparison has been made between British Rail and the privatisation and deregulation of buses, which it was said would provide better services, lower fares, and investment. Instead, there is clear evidence that passengers pay a lot more, fewer services are available, buses run only on profitable routes, and there are no service cross-subsidies. The bus manufacturing industry has collapsed from 7,000 orders per year to none. It is plain that deregulation and privatisation destroyed our effective, modern bus industry.

Sir David Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: No—I am not giving way to Tories.

At last we have the Second Reading. Never has a Bill changed so many times. Never has a Bill been so universally condemned. Never has a Bill lost its essential justification—that private competition and privatisation would provide the means by which to change the service. All that the Secretary of State seemed to claim was that there will be a change in the culture. That was his essential point. He is to replace public management with private management, and there will be fundamental changes. Of course there will—one of them will be the pay inceases for the bosses at the top who will be running the system. That will happen straight away.

We shall have to wait to find out whether privatisation will lead to improvements, but I do not believe that it will. Essentially, the Bill is an enabling measure——

Mr. Milligan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: In a second.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Weakness!

Mr. Prescott: All right, I will give way now.

Mr. Milligan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way at last. He mentioned the gas, water and electricity industries. In the last Parliament, he said that if the Labour party took power they would renationalise those industries. Is that still his view?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman should be more concerned about the state of the Eastleigh and Southampton railway services. He should be intervening on that subject.

I firmly believe that a publicly owned railway system can provide a better service than one that is privately owned. According to the Secretary of State, this is not privatisation but commercialisation. It will lead not to

competition in the provision of services, but to competition for the taxpayer's money for the payment of subsidies. That is the only competition that there will be. Instead of the public monopoly about which the Government are so concerned, we shall have what the Secretary of State called "exclusive services"—in other words, a private monopoly. We shall be replacing a public monopoly with a private one.

The process will not, however, be completed under the present Government. According to the Secretary of State, it will not be completed until the next century. Nor will it reduce bureaucracy. As the Secretary of State has been forced to admit, there will be more quangos. I note that he drew a distinction between the present employment of civil servants by British Rail and their future employment by quangos. One of the Tory party's essential arguments has concerned the growth and proliferation of quangos in the civil service, and in bureaucratic organisations. Now the Secretary of State is establishing quangos and claiming that they will not increase bureaucracy. The evidence is against the right hon. Gentleman. I do not believe him, and neither did the Tory party at the beginning of the decade, which spent all its time abolishing quangos, for the very reasons that I have cited.

The Bill offers no guarantee that the existing network of 11,000 miles will continue. That was the justification for the public service obligation payments made by the European Community. Despite what the Secretary of State said, there is no guarantee of protection from closures, especially in rural areas. Let us consider the reasons currently given for such closures. Perhaps British Rail wants to run a train from Yarmouth, in the Secretary of State's area, to Peterborough; it wants to speed up the journey, so it begins to cut the number of rural stops.

I must emphasise the importance of network services, whether in rural or urban areas. Often people who live in rural areas want to drive to the station and then travel into town by rail to avoid the congestion on the roads. The Secretary of State has an answer to that: the introduction of road pricing. That is another proposal that he has slipped in. Clearly, huge charges for road freight and passengers will be needed to subsidise the policy, and they will apply not to taxpayers but to road users. That is what the Secretary of State has told us.

There is no guarantee, either, that we can sustain the £1 billion investment which, according to the chairman of British Rail and everyone else concerned, is the minimum that will be necessary. The Secretary of State has talked of a record level of investment; what he means, of course, is the actual amount put into the channel tunnel. The chairman of British Rail has told the Select Committee that, after two years, investment in the tunnel will fall to an average of £600 million a year. That is less than the average in the late 1980s, and it is not enough to maintain the support that Network SouthEast requires.

The Secretary of State plainly has not convinced Conservative Members with seats in Network SouthEast areas about the source of the money or indeed whether it will arrive. Obviously it will not arrive, although a £1 billion annual investment is needed.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: I certainly will not give way to you.

Furthermore, the Secretary of State has not guaranteed the maintenance of a proper standard of safety. He has not guaranteed that the railways will retain freight, rather than more of it being transported by road. It is interesting to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that he is now convinced of what needs to be done to transfer the traffic from road to rail. He may not know it, but a lot of the ideas that he has announced have been pinched from Labour. The leasing proposals are one example, but three more of his ideas can be found in Labour's transport document, produced at the time of the general election. We suggested that heavy lorries could be taken from certain sites to the railheads, and that subsidies could be made available to relieve motorway congestion.

All the ideas offered by the Secretary of State were published years ago: he is merely trawling our documents and adding our policies to his. I agree that those proposals will help to transfer traffic from road to rail, and I am in favour of that, but the Secretary of State has just announced that there must be an 8 per cent. rate of return on freight. His present policy is driving a number of private companies to transfer the equivalent of 100,000 lorryloads from rail to road in the south-east. He need not wait for legislation to change the position; he could change it now. Select Committees have recommended such action. It is arrant nonsense to talk of the need to wait for legislative change. The present Secretary of State seems unaware that he has the powers to introduce change; his predecessor suggested that he would introduce it, but never did.

I welcome the proposals. I have advocated transferring more traffic from road to rail, and they will help us to do that. My only difference with the Secretary of State lies in the fact that it is unnecessary to wait 18 months for legislation before effecting the policy. There is a specific reason why it is now so important to reverse the policy of driving traffic from rail to road. British Rail has increased its prices to some freight operators by as much as 150 per cent. It is not possible to operate a service on such terms. Is the right hon. Gentleman telling us that he will allow hundreds of lorryloads of freight to travel by road when he could stop it? Will he reverse that stupid policy, which has arisen directly from the track charges required to meet the 8 per cent. rate of return that he has imposed on British Rail? I am happy to give way to the right hon. Gentleman because a good many people would like to hear the answer.

Mr. MacGregor: In fact, the rate of return which British Rail is being asked to achieve, and which it is not achieving, is a good deal less than 8 per cent. Some services are making substantial losses; those losses must be addressed, in view of the heavy losses currently being incurred in rail freight.

Mr. Prescott: I cannot understand the right hon. Gentleman's logic. Has he not announced that he is prepared to subsidise those companies to deal with the track charges because of the difficulties of marginal costing? Legislative change is not needed for that; as I have said, these are just Treasury rules, which are absurd. The Secretary of State clearly does not understand what he is doing with the railway system. He could reverse the policy if he wished, but he appears not to know what powers he has. He is not competent to understand what is involved in transferring freight from road to rail.

[Mr. Prescott]

The Secretary of State spoke of passengers' rights, and protection through the passenger transport consultative committee. The committee has issued a report saying that the Bill will not improve the position, and that it will reduce the committee's powers. I do not know whether the Secretary of State reads the documents that are sent to every Member of Parliament, but that is what the committee says.

Certainly, the Secretary of State has not inspired us with any confidence about concessionary travel. He said that it was guaranteed, but according to clause 117 such travel "may" be provided. As every hon. Member knows, "may" is not the same as "shall". Anyone who doubts what I am saying should consider what happened when the bus service industry was deregulated. Concessionary travel was one of the first things that went, along with through ticketing, the fare structure and the timetables. The evidence is clear.

Mr. Mans: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on a specific point. Is it right for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), as Opposition transport spokesman, not to declare his interest as a member of a railway union?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Prescott: I think that it is acceptable to record such an interest in the Register of Members' Interests. So far, no one has doubted my union connections. Let me add that I do not receive a penny in sponsorship—unlike Conservative Members with banking and other interests.

The overwhelming criticism of the Bill, especially on Second Reading, relates to the fact that it is rejected overwhelmingly by people outside the House. The Secretary of State constantly tells us about the people who support it. The evidence is clear——

Mr. Adley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: Yes, I shall give way in a moment to the Chairman of the Select Committee.

The Independent on Sunday reports quotations from people who know, people who have a lot of experience —Tories, of course. Lord Ridley said:

"I do not believe it is possible to privatise the railways".

He was supported enthusiastically by Lord Young and Lord Whitelaw. In its editorial, the *Daily Express* said that

"the Government . . . would be wise to rethink this risky undertaking."

Mr. MacGregor *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: Let me complete the list, and then the right hon. Gentleman can give a full answer for once.

The National Opinion Poll found that the system would get worse if it was privatised. The Central Transport Consultative Committee, the statutory watchdog for the industry, said that it would be the passengers

"who pay the price as operators seek to maximise profits."

Let us consider what the experts said. The Select Committee made it absolutely clear that few of the people who gave evidence to it have endorsed the Government's specific proposals. *Jane's World Railways* says that the proposal cannot be viewed as

"better than a dogma-driven exercise, utterly irrelevent to national need."

The banker who advises on the privatisation said:

"The economics of railways may not attract private-sector investment".

He should know. A lawyer who dealt with the Clapham crash said that the difficulty—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is speeding up a bit because of the amount of time involved, but it is a serious point. A lawyer involved in suing on behalf of a number of people involved in the Clapham tragedy said that

"it would be impossible . . . for the traveller to know whether to sue the train operator, Railtrack, who run the signals, or the owner of a sold-off Clapham station."

That is a serious point.

Many others have pursued the issue, including rail bosses. The chairman of British Rail has made his views clear. He said:

"My view is that a railway should meet the social needs of the country as well as the economic needs."

Lord Marsh, who I think was one of yours and one of ours at some stage, but who was also the chairman of British Rail, said:

"Logic has been abandoned a long time ago . . . Why are we doing this?"

The Swedish rail chairman, who I should have thought would know about this, said:

"I don't see any commitment in your Government's proposal to modernising the rail network."

Howard Davies, the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry, said that

"there is a real danger that privatisation will be a blueprint for bureaucracy."

He should know. The list goes on and on.

Across the country, all groups in the community, including the industrialists, are telling the Secretary of State that the privatisation of the railway cannot work in the way he suggests and that it would be disastrous for the railway industry.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has engaged in some selective quotations. I must put him right on one so as to put the record straight. My noble Friend Lord Young said clearly:

"I have no doubt that rail privatisation will add to the long line of services successfully enhanced by the addition of private sector skills"

and made it clear that he was backing the proposals. *[Interruption.]* I shall be happy to read the whole letter because it is entirely supportive of what we are doing. Many industrialists also support us. I have letters from industrialists saying that it would undoubtedly offer the best service. The hon. Gentleman has quoted from various leader articles on the day the Bill was published. I shall not weary the House by reading a long selective quotation, but the hon. Gentleman might also have seen a list of eight leaders which supported what we are doing.

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State is not denying what Lord Young said in January. Clearly, Lord Young has been nobbled since then so that the Secretary of State can quote him. Lord Young is confused, but what I read was exactly what he said. That is a kind of nobbling job. No doubt the Secretary of State has gone to a few more saying, "Can you please say you support this system?" In reality, they do not.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): In one debate last year, I understand that the hon. Gentleman said that he did not necessarily believe that British Rail needed to be wholly publicly or wholly privately owned. In another debate he said that it needed to be publicly owned for very good reasons. Which does he believe?

Mr. Prescott: I see nothing inconsistent in a publicly owned railway having access to private capital and access for private operators to work on some of the lines. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is how it was done with some of the freight systems. It is not new for British Rail. It might shock some Conservative Members but British Rail management, largely because of the freight operations, did not have sufficient resources to put the necessary investment into the track, trains and engines. It basically told private companies that if they would pay for the engines and the rolling stock, it would allow them to operate on the lines. They operate under British Rail's conditions of operation and that is acceptable to them.

Mr. Adley: On the question of freight and my right hon. Friend's powers to act immediately to implement what he has announced, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) and I share the hon. Gentleman's view that the Secretary of State has the power and we would urge him to use it immediately.

Does the hon. Gentleman understand what I understood my right hon. Friend to be saying about freight costing? At present freight has access to marginal costs, but under the new simplified system the Government will give funds to Railtrack, which will have to make commercially driven revenue. That will put up the prices and a rebate will be available from Railtrack for operators which will apply for subsidy, presumably to Railtrack. Instead of one management decision, five quangos will be involved. Is that the hon. Gentleman's understanding?

Mr. Prescott: Precisely—that is absolutely right. Even worse, it means that the costs of Railtrack will be passed on to all operators. When we separate Railtrack from British Rail, as the Secretary of State now proposes, British Rail will presumably operate 95 per cent. or 90 per cent. of the service. Only a minority will be pinched by the private operators, so the 90 per cent. will be operated largely by British Rail. Because the cost of the track will now have to involve a profit element, it will mean a major hike in the cost for British Rail which has to fund it from the public service obligation, which means through subsidy from us. All we shall do is increase subsidies. Anyone who knows anything about the operation of railway services knows that to be true.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: No, I have given way for the last time.

The central thrust of the Government's case, therefore, is that it would change the culture. By introducing private management and entrepreneurial flair, they intend to achieve a change of culture. They believe that we shall then get the change of culture that will bring about all that the Secretary of State claims will be improvements. There is no doubt that he has a dream and a vision, but I wonder whether he is not merely dreaming and not looking at the practical realities.

Where is the historical evidence that changing the management brings those improvements? In Britain, pre-1921, there were 120 private railways all begging to be taken over. They were clapped out, so when the first world war came we had to make them into four big rail operators and therefore reduce the idea of competition. Of course, they were still private management led.

Let us consider the record of that period. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) for giving me a copy of a speech that he made in 1960. He referred to the record of the Great Western railway, to which I referred in an earlier speech, and which was the only one to make a profit. My right hon. Friend said that in 1929 the GWR was paying 7·5 per cent. on its dividends. A year later, the dividend fell to 5 per cent., the following year to 3 per cent. and, in order to pay the 3 per cent. next year, it dipped into its reserves. It then asked for a 10 per cent. wage cut and said that in order to pay the 3 per cent., it would have to pay out of its reserves. My right hon. Friend said:

> "In 1937, it managed to raise it to 4 per cent. by postponing modernisation. It cut £3 million out of its capital requirement programme".—[*Official Report*, 13 April 1960; Vol 621, c. 1389.]

It did that in order to pay 4 per cent.

The railways were saved by the war. Nobody doubted that what happened was necessary in the national interest. As most of the investment had not been carried out, it was an inadequate system, but it all took place under a private system and, interestingly enough, with the type of quangos that the Secretary of State now proposes. He is talking about regulators and clearing houses, which all existed in the 1930s. Private ownership of the industry did not mean that the investment was made. It did not produce good entrepreneurial flair, so we know that is not true.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Prescott: May I say to the Secretary of State that for someone——

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for me to point out that the Opposition spokesman has given way only three times?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. That is not in order.

Mr. Prescott: It might be only three times, but it seemed like 33.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I would not give way to the hon. Gentleman's mother.

The Secretary of State lacks an awful lot of knowledge about the railway system. His central case is that private entrepreneurial flair was needed and that we must privatise the industry. He should consider British Rail's record. I have been critical of British Rail—make no mistake about that—but it produced some of the best hotels in the world. People know about Gleneagles. Why did they fail or not have investment? The Treasury would not allow them to mortgage their property to continue the investment in the development. It was a Treasury rule; it was nothing to do with private managerial flair.

The first development of containerisation in any maritime base was done by sealing in the United Kingdom. That development began to fail primarily because the Government were not prepared to invest in more ships and the industry was starved of capital. The tilt mechanism and the advanced passenger train system was first developed in the United Kingdom. It was not completed, but it was done in other countries.

[Mr. Prescott]

The fast 125 diesels and the 225 electrics were ahead of their time in technology. It is a credit to the management of that industry that they led the way in the development of technology using conventional track. The evidence is there. Clearly, they were good. The real problem was that, although they produced a safe railway, the lack of resources began to undermine the system. The industry had the best productivity of any railway system in Europe. It was the same in the 1970s and the 1980s. Essentially, the industry was starved of financial resources.

Who was responsible for the resources of British Rail? It is clear that one cannot take all of the financing from fares. Resources must come in from some form of subsidy. Therefore, Governments must be involved. The Secretary of State may have said that the European railway system had already borrowed a lot. If the British people had the opportunity to choose between the French or German railway systems and our system, I have no doubt that they would pick the system with a higher quality and high technology, which is what everybody in the United Kingdom wants. They appreciate that such a system must be financed, and that resources cannot come out of the fare box. That is the real problem of the railway system.

The real problem with the British Rail system is that it has not had sufficient resources. The Government believe that a railway system can be run on a financial framework. That means that one begins to cut back the public subsidies, as the Government did during that period.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No. I have given way quite a lot. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, I have. I cannot take the hour that the Secretary of State's speech took.

Investment has not taken place. The Government have tried to put a financial framework on our railway system. Clearly, the railway system needs £1 billion a year. On the projections from the Treasury and his Department, the Secretary of State must accept that investment will be cut back in the next two years to £600 million. That is reality, and that is what the Secretary of State must recognise. Therefore, he must get resources from the private sector.

The Secretary of State knows that I have advocated leasing and bond ideas. Those ideas are used by the publicly-owned railways in Europe. The Secretary of State need look only at those ideas as a way of financing railways. Every railway system does it, and the Government cannot afford not to do it. It is true that one does not have to maintain the level of subsidies at the level to which the Secretary of State referred.

It is readily recognised that British Rail has been effective in its productivity. Even with the projections which included private finance, experience has shown that the tunnel link collapsed not because the public sector and private sector could not get together—management had good ideas—but because the Government were not prepared to find the financial resources for the public sector.

It is the same with the Heathrow-Paddington line. All we had to provide was 20 per cent. public money—80 per cent. was to come from a private company, BAA. Why were we not able to endorse that? It was nothing to do with managerial ability; it was a decision by the Government. We wait to see what will happen with the Jubilee line fiasco. Experience of private management in British Rail shows that Tiger Rail, Charterail and Stagecoach collapsed. They had private management and problems with track costs. The Secretary of State is addressing that problem at present.

On the rail side, the Secretary of State has answered the problem by saying, "I will provide more subsidies." That is what he said in the House today. I am not against it. However, when he charges us with wanting to throw money at freight, it is a bit much when his own proposals relate to subsidising freight. It is not acceptable for him to accuse us of throwing subsidies at freight and then to come here with his own proposals to do exactly the same thing.

Our argument with the Government's approach to the matter is that they are purely ideological. They hate publicly-owned industries. It is not that they do not believe that public sector management cannot do it. They are not prepared to give it the same terms as the private sector had to achieve it. They discriminate against British Rail. In the circumstances, they deny British Rail the opportunity to produce a good railway system.

One of the Secretary of State's main claims was that it would be a safer railway. On the Health and Safety Executive, he said that they would make it clear that it would be a safer railway. The Health and Safety Executive made an important qualification which hon. Members must learn:

"Companies with little or no previous experience of operating on the railway, and managers with limited experience of railway safety issues, will enter the railway industry as the BR monopoly is broken. Unless considerable care is taken to set up systems to ensure that new operators are properly equipped and organised, there can be no confidence that risk will be effectively controlled right from the start, and that important matters do not fall between the safety arrangements of various parties."

The Secretary of State said that he had adopted the 31 recommendations. I wait to see whether that will be the case.

I refer the Secretary of State to the Hidden report on the inquiry into the December 1988 Clapham rail disaster in which 35 people were killed. The report made an important point about private sector operations:

"A further concern is that there are signs that the past high safety standards at local level achieved by giving a high priority to a 'safe railway' above other issues are starting to be eroded by the change in railway culture. If continued, this will strike at the root of our structure. I would not like a major disaster with loss of life to be the reason that forced British Rail to invest in modern safety aids."

The report included a recommendation of the improvements which needed to be made in order to move against the development of a culture which could undermine safety. One of the report's recommendations was to introduce the automatic train protection system. It was felt that the introduction of that system was important to stop trains colliding with each other. The report recommended that the system should be introduced in five years. British Rail have made it clear that it cannot be done in 10 years. Yet it is an important safety provision.

I note that in the publicity in the press today the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) proposed that it is no longer necessary to introduce the automatic train protection system. He said:

"The cost of installation throughout British Rail is likely to be some £600 million. It is not clear that this amount of expenditure can be justified . . . There are now welcome signs that this absurd project is being abandoned."

That was said at a conference today with the Prime Minister to discuss red tape. One of the essential recommendations of the Hidden report on the Clapham disaster and Network SouthEast that there should be automatic train protection systems is about to be abolished because the Government cannot afford it. The Government have never told us whether the money will be provided. We know that the system will cost £600 million. The Prime Minister is attending a conference not far from Clapham station to discuss, in effect, how to reduce safety on the railway system. That is our main concern.

We received the Health and Safety inspector's report this week. I was pleased to receive the report, as someone who is always looking for it. Normally, it takes 10 months to come out, but this one has come out in 10 weeks. It is interesting that the report says that railway safety has improved:

"Serious incidents and fatalities declined from 161 in 1990 to 131 in 1991-92."

Any improvement in safety is to be welcomed, but that is a snapshot. How can one judge anything if one merely compares one year with another? Why are we not looking to see the reality of the first half of the 1980s compared with the second half? The inspector's report contains a graph for all to see. It is misleading to suggest that there is an improvement in railway safety on those grounds. I looked closely at the graph. When one looks at the figures, it is clear that safety on the railway has deteriorated between the first five years of the 1980s and the second five years. The number of fatalities has increased by more than 22 per cent. Those fatalities were largely due to technical effects brought about following inadequate investment in our track and signalling system.

What is significant about the increase between the first five years of the 1980s and the second five years is that during that period the Government reduced the amount of subsidies, support and investment levels in British Rail, which had an effect on safety. The emphasis during that period was on reducing costs. Instead of the Secretary of State telling the House that everything on the railways is fine, I suggest that he look at the figures in more detail or get his staff to analyse them. Will he still be convinced? Will the money for the automatic train protection system still be available? Can the Secretary of State tell us that? That is one major decision on safety that he could announce if he wanted to convince us of the truth of what he has said about the future safety of the system. Will he guarantee that that money will be available?

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): British Rail spends some £230 million per annum. The Hidden recommendation in relation to automatic train protection was that it should be applied five years after the development and trialling had been concluded. That has not yet happened.

Mr. Prescott: Is the money to be provided for the system as soon as it is developed? That is the question that I asked. The remarks of the hon. Member for Havant suggest that it has been decided that the money will not be provided and that the Government are about to drop the automatic train protection system.

If what the Minister says is true, the decision whether the money should be invested will lie not with the Secretary of State but with the track authority, which will be divorced from British Rail. Will the track authority have to make such decisions? If it does, will not its mind be exercised by the consideration that if it spends £600 million on improving safety, track costs will increase for all the franchise and freight operations whose ability to provide a profitable service will have to be judged? Can we not now see the beginnings of the conflict between the commercial culture and what is needed to maintain a safe railway system?

I note that the Secretary of State and the Minister are not saying that the money will be available to implement that recommendation of the inquiry into the safety of the railways. I can only say that safety is bound to be affected and that that fact will be noted.

The Government's judgment about the separation of Railtrack will undoubtedly make it much more difficult to operate services. What of the lines that the Secretary of State has made available for the cherry pickers? And it is certainly cherry picking, is it not? No one doubts that it will be possible to make money on the east coast line. Any silly fool, whether in public or private management, can make money on that line; it is making money now. Some £420 million worth of taxpayers' money has been invested to maintain that line. How much will the entrepreneurs now pay for the track? Mr. Sherwood of Overseas Containers has made it clear that, if he has to pay the full price for tracks, he will not be able to operate a commercial service. He is one of the 50 on the list of applicants that the Government keep on about.

The Tories have always rejected the idea of cross-subsidisation in transport. The French realised the value of the concept years ago, when they were developing the TGV. When the first TGV was built, all sorts of people wanted it to be run privately. Chirac—the mayor of Paris at the time and not a socialist, as the House will be aware—favoured privatisation. People explained to him that, following privatisation, all the profits from the first, profitable route would go to the shareholders, whereas if the profits were allowed to be reinvested in the second stage, a network could be developed as the profitable routes began to finance the less profitable ones.

Cross-subsidisation is relevant to the future of the east coast line. What will happen with that line is that the branch lines will go first—that means Hull, my own area, and Harrogate. At present 125s have to be used as that part of the line is not electrified and no doubt the Railtrack people will not go ahead with that project. Will the Aberdeen route be retained and electrified to give a through service or will people have to change trains at Edinburgh? Those are the decisions that commercial operators will face. Under a British Rail system, the profit from the east coast network could be reinvested to subsidise the west coast line. Such investment is desperately needed: no entrepreneur is offering to pay £1 billion for the west coast line.

Will not the entrepreneurs on the east coast line say, "Why maintain a railway up the west coast? We'll take people up the east coast to Glasgow and Edinburgh." The west coast network will then begin to close. It will be maintained as far as Manchester, but no one will undertake the necessary investment thereafter. Then we shall begin to see a reduction in investment in new trains and wagons, which will further undermine the manufacturers. In a few years' time, no doubt the Secretary of State will come to the House and say that the Government are having to close down rail manufacturing because no orders are forthcoming from within this country—exactly what has happened with Leyland DAF, as we heard in the

[Mr. Prescott]

earlier announcement. The Government simply do not understand how heavily our manufacturing industries depend on the railways. That is a crucial part of our analysis.

The Secretary of State referred to the Great Western line to Paddington. Will that line go only as far as Plymouth, or will it be guaranteed to go as far as Penzance? From talks that are already taking place, we are led to believe that it will go only as far as Plymouth. Can the Secretary of State tell us whether it will in fact go further? Who will undertake the necessary investment in the 30-year-old stock of 125s on the Great Western line? We are talking about hundreds of millions of pounds; no private entrepreneur will be prepared to invest that amount.

Why is the Gatwick line to be kept with InterCity? The books were fiddled to allow the resourses to be given to InterCity and to improve InterCity's accounts so that the Government could sell it to the private sector—although, in fact, they have not been able to do so. Why cannot the profits of the Gatwick line, which is a premium service, be reinvested in Network SouthEast instead of going to a few shareholders who happen to have pinched that particular jewel?

The Southend line is also on the list. For the record, let me say that the Secretary of State has pinched another of my ideas here. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] It is a matter of record. I sold my pamphlet to the Secretary of State for 25 quid; he got it very cheap and pinched most of the ideas. There is no reason why an industry in the public sector cannot use private money. Why cannot private industry be asked to finance the project, as happens with road bridges, with the new stock being returned at the end of the period so that it can still be run by British Rail? There is no reason why the public sector cannot do that. It is ideological nonsense to suggest that it has to be the private sector.

We believe that there is an alternative. There is no time to go into it now, but our suggestions have been published in pamphlets before today. As the Secretary of State knows, they were embodied in an instruction that I would have given to the chairman of British Rail to implement what I believe to be a far better railway system. We have made clear our view on all those things.

The Bill will make the railways less safe. It will be a cherry pickers' charter, as we have established from what the Secretary of State said today. Profits will be put before service needs. It will be a reduced network service. Fares will be higher. Investment will be less. More traffic will be chased off rail on to the roads, adding to the congestion and the environmental damage.

Above all, we shall have a different railway industry, driven solely by the desire to make profit. We shall be going in the opposite direction from the rest of Europe. What we want in Britain is modernisation, not privatisation. What we are getting is the Secretary of State's ideological obsession, which is rejected by every part of the community. I can only hope that the House will join the Opposition in rejecting the Bill.

5.57 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): This is my second speech on the current legislative proposals. When I spoke in the debate on the White Paper on 29 October 1992, I said that I supported the Government's intention to try to bring the private sector into the railway system but expressed grave concern about the fare implications of the proposals, particularly for middle-distance and long-distance commuters using Network SouthEast, who include a large proportion of my constituents.

The potential financial implications of rail privatisation for the household budgets of that group of people are of a quite different order of magnitude from those of other privatisations, such as the privatisations of the telephone system, electricity, gas and water. Those items may cost households hundreds of pounds, whereas on this occasion we may be talking about thousands of pounds. That is a critical consideration for those living in the belt around London.

What the fare implications will be is a matter of judgment. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already set out figures for various privatisations whose effect has been to bring about a reduction in charges. My right hon. Friend was right to do that. Equally, however, other privatisations—for example, water privatisation—have been followed by a sharp increase in charges in real terms.

I suggest that one can discern a general pattern. Where privatisation has taken place following a substantial period of investment in the previously nationalised industry, it has usually been possible for the new regime to bring about a real-terms reduction in charges. By contrast, when a public sector body, following years of under-investment, as in the case of water and, I suggest, in the case of British Rail, has been taken into the private sector, prices have invariably gone sharply upwards.

I believe that, in the case of this privatisation, the underlying pressures are very firmly in the upward category—a judgment to which I come for one reason only, quite apart from the long history of under-investment in the railway system. The existing nationalised industry requires a rate of return on capital of about 8 per cent. I think that I heard my right hon. Friend say that the industry was not achieving that. One certainty is that when this industry is privatised its owners will require a significantly higher rate of return—probably about double the figure I have mentioned. That in itself will put immediate pressure on fares.

What happens will be determined critically by two factors. The first is the future of subsidies. In saying that, I am referring in particular to Network SouthEast. The second factor is the type of fare-control regime.

Those of us who represent constituencies in the Network SouthEast area are very well aware of the critical and direct relationship between the level of subsidy and the affordability of fares. In an attempt to bring home just how critical that relationship is, I put a question to the chairman of British Rail, Sir Bob Reid. I asked him by how much fares in Network SouthEast would have to rise if the current Government subsidy were removed entirely and if Network SouthEast were to continue to achieve the rate of return that British Rail expected of it. Sir Bob Reid's reply was very instructive in that it brought out the key relationship between subsidy and fare levels. It said:

"The immediate achievement of the scenario you describe would, we estimate, require a fare increase of about 190 per cent. on 'peak' prices. This would principally reflect the high level of assets inevitably required for use only in 'peak' periods: two-thirds of Network SouthEast rolling stock is

used only during the morning and evening rush hours. There would not be an equivalent 'off peak' increase as this would be self-defeating in business terms."

Let me emphasise, lest anyone be tempted to misrepresent what I have said, that I am not suggesting that one implication of these proposals is a fare increase of 190 per cent. Nor, as is quite clear from the extract that I have just quoted, is Sir Bob Reid. My purpose is to point up very sharply the fact that unless the subsidy level is maintained at its present level, in real terms, the fares implications for mid-distance and long-distance commuters are likely to be very serious indeed.

The Government's policy—repeated twice today by my right hon. Friend—is that subsidies will continue in respect of those lines that are socially necessary. But that comment omits the key piece of information. *[Interruption.]* Someone asks, "How long?". That is one of the key questions, but even more critical is the level of continued subsidy. There is no point in saying simply that subsidy will be continued. It might be continued, but reduced by 95 per cent. More instructive than what my right hon. Friend said was the answer that I received a few weeks ago from his hon. Friend the Minister of State. I asked the Secretary of State:

"if he will maintain the subsidy paid to Network SouthEast at its current level in real terms, and if he will make a statement."

The Minister of State replied:

"The specific allocation of the planned external financing limits for British Railways between 1993-94 and 1995-96 between grant and borrowing has yet to be agreed and will be announced, as usual, in due course—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. *824*.]

The implication is that there is no certainty about what the level of subsidy in respect of the Network SouthEast area will be if these privatisation proposals go ahead.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should like to remind the House that application of the 10-minute rule started at 6'clock. In the case of the right hon. Gentleman, I shall not count the 20 seconds that I have just taken up.

Sir John Stanley: The second critical issue concerns the lines that will be deemed to be socially necessary for the purposes of the continuation of subsidy. Having put that question to the Secretary of State formally. I received the following reply:

"It will be for the new franchising authority to decide on the appropriate level of passenger services to procure through franchises in line with the overall guidance provided for him by the Secretary of State. Any subsidy required and its level will be determined by competitive bidding."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. *32*.]

Thus, we have no information as to which lines will be deemed to be socially necessary and will, therefore, attract subsidy. Indeed, we have no more information now than we had when the White Paper was debated.

On the question of the fare-control regime, I regard this privatisation Bill as conspicuously the weakest piece of legislation in respect of the charges aspect of consumer protection. There are three consumer-protection bodies —the regulator, the consultative committee and the regional body. I do not have time to go into detail, but hon. Members will see that, by the provisions of clause 4, clause 66, and clause 67, these bodies are specifically excluded from involvement in fares on franchised routes.

So where is the element of consumer protection? Does it lie with the franchising authority? People may look to the franchising authority, but I think that they will do so in vain. The job of the franchising authority is to get franchises off the ground. It is concerned with attracting franchisees, not with protecting the interests of the consumer. Therefore, we are left with one person to whom consumers may look for protection in respect of charges —my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He has a key role, as was foreshadowed in the consultation document on the franchising of passenger rail services, which says that the Secretary of State can—indeed, will—provide the franchising authority with guidance on a number of matters, including

"in what circumstances and to what extent fares might be controlled."

That guidance is centrally important, and this document should be before hon. Members today. Only when it is available will hon. Members be able to make an assessment of the fare implications of these proposals. I tried to persuade Ministers to make it available for this debate, but, as has already been said, they decided that we should receive it only at the beginning of the Committee stage. I greatly regret that decision. Such an important document should be before the House at this time.

The issue of subsidy from the point of view of quantity is wholly unknown. There has been no information about which socially necessary lines in Network SouthEast will be eligible for subsidy. According to the Bill, all three bodies that are supposed to be responsible for consumer protection are excluded from having any role over the fares that will be charged on the lines that will be the subject of franchises. The key document from the Secretary of State about his fare control policy has been withheld from the House and will not be available until the Committee stage. I am, in effect, being asked to sign a blank cheque on my constituents' cheque book. I am not prepared to do that, and while I shall not be voting tonight with the Opposition, I cannot support the Bill at this stage.

6.10 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I wondered as I listened to the Secretary of State today commending the Bill to the House as the right way forward for the future of the railways. At the equivalent stage of what became the Transport Act 1985, the then Secretary of State said that its purpose was to halt the decline that had afflicted the bus industry for more than 20 years, that it was not about reducing subsidy but about putting life back into the industry and that the effect of competition would be to reduce costs dramatically so that fares would be reduced.

The then Secretary of State claimed that there was more to the Bill than deregulation and far more than privatisation. It was, he told the House, a full-scale rescue plan for the industry. Given that since the introduction of that measure passenger use of buses has declined by 28 per cent. in metropolitan areas and 16 per cent. in shire areas, may we be assured by the present Secretary of State that this is not to be a full-scale rescue plan for the railways?

The Bill comprises 132 clauses and 11 schedules and gives massive powers to the Secretary of State and the new regulator. It might have been preferable to have had a Bill of one clause which simply said, "The Secretary of State can do what he likes, how he likes, when he likes, and where he likes." It would have had more or less the same effect.

It is ironic that it should be clause 4 which gives a Tory Secretary of State enormously sweeping powers of centralised bureaucracy. He can rule by decree from Marsham street, with freedom to set out the parameters

[Mr. Nick Harvey]

within which the new rail network will operate. Under that provision he is given guidance on taking into account economic considerations——

Mr. Barry Field *rose*——

Mr. Harvey: With the 10-minute rule operating, I will not give way.

He is told to consider economic considerations, but there is no suggestion that social or environmental factors should fashion the decisions he takes with his new powers. As well as being unworkable, the Bill contains no form of vision. It is a system set up to run today's, not tomorrow's, railways. As the rest of Europe is integrating and improving its rail networks, we shall be left behind, with an increasingly antiquated hotch-potch of disintegrated services. Whatever the Minister may say to the contrary, the Bill depends on a myriad of legal agreements at every interface in the new structure.

What will the hypothetical new private sector whizzkid do to rescue the railways? He comes in wanting a franchise, but before he can get started he will have to make at least 10 separate agreements, first with the franchising authority for the allocation of routes; if he requires subsidy, then intrinsically the Department of Transport and the Treasury will become involved; he will have to make an arrangement with Railtrack over charges; if that does not result in an easy conclusion, the matter will probably finally go to the regulator, and it is possible, at least in the early days, that the Secretary of State will become involved at that point. He will already have had discussions with the Health and Safety Executive, with the leasing company over rolling stock and possibly also with two different passenger groups.

He will then have to make separate arrangements for every station and maintenance depot that he wants to use and that is not under his control. If another operator wants to use any of his track, he will have to negotiate with him. That might end up in the hands of the joint industry body. It may even come back to the regulator or the Secretary of State for decision. Only after he has been through all that appalling rigmarole—and has apparently been told by the franchising authority what the fares and frequency of service must be—he will bring his private sector skills to bear. The whole thing is absolutely mad and will collapse under the weight of its dreadful bureaucracy.

Mr. Barry Field: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Isle of Wight county council is the only Liberal-controlled county council in the country, is it in order for the Liberal Front-Bench spokesman to try to mislead the House by pretending that his party is against this privatisation measure when the Isle of Wight county council has agreed to it, and in a recent press release——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a matter of argument, not a point of order.

Mr. Harvey: The Bill is a lawyer's paradise but will prove to be a passenger's hell.

Mr. Barry Field: What about the Isle of Wight?

Mr. Harvey: The Isle of Wight county group is entitled to follow its own policies.

The franchising director under the proposed agreement will end up making the key marketing decisions. Those decisions will not be made by the private sector operators who will be brought in. Despite all we are told about competition and private sector disciplines, there is no guarantee that there will be competition in the bidding for the franchises. If only one bidder comes forward for a franchise, it will try to dictate the terms and seek an inflated subsidy.

According to the Bill as drafted, British Rail is prevented from bidding. In other examples of competitive tendering—in local government and in the production of television programmes and so on—it has always been permissible for the existing in-house operator to bid. In this case, only managers in their own right, who will have to resign their jobs, find capital and leave the rest of their colleagues to sink or swim, will be invited to join in the process. At least if BR as a corporate entity had been allowed to take part in the process, there would have been a guarantee of some competitive bidding.

It is interesting, if not worrying, to note that the Bill spends the most time—all of 10 clauses—dealing with the subject of closure. I hope that that is not an omen for the way in which it will operate in practice. Clause 43 envisages the bus replacement of failed franchises. What will happen when the franchising director runs out of money if, for example, bids for subsidy exceed his budget? Will he become the arbiter of the levels of service to be provided? What democratic accountability will there be over his decisions?

According to clause 111, the remains of BR will be excluded from the responsibility of picking up any failed franchise operations. So what guarantees are there that passengers will continue to receive services?

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in areas such as Cornwall and Devon, it will not be a matter of failed franchisees because it is clear that branch lines will become bus routes—that is what the only local potential bidder has said—and that inter-city lines are likely to become branch lines? That is hardly the maintenance of services for local people.

Mr. Harvey: That is indeed a worry. Bus replacement is envisaged and, of course, once rail lines have gone it will be impossible to use them in the future for conveying freight. It is also clear that other network benefits will go. Despite the fact that railcards for the disabled have been guaranteed, there has been no such guarantee for pensioners' or students' cards. It is hoped that the new private operators will consider it in their interests to continue those, but that has not been the lesson of the bus experience.

It is said that a national timetable will be published. It will be handy to have such a timetable, but we want it to be nationally planned. It is no good having a national timetable which simply informs one that one is missing one's connections by five minutes. The timetable must be co-ordinated.

We have many other concerns with the Bill as drafted, not least the fact that there is still no sign of the Government having a strategic plan for the railways, unlike every other European country. I note that 44-tonne lorries will have permission to go all the way to the railhead by road. Will that include the channel tunnel? If so, we shall see many more such vehicles on the roads.

Among our other concerns is the issue of passenger groups not being free to comment on fares, charges or

standards of performance required under franchise agreements. There is also the question of the bypassing of metropolitan and shire authorities and their having no formal relationship with the franchising authority. There is little to encourage me to believe that the system will produce any significant new investment. It is all rather like giving someone suffering from hypothermia a cold shower to spruce him up. I hope that those and other points will be addressed in Committee.

This Bill is fraught with dangers, but there are no convincing benefits to passengers. Rarely can a Bill have had such widespread opposition. Even a former Government Chief Whip has been reported as saying that he would not fancy taking it through the House. No one would condemn the Secretary of State if he were to change his mind at this stage and turn back on the very verge or the brink of disaster. We understand that they have to look over their right shoulders and convince everyone that the Thatcherite march goes on, but surely once Lord Ridley of Liddesdale had said that it was impossible, that rather got them off the hook. Surely the Secretary of State could walk away from this experience, if he were to abandon it, with his reputation as a pragmatist intact and the brief period of sanity that he was supposed to have brought to the Education Department between the reforming zeal of the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the right hon. and learned Member for Rusheliffe (Mr. Clarke) soundly underlined, but if he ploughs on, despite all the ill omens, his name will go down alongside that of Beeching and he will be regarded as the harbinger of ghost trains on a skeleton service.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): There are two things, amid the disharmony, that we could agree on in this House —that a good railway service depends on an appropriate level of investment and on good management. On the question of investment, my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have begun, in the past two years, to hit the right note. The current levels of investment are higher in real terms than they have been, I think, since the late 1950s and early 1960s. I commend my right hon. and hon. Friend on that. In addition, they have now begun to relax the rather narrow Treasury rules governing the financing of public sector infrastructure, and that is all to their credit.

However, as we know, good investment is totally wasted if it is not accompanied by good management. Eastern Europe is a monument to the follies of huge quantities of investment that have been totally ruined by ludicrously bad management. The problem with British Rail management has been rightly diagnosed by my right hon. Friends—that the culture has been wrong. I do not think that there is a lack of good managers and good staff in British Rail but simply that the framework in which they are forced to operate does not encourage innovation and rigorously high standards.

They are therefore right to privatise British Rail and right to do it by the method of franchising because that breaks down the system into more manageable units and gives tenderers and frachisees a specific period in which to prove their competence or they, too, will be out on their ears. It is sensible from the size point of view and sensible to introduce that kind of competition.

I therefore support the basic strategy, and I support the Bill. If that was all there was in the Bill, I would be 100 per cent. behind it, and probably would not even be bothering the House by speaking today, but would just be voting in the Lobbies. Unfortunately, that is not all that is in the Bill. In addition to the fundamental change of franchising, the Government have also thought it right to bring in a second major revolution in railway thinking—to separate the operation of the track from the operation of the trains.

Even if that were a good idea, it would have been unwise to introduce two ideas of that enormous size at once. Governments have habitually underestimated the difficulties they cause to people who manage the systems by bringing in huge amounts of change which they can scarcely cope with.

We have had that problem in electricity, for example, where the law of unintended consequences has operated with massive effect and we have also had it in other areas in the public sector such as education. The Government should have been wary of that.

Is separating the track from operating the trains a good idea? I heard what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said today and I must say to him that it is the first considered justification of separating the track from the trains that I have heard from him. There was not very much in the White Paper, but I will listen and I shall study what he has said.

My problem is that, for the past 10 years or so, I have not been in the House but have been managing companies. I know from that experience that one of the first requirements of getting a sensible management system is that people should be able to control all their costs. They must have as much as possible of the environment in which they operate within their own sphere of control so that they know what they are doing. That is the right way to release what Keynes called the "animal spirits" of the entrepreneur. He must have confidence that he can control his costs.

The fact is that, under my right hon. Friend's proposals, because Railtrack exists and will have its own costing regime, about 40 to 45 per cent. of an ordinary operator's costs will be determined by Railtrack—indeed by Mr. Bob Horton, who is a refugee from the private sector, with a reputation as a very hard man. That is not a regime I would be very happy with if I were a franchisee.

Imagine what would happen if, under these new proposals, there was a drop of revenue of the kind there has been on Network SouthEast over the past two years —of 9 per cent. The franchisee will not then be in a position to defer a bit of investment on a new line, or to defer maintenance, and thereby keep the running of the trains roughly consistent with what they are today. He will not have that option. Therefore, train services will be slashed, customers will be deterred and we shall get into a vicious circle of spiralling decline in services. That is the sort of thing I am concerned about.

One thing one must do as a good manager is to try and install a "no excuses" regime. By that I mean that one gives a manager responsibility for delivering a service and no excuse for not delivering one.

Sixty per cent. of the faults or failures in a normal railway system are a product of track and signalling and not a product of the operating of the trains. The first thing that will happen when things go wrong is that they will blame Railtrack. In addition, they have to meet the citizens charter, and are under a legal obligation to do so.

The second event, therefore, after blaming Railtrack will be to issue a writ against Railtrack for not delivering

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a proper infrastructure service. So we are in to a whole area of legal wrangling. A huge number of legal contracts will have to be introduced as a result of this separation of powers and the number of franchisees. I have been told that there are likely to be 14,000 separate legal contracts as a consequence. That is huge and unnecessary complexity.

In addition, there is the bureaucracy. My right hon. Friend always makes the point in speeches that the sort of bureaucracy he is proposing to set up is already mirrored inside British Rail, and we cannot see it because it is inside that large organisation. That is not a good argument; it is one thing to reach agreement with somebody in another division of the same company but a wholly different matter to reach agreement over dividing revenue with a totally separate company which is legally separate and when there will be huge competition between the two.

Mr. Milligan: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point about the problem, but has he studied the experience of Sweden, where they have done exactly this? The latest issue of the *Railway Gazette* says that productivity on Swedish railways is three times higher than on British Rail.

Mr. Horam: I do not think that Sweden is a sensible comparator. It is a huge country, with a small amount of rail track. This is a very complex system we are dealing with, and it is the complexity that concerns me. I am concerned not with the theory but with the practicalities. There are theoretical arguments for separating train and track—I fully accept that. In fact, when I was a Transport Minister from 1976 to 1979, we considered separating track and trains but rejected it for those reasons—on the grounds that it would not work.

Finally, the other danger is sheer uncertainty. Uncertainty will deter finance, and that will have a bad effect on investment. We are already seeing the consequences of that on the railway equipment industry. It is all very well for the Government to say that they are right behind manufacturing industry and are trying to help, but in other parts of their huge empire they are having a dreadful effect.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South) *rose*——

Mr. Horam: No, I have already given way once.

I should like my hon. Friend to consider these matters most carefully. He is already beginning to do that. It is quite clear that many final decisions have not been taken involving the most important parts of the Bill, and one can see that he intends to treat it as a flexible framework rather than something which is cast in stone.

I also noted what he said about the limitations of open access and the possibility of vertical franchising, but I should like him to go further in that direction. It is right that there should be some franchising, and I have no quarrel with the announcements today, but I should like more to be in the control of the franchisees. I should like my right hon. Friend to give them time—three or four years—to see how it works in practice before making further concessions on franchising. I should also like to see guarantees on investment, so that the railway equipment industry can be assured of a future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Dr. John Marek.

6.30 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): If the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) really means what he is saying, he should have the courage of his convictions and vote against the Bill. It requires only 12 hon. Members—and I can tell that more than 12 Conservative Members have doubts about the Bill—to put the Secretary of State out of his misery.

I am afraid that the Secretary of State was gabbling when yet again he talked about the Networker and five-abreast seating instead of four-abreast seating, which is what used to exist on the north Kent line. He talked about investment being at its highest ever level, but he conveniently neglected to say that half of it was for the channel tunnel, that much of it was already committed and that the extra was extremely small.

The Secretary of State must know that the chairman of British Rail does not agree with privatisation. Before the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) takes me to task, I must say that I am sponsored by the RMT, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. The workers in the industry do not agree with what is proposed in the Bill and nor do the experts. The Secretary of State mentioned leaders of industry such as Mr. Sherwood, but I do not think that the real experts agree with what is proposed.

Mr. Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Marek: I will not give way, as I have only 10 minutes. It is one of the problems of limiting speeches to 10 minutes, and I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

The public certainly do not agree with privatisation, and the civil servants in the Department of Transport do not know much about it, as the Department is heavily road-oriented. As an example of that, the document entitled, "Railway Privatisation:—A Voice for the Passenger" has on its back cover a map of the railway system which has completely forgotten the Wrexham to Chester railway. The Shrewsbury to Wrexham part is there, but not the rest. That is typical of what we get, simply because the Government do not rate very highly the railways and railway investment.

The only ones in favour of privatisation are the Secretary of State, the cheap and cheerful Minister sitting next to him and some right-wing Members who agree with the proposals. So why will the Bill go through? Basically, Conservative Members, with a few notable exceptions, do not use the railway system. They are more interested in claiming 68p a mile and using their 2000 cc cars to get to London. I would be quite happy if the Fees Office published a list of those who claim 68p a mile to get to this place. The country would like to know; then people would be able to judge those who support the Bill. By and large, the people who will vote the measure through this evening are hon. Members who do not use the railway system.

Let me say what I think will happen. First, it is clear that railcards will disappear. The Secretary of State has as good as said so this afternoon. The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) is quite right to say that we need a national timetable with good connections, but I fail to see how we will get that if the demands on making a profit mean that a connection will be missed. Will there be a regulator to say that a train will have to run five or 10 minutes late in the interests of a national timetable with

good connections? I do not believe that will be the case. We may have a national timetable, but good connections will depend on luck.

We will have through ticketing, but will that be at discounted fares? Again, the Secretary of State has as good as said that through ticketing will not be possible at major ticket offices. If a travelling guard can issue tickets, will that guard be able to issue through tickets as at present? I very much doubt it. That is another potential loss to the public resulting from the Bill.

Will there be a common set of conditions of carriage, or will the Secretary of State vary it for any particular franchisee encountering special difficulties, and apply special conditions? Will train service frequencies be retained, and will we still have evening and Sunday services so that any member of the public can travel anywhere in the United Kingdom, knowing that there will be a reasonable train frequency so that, although it may take a little longer than normal, they can reach their destination? I very much doubt that. I believe that evening and weekend trains will disappear.

Will there be national information and seat reservation systems? I very much doubt that, if there are to be different franchisees, all varying their timetables without notice, just as occurs in the present deregulated bus system.

What about access for disabled people? Will the Bill applying to rolling stock include a set of conditions which will guarantee and preserve the advances that have been made in access for disabled people to the railway system?

What will happen if a franchisee goes bust? If I turn up at the railway system and the franchisee has gone bust, or if that franchisee has only a few wagons or engines, or if the driver has not turned up because he had an accident on the way to work, or if there is a fault with the engine so that my train cannot run, will it be a case of: "Hard luck, mate – come back in three or four hours and we will try to get it repaired"?

I know that British Rail is not perfect, but, by and large, if I turn up at a railway station, I know that the train will run, or, if it does not, if the delay will be more than an hour or so, British Rail will put on alternative bus services. I do not believe that will happen under the Bill. There will be fewer staff on station platforms securing people's safety, especially at night. Staff cost money, and that eats into profit.

If the Government privatise rolling stock, will the quality of build be maintained? As we all know, there will be no build in Britain, as the manufacturing industry here is about to go bust, but will the orders and specifications placed for that rolling stock be up to the quality and strength of that which we have today?

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was far too kind to the Government when he spoke about safety. Between 1980 and 1985, the Government made conditions applying to level crossings easier, so that British Rail could spend less. The effect was to allow car drivers to kill themselves, until the disaster near Hull when the Government finally saw common sense. The Government deliberately loosened conditions at level crossings to save money.

As British Rail has been forced into privatisation, there are bound to be arguments about platform space and about whether the platforms are owned by Regional Railways, a franchisee or by InterCity. If there is a delay or something goes wrong, and a train has to use a platform that is not part of the franchisee's domain, extra charges will have to be paid, as happens now between Regional Railways and InterCity. The franchisee may say that, as passengers have to wait only 12 minutes or thereabouts, they can wait outside the station to avoid the extra cost. That is what bringing accountants into the service would do.

Unfortunately, we have the worst Government this century; there is no doubt about that——*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members are laughing, but only one or two of them. We have the worst balance of payments crisis that I can remember, and the worst public sector borrowing requirement. Indeed, the PSBR is worse than it was in 1976, when we suffered an oil price rise, and now we have the benefit of North sea oil.

According to the official figures, 3 million people are unemployed, but really it is more like 4 million. We also have a clapped out railway system; time and time again, I am amazed at how it manages to run. We spend 0·14 per cent. of GDP on rail, whereas Germany spends 0·57 per cent. and France 0·61 per cent. The Government are in no position to put it right, and the Bill does nothing to put it right. I appeal to 12 Conservative Members to put the Government and the Secretary of State out of their misery at 10 o'clock tonight.

6.40 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) mentioned that there were few Members on the Conservative Benches, but 18 Conservative Members are taking an interest in the debate, and only eight Members of the official Opposition are in the Chamber, so perhaps he can learn to count.

I intend to ask why we should privatise British Rail, comment on how we should do so and on some aspects of the Bill, and refer briefly to freight services to King's Lynn.

I was taught to subscribe to the dictum "If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it." However, it is broke—the whole culture is anti-consumer and we are talking about attitudes that look back to the 1960s, rather than forwards. That is why the Government could not stand still and do nothing, but had to move forward with the Bill.

I shall not dwell on the reasons, as they are self-evident. I like the Government scheme and its structure, because it is evolutionary, imaginative and highly flexible. However, I have one or two small nagging doubts, which I shall express briefly. First, the offices of director of franchising and regulator are to be set up. I have studied the Bill carefully, and listened with care to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I do not understand why those two offices could not be combined. Surely that would be a pragmatic and sensible step forward, and I urge the Secretary of State to consider it.

My second doubt relates to InterCity. British Rail was told to be more responsive to the public's requirements, to be more aware of what the punter wants, and to run a service for the benefit of passengers and not for the benefit of staff. To a certain extent, InterCity has achieved those aims. It has a successful brand name, and I would be sad if it disappeared. I understand the Government's argument, that they do not want to sell a vertically integrated company, but surely we could keep the brand name.

I would have preferred the option of privatising InterCity outright. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) mentioned the advantages of the

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

operator controlling costs, and I think that that has additional advantages. Also, the attractions of vertical integration are obvious if we want to get private sector capital into the infrastructure.

For example, it is apparent that delays can take place during electrification—the line to King's Lynn was electrified—and a close interface between the track infrastructure and rolling stock is required. If too many factors were outside the control of the operator, there could be disincentives and disadvantages to electrification. We must bear in mind that InterCity has to compete with other modes of transport. An operation that has 8 per cent. of journeys of more than 50 miles has only a very small segment of the market, and we want that share built up.

So far, we have been talking about two franchises being offered for InterCity. If the same organisation were to bid for both, I should like the Minister to keep open the option of a vertically integrated company, which would also own the infrastructure. It would be sad if that option were not kept open. I see that my hon. Friend the Minister is nodding, and I should like him to comment on that. The most important thing is to allow the very successful InterCity brand name to remain in existence.

Although I have been critical, I welcome the proposals, and I think that franchising will work. It has been carefully thought out. People say that it has not been given enough thought, but the Department has been considering the proposal for two and a half years, has consulted every possible organisation, has studied the matter carefully and has come up with proposals. Few Bills have had more work put into them. That is why the proposals can and will work, especially for the loss-making lines in Network SouthEast and Regional Railways.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bellingham: I cannot give way, because of the 10-minute rule.

Those lines need an injection of private entrepreneurial flair and private investment, and my goodness we will get it.

Yesterday, I learned—much to my dismay—that British Rail has terminated the link to Boston docks. I do not know the details, but King's Lynn docks uses the railways to shift roughly 150,000 tonnes of coal and 50,000 tonnes of urea a year. Also, Dow Chemicals uses rail freight distribution to shift about three or four wagonloads of hazardous goods each month.

British Rail and Associated British Ports are in negotiations on the future of train freight haulage of coal from King's Lynn docks, and I understand that the negotiations are not going very well. The manager of the docks has told me that he has come up against a thoroughly negative attitude on the part of British Rail, which has insisted on a 15 to 16 per cent. increase in tariff. The dock operators have said that they will run the shunting loco and take on ancillary operations, but British Rail has a negative attitude.

If I brought the manager of Associated British Ports in King's Lynn to see the Minister, would he be prepared to discuss the matter with him and explain the impact of today's announcement on freight and how it could present opportunities for King's Lynn?

I welcome the package of four measures that the Secretary of State announced, because it could save the link to Boston.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Bellingham: I cannot give way, but perhaps we can talk in the Lobby afterwards—*[Laughter.]*—if the hon. Gentleman comes to our Lobby.

We must try to ensure that the eight or nine wagonloads of butadiene—a potentially hazardous commodity—that are transported each month remain on the railway. British Rail told Dow Chemicals on 25 January that the service would be terminated. If the negotiations between ABP and British Rail on trainload freight for haulage of coal collapse, the rail freight distribution service to King's Lynn and the link to the docks could be put in jeopardy. Given British Rail's thoroughly negative attitude, I hope that the Minister will agree to meet that delegation, and that the four proposals announced today will have some impact. I am sure they will.

Mr. Freeman: I hope that I shall be in the same Lobby as my hon. Friend tonight. In case I do not have the chance to talk to him, I assure him that I look forward to meeting his constituents from the docks. Also, I can assure him that I shall shortly be meeting the director of InterCity to talk about the retention and development of the brand name, even within the franchising regime, and to confirm that we have taken no long-term decisions about the future of InterCity.

Mr. Bellingham: I am extremely reassured by that.

If the Minister thought that I was being critical, I hope that he deemed it constructive criticism, because what I particularly welcomed in the Secretary of State's speech was his description of the proposals as evolutionary and imaginative. The Secretary of State also said that, if changes were proposed in Committee, he would consider them and listen carefully and, above all, that he would try to ensure consensus throughout the industry to bring these difficult, imaginative and challenging plans forward.

If the Minister has perhaps sensed today that there is some opposition on the Government's side—my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington made it clear that there were parts of the Bill which he did not like, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley)—I would urge him to stand firm. I am reminded of a quotation that I think came from Lord Jenkin back in the 1960s: "The time when people start to doubt your policy is the very time when you should strengthen your nerve and see it through."

6.50 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me, as an hon. Member sponsored by the Transport and Salaried Staffs Association, an opportunity to take part in the debate.

Sadly, history is not on the Minister's side in the case that he is trying to argue. The private owners could not believe their luck when, in the first world war, the Government took the industry off their hands; and there was an outbreak of mass panic when, after the war, the Government suggested that they should take it back again. The Government had to introduce an Act to set up the old LMS, LNER and GWR to take on the industry, which then tottered through the inter-war period and was on the

verge of collapse when it was again taken over at the start of the second world war. It is not generally realised that some of the old GWR shareholders are still deriving dividends under the arrangements made for the takeover at that time.

The Secretary of State asserted that the proposal is in the interests of both the consumer and the taxpayer. He went on to quote precedents from other privatisation measures which he felt proved his case. I point out to the House that in each privatisation measure the Government have used rather different initiatives to ensure that any advantage goes not to the consumer or to the taxpayer but always to the new shareholders.

In the gas industry prices were put up 10 per cent. a year above the rate of inflation for three years to give a 33 per cent. cushion to guarantee profitability for the industry and higher prices for the consumer. Jaguar was allowed to remain in public ownership by this Administration until the taxpayers' investment programme was completed, and then the profits were privatised. Sadly, it then gradually slipped into its old ways and had to be taken over by Ford.

In the case of the electricity industry, although the Government claim that they got £8 billion from the sale of the electricity industry, as the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), who served on the Public Accounts Committee will know from the report that we undertook, only £5 billion of that came from the shareholders; the other £3 billion came from an artificially created debt which was imposed on the industry and then taken from the industry which had had prices set at a level that would recoup the debt. So we had the anomalous situation that the customers who had previously owned the industry now had to pay £3 billion by means of their prices to help someone else acquire the ownership of the industry.

The most outrageous example, however, was the water industry. It demonstrates the sheer nonsense of what the Government are willing to consider in order to favour the shareholder and private enterprise. In this case, £35 billion of public assets were sold for £3·5 billion. Ten companies were sold for the price of one. The Government wrote off £5 billion worth of debt on which the taxpayer was obtaining interest, gave £1·5 billion of public money—which cost the taxpayer interest—as a donation to the industry, and then gave it £7 billion worth of tax write-offs to ensure that it would not have to pay any tax for most of this century.

The cumulative result of this package—the lost interest on the write-off, the lost interest on the cash injection and the exemption from taxation—is that within about five years all that the Treasury gained from the sell-off will have been given back, and the industry will have been given away for absolutely nothing to people who will go on creaming profits from the public. So while the idea that privatisation is some great initiative on behalf of the consumer is fine on the political platform, it does not bear close scrutiny.

I wish that the Secretary of State were still here. I have sparred with him for many years and I have a great regard for him, but this is the first time that I have heard him venture into nonsense arguments. It is a new departure for him but one that he undertook with his customary charm and giving the impression of greater experience than we all know he has had in that respect. The thought that worried me towards the end of his remarks was that he might be beginning to believe some of the arguments that he was putting forward. But I know him better than that, and I am sure that if he comes to the Committee our old confidence in him will return, because he knows as well as we all do that the railways were always cross-subsidised, even in his good old days of private ownership. The trunk line subsidised the feeder lines. As far back as Beeching, under public ownership, the branch lines cost 40 times as much per passenger mile as the trunk lines. There has always been cross-subsidy.

I urge hon. Members to consider this matter from their constituents' point of view, particularly those who represent commuter areas. If, instead of that cross-subsidy going into the rest of industry, it goes in dividends, it means that we need not just the same subsidy; we need more subsidy, more taxpayers' money, in order to sustain the present level of services. Yet all we have had is an assurance that subsidies will continue. There has been no indication of the level at which they will continue. It is no good their staying constant because we all know that, with the inevitability of inflation—I am not making a political point; inflation has been a feature of any society for most of the century—if the subsidies were continued but frozen at one level, they would wither in real terms. So either the burden would pass to the farepayer—and it is doubtful whether the market could bear it—or there would be cuts in services or lines.

All this is ominous for those of us in south Wales who depend on our valley rail services for commuting and those who depend on the central Wales line, the mid-Wales line, the north Wales coast line and so on. Even on the 125 line to my constituency there are doubts about what will happen to the service between Cardiff and Swansea if the proposal put forward by the Minister goes ahead. We are fearful that there may be cuts in that service.

Safety is of crucial importance to the public. I was pleased that the Minister said that he regarded it as a high priority. The trouble is that Ministers do not last long in the Department of Transport, and one Minister's reassurance might not even be valid by the time the Bill finished its journey through the Committee. They tend to be rather high-speed travellers as they reach the Cabinet via that Department.

I was somewhat horrified to read in *The Independent* yesterday the headline:

"Major urged to halt spending on rail safety".

A former director of the Thatcherite Centre for Policy Studies, now the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), was quoted as asking,

"How can you spend over £200 million a year on rail safety and increase transport deaths?"

He was reported as saying that

"by forcing higher spending on rail safety, passengers were being driven on to the roads by higher fares, where the risk of death was almost five times greater."

He also said that the Prime Minister

"might also call for a moratorium on implementation of all further rail safety requirements".

That is horrific nonsense. Instead of the train taking the strain, the train will take the risk if the hon. Member for Havant has his way.

It used to be an axiom of economics that, if one had two competing services, one tried to invest to the point where the marginal rate of return on each was equal, which resulted in optimum investment. Now a right-wing Conservative Member says that we should disinvest to the point where the marginal rate of accident is equal—a peculiar proposition to make. Why did he not suggest that we should invest more in road safety? Why did he support

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the deregulation of the bus services? If the railways are that much safer, why does not the hon. Gentleman come into the Lobby with us tonight? I hope that he will.

7 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I pay tribute to the memory of the late Sir Peter Allen, who will have been known to some of my colleagues in the House. I read in his obituary in *The Times* that, like me, he was a railway and steam train enthusiast. Like me, he would be described by my colleagues on the Front Bench as eccentric. Unlike me, he was chairman of ICI. Quite a few people are concerned about the Government's proposals—Sir Peter Allen certainly was.

Where should we start? Why not start at the point that we have reached today. The damage caused by the very threat of the Government's proposals is already evident. Rail freight is haemorrhaging away. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) should ask British Rail why it has vastly increased its prices. He might find that its answer provides the answer to many of his questions. Private sector manufacturers of rolling stock are in crisis because British Rail is unable to place orders. My hon. Friends insist that that has nothing to do with the Government's proposals, but everyone in the private sector knows that it is directly related to them.

Who is in favour of the proposals? The Centre for Policy Studies is, of course, and the Adam Smith Institute would claim that it invented them. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is in favour of them and some of my colleagues, particularly new Members of Parliament, have already expressed their enthusiasm. They would probably want to privatise everything—it will probably be the Army next. The prime architect of the Bill, Sir Christopher Foster, has not figured much in our deliberations. He was the director-general of economic planning under Barbara Castle in the Ministry of Transport between 1966 and 1970, and this is largely his Bill. He was the inventor of the freight integration council, among other things. If that does not frighten my hon. Friends, it certainly should.

Who is opposed to the Bill? We know that millions of our fellow citizens are. Those who use the railways, such as the Confederation of British Industry and its commercial members, oppose it. The transport users consultative committees, appointed by the Government to look after passenger interests, oppose the Bill, as do those who run the railways, those who work on them and those who build the rolling stock for them—to name but five groups.

In 14 years of Conservative Government we have seen fluctuating investment on the railways, reductions in the public service obligation grant and consequently numerous customer complaints. The Bill has been introduced as a means of alleviating those complaints. There has been a total lack of any coherent transport policy during the past 14 years, which has caused the problem. The hostility of the Government under Lady Thatcher to anything in the public sector forms the background to today's Bill.

We have had no discussion—nor is there anything in the Bill—about the road versus rail argument. When the CBI appeared before the Select Committee, it gave interesting figures. My hon. Friends who intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might read the statistics in *Hansard*. On a dollar-per-head basis for the latest years for which figures are available, rail investment is as follows: in the United Kingdom, under $7; in Germany, $24; in France, $37; and in Italy, $50. Is it any wonder that complaints are made here about railway services while there are comparatively few complaints among the customers of our continental partners in Europe?

From where is the investment to come for Railtrack? Who is to finance the new railway? There is no mention of any investment regime in the Bill. Investment is fundamental to the success of a railway. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has already confirmed that there is a direct correlation between new investment and satisfied customers on the Chiltern line. That is how to build a successful railway.

Some of the similarities between the Railways Bill and the Bill to privatise electricity should provide a warning to some of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The problems of the coal industry today are the direct result of the way in which the electricity industry was privatised. If one looks at the phraseology of both Bills, one can understand why some of us are concerned about the Railways Bill.

The Bill contains a fundamental flaw which has been touched on by all those who have spoken so far. It separates responsibility for track and signalling from the operation of trains—a recipe for endless conflict. What would have happened in the recent crash at Borough Market junction if the two trains involved had been operated by two different companies? Each would blame the other for everything—and both would blame Railtrack. Some of my constituents were killed in the Clapham junction rail crash. Within hours, British Rail accepted responsibility. Would a private sector company immediately have accepted responsibility for a crash involving one of its trains? Of course not.

Vertical franchising is the demand of the private sector and of almost all the companies which came before the Select Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister of State nodded as he listened to the suggestions of some of my colleagues who stated that complete vertical franchising should be considered. It is clear that the creation of a track authority and the surrounding paraphernalia is at the heart of the Bill's proposals. There is no point in pretending that vertical franchising—other than in the Isle of Wight—is for the Secretary of State anything other than a dream.

Who will provide the long-term funding for all the franchisees? They are being encouraged to invest money for 15-year franchises. Has my hon. Friend the Minister received permission from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to provide guaranteed funding at constant levels for 15 years? Will the Chancellor be in place for 15 years? Will there be a Conservative Government in 15 years' time? Relying on a public sector rail track for infrastructure and the vagaries of the Treasury to provide guaranteed subsidised funding for private sector operators for all those years forms an unlikely scenario—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends must make their own speeches.

I have heard too much about breaking up. I am not in politics to break things up—I am in politics to build. We are breaking up the national railway system and replacing it with a vacuum. It will be a lawyer's paradise. We are legislating not for deregulation but for reregulation.

Safety has been mentioned. The more people who are involved in safety, the more safety is jeopardised. The

proposals contained in the Bill are a recipe for muddle, indecision and conflict. Like everyone else in the House, I want a better railway, but the Bill is a clear illustration of the muddled thinking in the Department of Transport. It illustrates the conflict of private sector ambition versus public sector obligation. To satisfy the former, it will be necessary to diminish the latter.

Where do my right hon. Friends stand on the conflict between the ambition of the private sector to make profits and the obligation on the public sector to run a full railway system efficiently? The Bill is a laboratory experiment conducted by civil servants in Marsham street with a vital piece of our national transport infrastructure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) talked about Sweden, where the Government are making 45 per cent. additional infrastructure investment a year for 10 years and Sveriges Järnvägen—the state railway—has gained 99 per cent. of the contracts to run trains. Here British Rail is forbidden to enter the competition and there is absolutely no investment regime in the Bill.

I shall finish with a quotation from an unusual source —the new ambassador from Saudi Arabia, Ghazi Algosaibi, formerly the director of railways in his country. He wrote to me yesterday and mentioned the theory of privatisation. He said:

"Any service that is deemed so essential that it requires subsidy is, by definition, not suitable for privatisation. Railroads belong in this category. Railroads were in my time, and remain today, heavily subsidised by the government. Under these circumstances privatisation makes no sense. If you stop the subsidy, the service will deteriorate and might terminate. If you continue with the subsidy, the whole thing becomes an exercise in futility!"

That, I fear, is where the Bill will lead us.

We all know that BR is far from perfect and there are many ways of improving it. I want to see the private sector brought in, initially by ending the freight monopoly, but it seems that my right hon. Friend has rejected that proposition.

I just say this to my hon. Friends. If the size of their majorities is bigger than the number of rail users in their constituencies, they should not have too much to worry about. We are here at Second Reading. It is glad confident morning today. The Bill is born of dogma, conceived in theory and adjusted in the Whips Office. I am sad to say that, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I cannot support the Bill on Second Reading.

7.10 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who has spoken for every informed observer of the Government's proposals. Can any Government have launched a major piece of legislation amidst more general criticism and more misgivings from the professionals who are supposed to make it work than the Government in their rail privatisation proposals? Even the poll tax had its enthusiasts. This poll tax on wheels has no enthusiasts whatever.

Let us be charitable to the Government in their embarrassment. Let us assume that rail privatisation is not merely, as seems likely, the last confused spasm of a worn-out Thatcherite ideology. What then was the problem that the Government set themselves to resolve in evolving their present proposals? Was it the creation of a less bureaucratic railway? Hardly that. The Government are planning a positive quagmire of quangos to run the railways. It will be a bureaucrat's fantasy and an operator's nightmare.

Was it the creation of a more efficient railway? Not that either. On top of the quangos, the Government are proposing a split between infrastructure and rail operation with cuts across every principle of modern railway practice. It will prove a minefield of day-to-day conflicts between operators and the track authority and a prescription for endless litigation.

Was it the creation of a cheaper railway? Hardly that either. What hopes for lower fares with no guarantees on subsidy, with Railtrack under instruction to secure a commercial rate of return for every line that it runs and with operators seeking to maximise their profits also?

Was it the creation of a sharper, more entrepreneurial style? Where would that come from? Would it come from the bus operators who have managed to lose 13 million passenger journeys a year since bus privatisation in 1985? Would it come from Mr. Branson, who wants to spruce up old diesel locomotives to run at lower speeds on a newly electrified east coast main line?

The deep irony is that the Government's best hopes for a new management appear to lie in buy-outs by the old managers of British Rail—the very last group, I should have thought, that Conversative Members would want to see running the railway for them.

But, lo and behold, where are the profits to be made by the new thrusting entrepreneurial style? The Secretary of State has confirmed it today—by privatising the very services where profits are already being made. I shall believe the privatisation of the London-Tilbury-Southend line when I see it.

Was the Government's aim the creation of an expanding railway, better equipped to play a larger part in meeting the environmental, social and economic needs of the nation? Certainly not that. Scour the pages of the multitude of consultation documents flowing from the Department of Transport; listen to the words of the Secretary of State; examine the Bill. Where is the strategy? Where is the thinking about the future role of railways in the nation's transport system? Vision is the last thing that we have heard from the Government in relation to rail privatisation.

The truth is that the Government's proposals are the wrong answers to the wrong question. The fundamental question is that of investment—investment which is already too low and is in danger of becoming yet lower under the Government's proposals.

We have become used over the years—we have heard it again today—to a constant barrage of complaint and criticism about British Rail's performance. Yet the most singular aspect of British Rail is not that it all too often performs badly, but that it manages to perform at all. It is about time that Conservative Members recognised just what British Rail has achieved in sustaining the network and in maintaining a service when it has been so grossly underfunded for so many years in comparison with similar railways elsewhere.

Britain spends a third of the cash spent by France on its railways and a quarter of that spent by Germany on its railways. In subsidy by head of population, we spend one fifth in comparison with France or Germany. No wonder we have higher fares and less reliable services. Yet in all international comparisons of railway productivity, BR

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appears high in the rankings. That is a remarkable achievement, given the low levels of investment in the system.

The Secretary of State never tires of telling us that investment is currently at record levels, and, of course, he is correct. What he omits to point out is that in the early 1980s under this Government we had the lowest continuous levels of investment in the railways in any period since the 1920s.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hill: I will not give way in view of the strict time limit. I should love to do so in normal circumstances.

Without the significant increases in the past two or three years, we would not have had a railway in any recognisable form. However, it was too little too late. For all the Secretary of State's protestations, that investment will not be sustained. Next year, investment in the existing railway will fall to half this year's level. It will remain below this year's level to the end of the current programme in 1996.

Already, InterCity has no rolling stock investment plans or refurbishment plans for the next five years. Already Network SouthEast is operating with an estimated infrastructure budget shortfall of £200 million. The railway supply industry has no orders on its books beyond 1995. Its representatives told the Transport Select Committee that the industry, responsible for 50,000 jobs, faces annihilation. Only last week, Lord Prior, on behalf of GEC Alsthom, a major railway supplier, told the Select Committee that unless more orders are forthcoming no industry will be left in three years' time.

I say this to the Government in all seriousness: there is an immediate crisis of underinvestment in the railway industry. Even if their privatisation plans succeed in creating new investment demands, which I doubt, they are unlikely to come on stream for several years. Therefore, the Government should urgently undertake to provide at least steady levels of state finance for the first five years of privatisation in order to protect the quality of service and to maintain a rail manufacturing base.

Of course the Opposition accept that there is a role for the private sector in rail investment. We have looked at the experience of the nationalised French railways where all new major investment since 1990 has been funded by borrowing on the private market, including the City of London. We have looked at the experience of Japan where new capital projects are jointly funded by central and local government and by private finance raised by the still nationalised railways.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has repeatedly put forward proposals for leasing and joint ventures along those lines. The Government have rejected those proposals on grounds of dogma and, as we now learn, a totally antiquated set of Treasury rules. By contrast, the Government's proposals threaten to impede, not favour, the vital need for new investment in the railways. They will create an excessive and costly bureaucracy which can only serve to increase costs for operators and track authority alike.

The separation of track from operation will create a tangle of operational difficulties. Sensible railways investment requires an integrated approach to infrastructure and operation, but that is absent from the Government's proposals. Those same arrangements mean that half the cost of running services—that arising from the infrastructure—will be outside the control of the private sector businesses. Railtrack itself—half the railway system—will anyway remain in the public sector and be subject to the current severe Treasury spending constraints.

That is not a hopeful scenario for generating new investment in rail. A railway renaissance is taking place throughout Europe. The Government will bear a heavy responsibility if, because of their current policies, this country does not share fully in that rebirth of rail.

7.20 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I must first declare two interests. I regularly use the national railway system a minimum of five hours a week in travelling to and from my constituency. Sometimes, I use it much more than that. The present InterCity service, combined with a laptop computer, is one of the most congenial working environments available to a Member of Parliament. Also, if 14,000 new contracts are to be signed at the conclusion of our consideration of the Bill, there are several reasons why I, as a lawyer, may be tempted to be the first in the Lobby enthusiastically to support it.

More realistically, I address the House as the Member of Parliament for the constituency which was the birthplace of the railways and which ran the first successful privately owned railway ever laid down. To this day, one of the largest railway workshops in the country is to be found in my constituency. Furthermore, a regular complaint in my postbag concerns the coal that falls from viaducts in my constituency as it is transported from Durham to the south.

In his introductory remarks, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the east coast main line will be one of the first services to be franchised. It is instructive to look back at what was said about not only the east coast main line but the fortunes of the London and North-Eastern railway in the nationalisation debate in 1946. The LNER had emerged from the war having been extensively bombed—connecting as it did most of the airfields and industrial areas of Britain—and suffering from a long period of under-investment between the wars due to the recession that set in then. At the end of the war, there were extensive plans to renew the network and to develop new services and branch lines. With that in mind, the then Opposition voted against nationalisation because they anticipated, rightly, that instead of private companies competing for capital on the markets and applying it to worthwhile schemes, the national conglomerate—known as the British Transport Commission—would direct investment in a way that reflected its perception of national priorities, and often not do as good a job as the private sector.

In reviewing the history of the railways, I believe that I am right in thinking that British Rail has never constructed a new line.

Mr. Adley: I remind my hon. Friend of those serving Stansted and Manchester airports.

Mr. Devlin: I stand corrected. Those apart, British Rail has never laid a long line. It has, however, just completed

electrification of the north-east coast main line, and I would remind the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) —who is not in his place—that that is one service that gives the lie to the claim that it is apparently clapped out. I fundamentally disagree. The InterCity service is extremely good. That large-scale investment is an important factor in our consideration of the future, after the Bill is passed.

At the end of that process, the Government will have to demonstrate to the public throughout the country that there has been a significant improvement in the service that they receive. I do not believe that the public care one or two hoots about railway ownership. They care about being provided with a good, punctual service; clean carriages that are kept in reasonable condition; the operation of train services to proper timetables; and the ability to purchase tickets at different prices for various destinations.

Since the privatisation of the gas and electricity generating industries, both have attracted huge investment. If we want the same for the railways, we must make them as attractive as possible to private sector investors. The fact remains that there is not a railway in the world where competition operates on the same line. There are many places where there is competition between two lines. The history of LNER and of the London, Midland and Scottish railway shows that they competed with each other for passengers travelling to Scotland.

Today, British Rail competes with the car and, in the case of long-haul journeys, with air travel. The would-be franchise holder will be looking for a service that it can run economically, at a profit, and in competition either with cars or airlines.

I understand the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), that the business man naturally wants as much control of the resources as possible. In that respect, I urge the Government not to pull back on privatisation but to go further. If we want to attract large-scale investment to the railways, we must offer the commercial opportunities that people want. At the beginning of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whether an operator who wanted to buy and to operate a whole line on a vertical basis would be allowed to do so. So far, significantly, no answer has been forthcoming. That is an important aspect.

What would happen if an operator came to the marketplace and identified the potential for a new line, better market opportunities if it were to introduce new rolling stock, or more potential if the line were to be electrified? In each case, the operator would have to refer to Railtrack, and that new body—to provide the service that the operator wanted—would have to refer to the Government. That would mean a call on the Government's resources.

In that way, British Rail is different from previous privatisations, which went straight to the market. The whole rationale for privatising them was to take them out of the Government's expenditure queue. If the Government said no to such an application, or Railtrack had other priorities, a dispute would arise between the operator and Railtrack that presumably would have to be sorted out by the regulator.

That difficulty could be simply resolved. If the franchise holder that operated, say, the east coast line from London to Scotland decided that it could run the whole track much better than Railtrack, why should it not be allowed to buy it? In the history of the railways, we can find a perfect model of private sector investment. When the Darlington and Stockton railway was first engendered in a pub in Yarm in my constituency and an agreement was drawn up, no one had to refer to another authority. Planning permission was granted, the line was built, and all aspects of the line came under the control of the Darlington and Stockton railway company.

A modern example is provided by British Airways—a loss-making operation that was turned into a profit-making company. It does not have to lease its aircraft from an aircraft authority. British Airways buys the planes that it wants, flies them to the destination it chooses and, apart from air traffic control, has total operational ability to do as it wishes.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement that rail freight companies will receive up to 100 per cent. of track costs if there is a good environmental case for switching goods from road to rail. A good example of that can be seen in the Yorkshire dales. Until recently, a loss-making local railway line transported limestone from the dales to British Steel's plant on Teesside. That line —the Redmire line—was a distinct little entity which could have operated all by itself. I do not see why a Railtrack authority should be involved in such circumstances. Why cannot the operator buy the whole line and run it himself if he wishes?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. John D. Taylor.

7.30 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Although this complicated Bill refers mainly to Great Britain, it is a United Kingdom Bill, some of whose clauses refer specifically to Northern Ireland.

I do not object to privatisation; I speak on that issue with an open mind. I judge the Bill mainly on the way in which it will affect people and public transport, and the way in which it will affect those of us who live on the periphery of the nation—especially those living in Northern Ireland and western Scotland.

Listening to the Secretary of State's speech, I could not but conclude that the best routes were being privatised and the worst were being left with British Rail. That is surely a dangerous step. I consider the railway system an important part of the United Kingdom's integrated transport structure, and I think it vital for us to maintain an efficient railway system throughout the nation. That will be particularly important to Scotland and Northern Ireland when the Eurotunnel opens at the end of the year. If we give away, or sell, the better lines—such as the Gatwick express line—British Rail, deprived of the profits, will have less money to invest in the poorer lines that it will retain. That will damage our overall railway structure. We are endangering the country by converting a public monopoly into a private one.

I am also worried by the Bill's possible implications for major railway projects which are important not only to London and its environs, but to the nation as a whole. What, for example, will be the implications for the new express rail link to Heathrow, or for the new link from the Eurotunnel to London—or, indeed, for the underground Jubilee line link with docklands? Will any of those three capital projects, which were important to us all, be affected by the Bill? Will the Minister also bring us up to date with the timing of the three proposals? So many different

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

thoughts are being thrown around by the press that we are now totally confused about whether any of them will proceed.

When we talk about railway systems in the United Kingdom we must not forget that we are now part of the European Community, which has its own overall transport proposals for the 12 nations. There is a limit to what we in the United Kingdom can do with our railways without the approval and support of the Community. Some of us may not like that, but it is the position; indeed, some investment in railway projects cannot proceed without the approval of the Community, and its investment of European funds.

The Secretary of State said that he had consulted the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. I noted that he had not consulted the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland: to our shame, the Northern Ireland Office had nothing to contribute, and we in Northern Ireland resent that very much.

Let me conclude by examining the Bill's implications for Northern Ireland and the west of Scotland. As the Minister will know, the European Community has a new combined transport network. A map illustrating the proposals for Europe shows the route to Liverpool, because the intermodal channel tunnel terminal will be at Seaforth. That will have important implications for us in the north-west and Northern Ireland.

What is the Government's stance on the ferry route between Liverpool and Belfast? British Rail selected it as the main route from Liverpool serving the whole island of Ireland, not just Northern Ireland; yet we now find that the route from Liverpool to Belfast is no longer shown on the map illustrating the European Community's proposals. Have the Government made any representations on the subject, and do they support British Rail's decision to recommend the Belfast-Liverpool route rather than the Dublin-Liverpool route as the main route to the island of Ireland?

Finally, let me deal with a subject well known to the Minister—the other major rail route serving Northern Ireland: the one that goes up to the west of Scotland, into Stranraer, across to Larne and down through Northern Ireland and the Republic. The route from Larne to Stranraer is the busiest between the whole island of Ireland and Great Britain: one third of freight from the Republic now comes up through Northern Ireland and Larne. That position will improve, because we are investing a good deal of capital in the route from Dublin to Larne. The European Community is helping us to modernise the line from Dublin to Belfast, and the Northern Ireland Office is investing massively in an inter-city link so that it will be possible to travel by train all the way from Dublin to Larne. The ferry system—and the ScotRail system, which is now to be privatised—will have more traffic as a result.

Back in 1991, we were told that a European Community committee recommended that the Dublin-Holyhead route should become the main route between Ireland and Great Britain, although the Larne-Stranraer route is the most popular with those involved in business and tourism. That was a most unusual decision. The vice-president of the Community, Sir Leon Brittan, confirmed that in a letter on 9 January 1992. Later that month, the Minister for Public Transport stated in another letter:

"the EC working group did not in fact present a further report on the high speed train network by the end of last year"—

that is, by the end of 1991, as had been intended. The Minister went on:

"A number of studies have yet to be completed and . . . the aim is now to produce the report by the end of 1992."

Have the Government now received that report from the European Community?

In July 1992, Lord Caithness, Minister for Aviation and Shipping, wrote a letter referring to the

"interim report produced in December 1990 by the European Commission . . . that has been considering the development of a European high speed train network".

He went on to say:

"The Government would expect that any railway network maps proposed for the new group would show the Larne-Stranraer route as a link between the railway networks of Great Britain and Ireland"—

that is, the island of Ireland.

At the end of the year, the director of roads and transportation for Dumfries and Galloway regional council, Mr. Guy, said in a report that there was a reluctance by

"ScotRail to improve the rail network in South West Scotland."

The report also highlighted the fact that

"the West coast rail line within England and Scotland carried more freight than the East coast line, yet the latter had been earmarked by British Rail to receive greater funding to improve the route and to decrease travel times."

Although the west was busier, it was not getting the funding—that applied right up the west of England and into the west of Scotland. Mr. Guy reminded members of the Committee that

"the shortest crossing from the island of Ireland to Great Britain was via the North Channel and that the majority of traffic used that route."

We ask the Government to clarify the confusing situation. Has the European Community working group made its final recommendations, and have the Government made firm proposals to Brussels that the Larne-Stranraer crossing and the railway system in the west of Scotland be preserved?

7.40 pm

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): There is one matter on which the whole Chamber seems to be agreed, and that is the need for additional investment in the railways. What is not agreed is how that additional investment can be obtained.

In my constituency of Newbury, new rolling stock has recently improved the service. There are now also additional stops by InterCity on its way from the south-west to London and back. That has improved the line, but not nearly enough. We all agree that there must be far more investment in the railways. I accept that the Government have recently made a huge investment, and we all know that investment is the highest it has been for 30 years.

I very much welcome the commitment given by the Secretary of State in his letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). The Secretary of State said:

"We agree on a need for continuing investment in the railway and a role of strategic investment."

The question, however, is how to get even more investment than the public sector can supply.

Some has already been supplied. For example, British Rail has been privatising its non-core activities for a considerable time, including British Transport hotels. It has also allowed private ownership of part of the railway —for example, by allowing people to run their freight wagons or locomotives on the railway or allowing private operators to run their own trains on the track. British Rail has also introduced private sector money by working in joint ventures, for example, using the many railway sites which became surplus to requirements.

The Opposition's method is always to demand additional borrowing. When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was speaking, I was not able to intervene to ask what level the additional borrowing would reach. I should like to know what he thinks he could possibly rise to, given that we already have substantial public sector borrowing and debt that should not be increased. Also, we should certainly not increase the interest burden on the debt.

As always, the problem would have to be considered in conjunction with other priorities but, as always, the Opposition say that there must be more spending in every area for which public sector borrowing provides.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chaplin: No, not in the 10 minutes available.

What is vital for an improvement of the railway system is the direct introduction of private sector money. Of course, that is not possible at present because British Rail's borrowing ability is limited by the external financing limit.

Prior to the autumn statement, British Rail had the theoretical ability to obtain certain fixed assets under leasing agreements. However, under the rules that then applied, it was a theoretical rather than a real possibility because British Rail had to achieve at least good value for money in the public sector as if the assets had been purchased outright. The Government can always borrow more cheaply than the private sector, so that is very difficult to do. Furthermore, the full value of any asset leased before the autumn statement had to be set against British Rail's external financing limit. Therefore, the ability to seek private sector funds was extremely limited, which is why the changes in the autumn statement are so important for investment in British Rail.

One of the changes is that any privately financed project which can be operated profitably will be allowed to proceed. I see no reason why that should not encompass new lines. If an operator believes that he can provide a new profitable line, I understand that, under the rules announced in the autumn statement, he will be allowed to do so.

Another announcement made in the autumn statement was that the Government would actively encourage joint ventures with the private sector. Indeed, much of the Bill is in essence a joint venture between the public and the private sectors to improve the railways.

The third change was that the Government would allow much greater use of leasing with only the leasing payments counting as expenditure. Naturally, that will increase the amount of private sector funding which can take place. That is especially important in the context of more investment.

Mr. Prescott: A Labour idea.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many sedentary interruptions from members of the Front Bench, who have already had 61 minutes.

Mrs. Chaplin: Leasing will be especially important for the development of a private market in rolling stock. Eventually, I hope that the private operators will buy direct from the manufacturers or on the second-hand market or that they will lease, but it will take time. The private sector needs to do that because in doing so it will bear the risk, seek innovation and compete. It will do all the things that we want to see introduced to improve the standard of the rolling stock.

However, there are legitimate questions to be asked not only about the long-term issues but about the transition. At the moment, British Rail has been told that it can lease rolling stock, but the lessor will clearly have much greater security when leasing to British Rail, which is backed, as it were, by the Government, than when a franchisee is running a track. I hope that the Minister can say how the risk adjustment will be dealt with during the transition. Otherwise, there will not be an agreement between the manufacturers of the rolling stock and the current British Rail, and franchisees will not as yet want to purchase rolling stock until they are sure that they have secured their franchise.

A further risk is a longer-term risk which has been dealt with to some extent in the consultation document. It is that the period of the franchise is shorter than the lifetime of the rolling stock. It has been suggested that there could be longer leases, the use of new rolling stock over two or more periods and some risk-sharing.

On the issue of private capital coming into the public sector, the Financial Secretary said that private financiers cannot expect conventional, commercial terms and gilt-edged security. Everyone accepts that anyone getting involved in franchising parts of the railway knows that he will be taking on substantial risks. It is important, however, that the risks will not be over-burdensome. I hope that the Minister will restate the fact that he will fight back if the Treasury insists too heavily on a very high degree of risk; otherwise people will not provide the rolling stock in the private sector, which is so important.

The involvement of the private sector will bring innovation, make effective use of funds and improve management. Benefits will come from the improvements which can be made to the rolling stock. Such improvements will be to the benefit of all our constituents, especially the commuters. It is important for us to examine carefully the genuine risk that is shared between the public sector and the private sector so that we encourage people to invest in a way which will improve the railways.

7.50 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): I start by examining the political consequences of the Bill. I should thank the Secretary of State because the political consequences of the Bill will mean that I am already elected at the next general election. The Bill has consequences for us all, but it will have serious consequences for the Government and their supporters.

Effectively, the Bill is destined to fail. It may not fail on Second Reading, in Committee or on Third Reading—it may pass through the House. However, its proposals will

[Mr. John Heppell]

definitely fail on implementation. I can think of 132 reasons why it will fail. The real reason why it will fail is that the Government have started by asking the wrong question. They ask: how can we privatise the railways? The Bill is the answer to that question.

The Government could have asked a number of different questions. They should have asked; how do we improve the railways? If they had asked that question, we would have had a different Bill altogether. They should have asked: how can we extend the present network? How can we get more freight on to the rail and off the road? That is the Government's policy. Time and again they have said that they want more freight on the rail rather than on the roads. The figures show that less freight is being carried by rail.

The Government should have asked: can we attract more passengers away from their cars? That would provide benefits to the environment and our health. There would be fewer accidents on the road, and we would save £15 billion in the cost of congestion on our roads. The Government should have asked those sorts of question. They should have asked: can we make the railways safer? The Prime Minister and others may not have recognised that there is a price to safety. People in the United Kingdom accept that they must pay a price for travelling on safe railways. The Government should have asked: can we increase investment? I am not bothered whether it is public or private investment.

The Government should have asked such questions because they are sensible and relevant. The question of how we privatise the railways is not relevant to the problems that the railways face.

I am a former employee of British Rail, so I know a little about the railways. I am probably a rarity in the House because I am a former blue-collar employee of British Rail. I do not claim to be a railways enthusiast. I do not suppose that I had any more enthusiasm than anyone else when I went to work. I know a little about the culture which a few hon. Members have derided today. The Government want to destroy that culture with the Bill.

Anyone who has worked for, or had any significant involvement in, the railways will know that the concept of fail safe is literally drilled into employees. Every day, fail safe is heard everywhere on the railways. Effectively, if a driver collapses on the train the "dead man" takes over and the brakes are applied automatically. If a driver goes through a red signal without stopping, the advance warning system takes over, the engine is cut and the brakes are applied automatically. If the brake device is cut, an emergency reservoir takes over and applies the brakes automatically.

It is a shame that the Secretary of State is not aware of the concept of fail safe. If he was aware of it, the brakes might have been applied to the Bill. Throughout the Bill there is nothing about fail safe. I do not mean simply the safety aspect. Everything in the Bill, including finances, the network and the timetable, is not fail safe.

Railways do not run on "if", "maybe", "possibly", or even "probably"; they run on certainties. Railways run on guarantees. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee in the Bill. The Secretary of State did not give a guarantee to the hon. Members for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) because there are no guarantees.

I am not reassured by what were supposed to be the Secretary of State's reassuring remarks. When he was asked on the BBC programme "On the Record" whether loss-making services would continue to be subsidised, he said:

> "I cannot give a guarantee for all time because, obviously, if no one is actually wanting to go on a particular line, then that would be a candidate for closure."

I am even less reassured by the fact that in the same interview the Secretary of State tried to play down the fears about the fare increases by saying:

> "I see no reason why, as a result of our proposals, prices should rise any more than they have risen recently."

I may have been reassured if he had not made that statement in the same month, January, as the headline in the local newspaper which read "BR fare shocks: Passengers reeling". The fares on some routes in my area increased by 140 per cent., from £1 for return journeys to £2.40. In another area the fare increased from £1 to £2.20. If that is the Secretary of State's assurance on fares, I am not reassured.

During the election campaign I predicted that fares would double in the run-up to privatisation. At that time I was told that I was scaremongering. I was wrong. I predicted that the fares would double; they more than doubled.

I am not reassured by the Secretary of State's efforts to placate some Back-Bench Members with small majorities by saying that there is no problem because the Government are phasing in privatisation. I think that an hon. Member said that he likes the proposals because they are evolutionary. There is nothing evolutionary about the proposals. Evolution gives the idea that, if something is going wrong with the first seven proposals, the process can be stopped. There is no way that the process outlined in the Bill can be stopped. I do not believe it, the Secretary of State does not believe it, and no one on the railways believes it.

By the time we get to the point at which something is proved wrong, the railways will be fragmented and broken up. If one does not believe me, one should look at the experiments that have already been carried out. Have any of those failed experiments stopped the drive for privatisation? Everyone recognises that Stagecoach was a failure, but we still have the drive for privatisation.

On the freight side, Charterail was a failure. It was insolvent. It could not survive and went into liquidation. British Rail owned 22 per cent. of that company. It should have been able to negotiate a better price for the track. That is what will happen with many operators. In the end, they will not be willing to pay the money that Railtrack asks to allow them to run on the track. If one wants an example of that, one need look no further than the present problems with the Heathrow-Paddington link. We are talking about a piece of track which is 11 miles long. The whole network has a track which is 11,000 miles long.

There is a joint venture between British Rail and BAA which includes negotiations about the charge for use of the track. The project has stopped because British Rail and BAA cannot agree how much should be paid for the track. British Rail is saying £6 million and BAA is saying £2 million. The problem has not been solved locally. The chairs of both those industries have had discussions about

the matter, but could not resolve it. The matter went further than that. The Secretary of State met both chairs on two occasions recently to try to resolve the problem. No solution has been found. If a problem affecting 11 miles of track cannot be solved, how can we expect to solve problems affecting a network of 11,000 miles of track? The only way is to offer operators a cut-price track. The railway will not run any more by people like me greasing the axles; it will run——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I call the next speaker, I remind the House that we have reached the end of the period during which the 10-minute limit applied. Nevertheless, I ask hon. Members to make short speeches, bearing in mind the fact that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to catch my eye.

8 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) has left the Chamber. I would have been happy to remind him that, a few years ago, I had the honour to open a new main line—the east coast bypass at Selby. I still have the spanner with which I tightened the last bolt.

I am one of those who have a very high regard for British Rail. Things inevitably go wrong at times, but I am aware of the enthusiasm that many members of the management feel and I think that they have succeeded in improving the motivation of their work force. Can the railways be improved? Yes, they can, and the aim of the Bill is definitely a good one. There is room for a better service.

It seems to me, however, that opportunities for competition on individual passenger routes are limited. The main competition will come from roads. I warmly welcome the fact that, in his opening remarks, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to announce the new freight grant. Vast quantities of freight have recently moved away from the railways on to over-crowded roads, and that must be wrong. It is certainly in the public interest to prevent that from happening in the future. I am sure that the Bill will seek to ensure that that happens.

Much could be done to improve the freight side of British Rail. The board member responsible for finance was recently reported as saying at a conference that Trainload Freight ran 500 trains a day with 13,000 staff. He was apparently stunned when a member of the audience pointed out that that meant that there were 24 people to run every train. There is certainly room for improvement there.

At the same conference, the managing director of Felixstowe port described the rail freight business as lacking any imagination and any understanding of how to create a market. That, too, justifies the suggestion that much could be done to improve the way in which freight is carried on the rail system. This afternoon, I had a meeting with the chairman of British Coal, who, I believe, was not aware that this debate was taking place and who volunteered information about the problems that British Coal suffers because of the very high costs that it now has to pay to carry coal a few miles from the pit to the pier on the Tyne from which it goes south.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has reassured us on a number of the most important worries in people's minds. First, he gave an assurance that socially necessary services would continue and that there will be no wholesale closures. I believed that that would be the case, but I welcome the fact that it is now on record. Many passengers on regional railways do not fully appreciate the way in which the services that they use are financed. If the fare for a journey on Regional Railways is £2·20, the cost of providing that journey is on average £10—the remaining £7·80 comes in one form or another from the taxpayer. I believe that it is essential that we should retain a regional network, and I welcome my right hon. Friend's assurance that we shall. I also welcome my right hon. Friend's assurances that the benefits of networking will continue because I am sure that that is an essential feature of our railway system, as will be self-evident to those operating the rail system in future.

The Government have sensibly accepted all the proposals of the Health and Safety Commission with regard to the future safe operating of the railway. I should like to raise one issue, which I regard as related to safety —the role of the British Transport police, a force with which I am happy and proud to be connected. The police are responsible for security on the railway and for enforcing law and order throughout the network. They have a well-deserved reputation for dedicated efficiency. At a time of organised terrorist threats, constant security scares and an explosion of vandalism, it is most important that the British Transport police should remain a unified national force specialising in the problems of policing people in the operating environment of a railway. My hon. Friend the Minister has already assured us that the force will continue to play that role in the policing of the rail network.

The detailed parts of the Bill relating to the British Transport police can perhaps best be dealt with at a meeting with my hon. Friend, and I am sure that, with his customary courtesy and in his customary spirit of co-operation, he will agree to such a meeting. For the time being, however, I seek two specific assurances: first, that franchise operators will not be able to opt out of using the British Transport police, and, secondly, that the future funding of the force will be assured and the costs of the force recovered by one means or another—I suggest through the track authority. I hope that my hon. Friend can give me those assurances.

Mr. Freeman: I can give my hon. Friend those assurances. I should be happy to meet representatives of the British Transport police with my hon. Friend, as I have done on a number of occasions. In the consultation document, we made it clear that we envisaged a national, independent British Transport police force, and that means funding—one of the options is through Railtrack —which will automatically cover the contributions of all operators, both franchised and open access. I hope that, given the tone of that document, my hon. Friend will feel reassured.

Mr. Trotter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that assurance.

A great deal of thought has been given to the Bill. It is a very complicated exercise and it is most important that we should get it right. In the years ahead, this bold move will be judged according to whether or not it achieves its aims of improving the service and of attracting more customers—both passenger and freight—on to the railways. I believe that, freed of the traditional monolithic

[Mr. Trotter]

structure of a nationalised industry, and making the maximum advantage of the skills and expertise of their staff, the railways can and must achieve that aim, and that they will remain an essential part of our society.

8.7 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Let me say at the outset that I am sponsored by the rail union, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, but I speak in the interests of my constituents in York. A number of towns around the country are great rail centres but few, if any, are as vulnerable to the proposals in the Bill as my constituency: 5,000 of the 50,000 people in the local economy work for the railways. That represents one in 10 of the work force—and, on the whole, they are more highly skilled, higher-paid professional workers. If they lose their jobs in York, not only will they and their families suffer, but the city will suffer a hammer blow which will intensify the problems that the recession is causing. It is all very well for the Minister of State to say that there will be plenty of new jobs in the private sector, but they will not be in York. Some of the individuals may go to work for firms of consulting engineers in Croydon, Bournemouth or elsewhere, but they will not be contributing to the economy of the city that I represent.

The manifesto on the basis of which the Government were elected less than a year ago contained the following promise:

"Our plans for the railways are designed to bring better services for all passengers as rapidly as possible."

I do not agree with much in the manifesto, but that is an aim to which I would subscribe. That pledge should be the test of the proposals in the Bill. Will the privatisation proposals mean lower fares for passengers, more frequent and convenient services, greater comfort and reliability? Will they improve safety on the railways? Will they mean better terms and conditions of employment for railway staff? Those are the tests on which the Bill should be judged.

On 30 Novemberr, I presented a petition to the House urging the Government to introduce legislation to safeguard railcards for pensioners, young people, families and disabled people. This afternoon, the Secretary of State stated that there would be a guarantee to retain the disabled person's railcard. But if we are to have a better service to the public, will the Minister extend that guarantee to the other groups who have benefited from railcards? Why is it wrong to stand up and ask for guarantees that the interests of passengers will be protected? Or have the Government just ripped up the passengers charter and put a privatisers charter in its place?

What about convenience? At present, 26 trains per day run from London to York on the east coast main line—one of the services that the Government are keenest to franchise off to the private sector—and 27 trains per day run from York to London. Will the service frequency increase or decrease as a result of privatisation? What guarantee can the Minister give me that the people who get private franchises to run from Edinburgh to London will stop their trains in York? Will York end up with a better service or a worse service? We rely on the railway for business and commerce, for social life and for tourism. It is a vital link to our city—more important than the roads.

As many hon. Members have said, comfort and reliability depend ultimately on the level of investment in trains, signals and track. Yet, as the Railway Industry Association tells us, railway investment is collapsing, blighted by the uncertainty of the privatisation proposals. *The Independent* of 20 January carried a report from my constituency by Christian Wolmar. It said:

"In May 1994, the last Network 465 train for Network SouthEast's Kent line will roll off the production line at ABB's modern York works. Barring some unexpected development little short of divine intervention, the plant will then close. And this after a £50 million modernisation was completed last month."

That modernisation was completed in the expectation of further orders for badly needed trains for London's commuters on Network SouthEast.

The White Paper refers to a market for second-hand trains. It is not second-hand trains, but new trains, that London commuters need. People from Essex tell us repeatedly that the London-Tilbury line, the Southend line, needs new trains. Why are they not being provided? The report on the Cannon Street crash blamed the level of casualties on the fact that 30 year-old, clapped-out, rotten, "Annie and Clarabel" carriages were being used, and said that they must be replaced. The replacement would be the class 465 carriages, which are currently being built at York. Fulfilling the recommendations of the report on the Cannon Street crash will require 100 of those. When will that order be placed? The Minister has promised two of his hon. Friends that he will visit their constituencies to speak to important local railway interests. Will he come to York to meet the managing director of ABB to discuss the crisis facing the carriage works there?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman has misquoted me. I gave an undertaking that I would meet, in my offices in London, representatives of the port of King's Lynn and of the British Transport Police Federation. Likewise, I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I shall meet—for the seventh time, I think—representatives of ABB. I am in frequent touch with them, but through the hon. Gentleman I extend to them an invitation to meet me yet again. We want the manufacturing industry—especially ABB—to take a very active part in the development of the leasing market.

Mr. Bayley: I thank the Minister sincerely for that undertaking. At a weekend meeting with the managing director, I was told that the problem will start not in May next year, but that he will have to start laying people off in six months' time. If the orders do not come through now, it will be too late to keep the factory going and the work force together to build the trains that are needed. And if they are not built in York, they will be built abroad. Perhaps ABB, which is a multinational company with German and Swedish manufacturing bases, will shift abroad as much of the £50 million worth of equipment as can be moved. Buying from abroad would add to our balance of payments problems. Prices would go up, as the labour component of the cost of building trains in Germany is twice as high as it is in Britain, which itself says a great deal about wage rates in manufacturing industry in this country. We need jobs, and our transport system needs the trains. Again, I thank the Minister for his undertaking.

The Government say that they have approved leasing as a lifeline to the rail manufacturing industry, but British Rail cannot place orders; the banks will not lend it money,

because no one knows whether it will be running trains in the future. I hope that the Minister, in his winding-up speech, will tell us that the £150 million for leasing that was announced in the autumn statement will be committed to rolling stock. The Minister nods—I thank him for the undertaking that that seems to imply. But we need a further undertaking.

If the leasing goes ahead, and British Rail subsequently loses the franchise for the services on which the rolling stock is to be used, will the Government either undertake to underwrite the leasing costs until such time as the carriages can be sold on the second-hand market—that is what the Minister believes will be created as a result of this Bill—or make it a condition of tenders from people bidding for the franchise that they must take over the rolling stock and the leasing costs? If that does not happen, the promise that leasing finance will be allowed will turn out to be a will-ó-the wisp, and the benefits that the Government expect will not come through.

During the rail debate in January on an Opposition motion, I referred to the United States Hours of Service Act, which stipulates maximum working hours for every grade of railway staff. I am told by senior managers and directors of Amtrack that, in a regime with a mix of public sector and private sector railroads, the statutory regulation of working hours is a vital safety requirement. In the case of a single provider which does not face competition, such as British Rail, it is fine, without statutory backing, to expect the railway management to impose safety limitations of this type. The report on the Clapham crash called for the abolition of excessive overtime, and British Rail has responded. But when British Rail is competing against others, however, will it be able to respond in this way? Will its competitors respond without legislation? The American experience suggests that they will not. I am not thinking just of drivers' hours. The Health and Safety Executive says that the Government will consult about a statutory limit in the case of drivers' hours, but it was the excessive overtime of an electrician which caused the fatal mistake at Clapham.

Rail privatisation will trigger a haemorrhage of jobs from railway towns like York, Crewe, Swindon, Manchester and Birmingham to private sector firms. It would devastate these towns. I hope that this Bill will not be given a Second Reading, but if it is, it will create a number of quangos, such as the track authority, the franchising authority and the regulator. London is already awash with quangos. Will the Government give a commitment that these new bodies will be based in established railway towns outside London? If they do not have faith in the transport system that the railways will provide, if they do not have faith that an office in Swindon or York or Crewe would be accessible to the centre, they do not have faith in these railway proposals.

8.17 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I have listened carefully to everything that has been said in this debate so far. So that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who is no longer in his place, will not be disappointed, I should say that, as a new Member, I am a strong supporter of this Bill, for whose proposals the Secretary of State has made a powerful and persuasive case.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and the other Opposition Members who have criticised the Government's proposals give the impression that British Rail is the jewel in the public sector crown, flawed only as a result of insufficient public money handed over by a willing taxpayer. Such a description bears no relation to the facts. As several of my hon. Friends have said, far from being starved of money in recent years, British Rail has seen record levels of investment. This year, the expenditure is some £1·4 billion—a figure that has not been reached since 1960, when we had a far more extensive network. In recent years, the service provided by British Rail has undoubtedly improved, but in many areas it is still extremely poor, with frequent and unpredictable cancellations, scruffy trains, poor service, persistent lateness and lack of recognition of, let alone responsiveness to, the needs of the consumer.

Those failings are the inevitable result of public sector ownership. They were mirrored in all the nationalised industries that the Conservatives inherited before those industries were banished as the result of privatisation. British Rail suffers from all the classic problems of monopoly public sector industry. Until recently, it has had too little investment, as it has lost out to other public sector demands in the annual spending round. Year after year, it has lost money, making little attempt to reduce those losses and relying on the taxpayer to bail it out. It has shown too little interest in improving its service to the customer, as it knows that the customer has nowhere else to go.

The passengers charter has been a valiant attempt to address those failings, and has led to some improvements. But it is the infusion not just of private sector capital but of the private sector ethos which is the remedy to those problems. In all, 46 businesses have been privatised in the last 14 years. Instead of costing the taxpayer £50 million a week, they are now profitable and contribute about £2 billion a year in tax.

More important, they are profitable because they are now giving their customers the service they require. They have an incentive to increase efficiency, to stay competitive and to improve the service they offer. That is the discipline which business men in the private sector take for granted but which has been sadly lacking in British Rail.

Every privatisation is different. British Rail is not a profitable enterprise which can simply be transferred as a whole from the public to the private sector. Some parts will never be profitable and will always require subsidy. On that I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, for it does not mean they cannot be made attractive to the private sector. It just means that the Government will have to continue to provide a grant to the operator in recognition of the social need for such a service.

For some groups, there will be immediate interest and a number of bidders for the franchise. For others, there may be no interest initially, and we shall have to see how the first private sector pioneers get on. I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement of the routes which he sees as the first that are likely to be franchised. I am disappointed that the great eastern division, which serves my constituency and his, is not among them. In recent years, the service in that division has improved, but there is still a long way to go.

The recent reduction in the number of trains stopping at Colchester is an example of British Rail failing to listen

[Mr. John Whittingdale]

to what its customers want, while at the other end of my constituency the line to Burnham and Southminster seems always to be the first from which services are withdrawn, so that British Rail frequently appears to be running a bus rather than a train service. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider inviting bids for that franchise soon, as I am sure that it would be of great interest to the private sector.

My right hon. Friend has in general rightly resisted those calling for track and infrastructure on those routes to be franchised also and be transferred to the franchisee. While I understand why bidders might want it, to do so would make it more difficult to have fair competition on those routes, if the possibility should arise. Initially at least, it is essential that there should be a neutral umpire overseeing the signalling and prioritising of all trains on the network. I was therefore pleased to hear his announcement this afternoon that Railtrack will be an independent operator from the residual rump of British Rail.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to consider ways by which the private sector culture which he described can also be introduced into Railtrack. Most of the problems that have occurred in the great eastern division, to which I referred—I suspect that they occur elsewhere throughout the network—have resulted from points failures, signalling problems, overhead power lines down and the ubiquitous leaves on the line. I assume that those will still be the responsibility of Railtrack, and I am sure that that body could benefit enormously from the disciplines of the private sector.

A number of expressions of interest have already come from potential private sector franchisees, not least from within British Rail. That is an encouraging sign, and I hope that every assistance will be given to management teams from within BR who wish to come together to bid for a franchise. I also hope that private sector operators will eventually be attracted not just to bid for existing services but to introduce new ones.

I spoke of the great eastern lines which serve Colchester in the north and Burnham in the south of my constituency. In the days before Dr. Beeching, my constituents in Maldon also had the benefit of a rail line. That line was scrapped and despite the rapid growth in population in recent years, many of whom commute, the chairman of British Rail has told me that there are no plans to reintroduce a rail link and that the financial parameters within which BR is obliged to operate mean that the investment finance that would be involved is not available. That is a pity, as I believe that there would be demand for such a service, and I look forward to the day when a private sector operator may make it available.

There are many details of the Bill still to be worked out. For example, there will need to be complex agreements between the franchisees to allow ticketing, discount schemes and railcards. There may need to be some sort of clearing house operation, as operated by the clearing banks. There will need to be regulations governing the payment of compensation by one company to another in the event of breakdowns or delays to the train of one operator causing a failure and further delay to that of another.

All those matters will be difficult to resolve. This privatisation will not be straightforward, simple or quick. In many ways, it will once again be breaking new ground. But I am convinced that it is the right way forward and that the overwhelming view of my hon. Friends is that it is the way we should be going. I give it my wholehearted support.

8.26 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The House will be relieved to hear that I have no intention of reading a central office policy studies pamphlet.

As we debate the Bill, we should make it clear at the outset that it is sadly lacking in any sense of where the transport policy of Britain should be going in the coming decade. Indeed, it is not clear from the measure where the policy is going in the next 10 months. That is a highly dangerous aspect of today's debate, not least because the Minister produced a large and complex Bill and proceeded to say that one of its basic tenets, the concept of Railtrack, could if necessary be overturned during the passage of the measure and supplemented by a totally different system.

Much has been said about the customers. Let us be clear that they care about the quality of service that they are given. I am proud to represent a railway constituency, and even prouder to be a member of a rail union. The Government constantly boast about the large sums of money that they are investing in the rail system. If we remove from that calculation the amount of money that is going into the channel tunnel, it becomes clear that British Rail is being squeezed tighter every year.

Hon. Members who have taken part in the proceedings of the Select Committee on Transport have witnessed that deteriorating position over the years. It was obvious when we discussed the line of the channel tunnel route, the need for electrification and the desperate need for new rolling stock. It was clear from the evidence of witnesses whom we have examined in relation to privatisation.

Our interim report was a classic example of the best of a Select Committee inquiry. Despite the efforts of some Conservative Members, it did not seek to give a biased view. It took evidence from a wide section of people interested in privatising BR, and we soon discovered that there were some basic problems with the Bill. People do not know what the charging regime will be and they cannot calculate to what extent, if at all, there should be interest in privatisation, because they cannot be sure what is being said. Who will buy a service if they do not know what they are going to be charged or what they in turn will have to charge someone else?

It is also clear that there has grown up in the Tory party such an obsession about what they call the culture of British Rail that they are not even capable of acknowledging the job that has been done by management whom they themselves appointed. British Rail has modernised over the past five years, has changed the way it operates, and has set up what it calls an organisation for quality. Those are precisely the problems that the Minister and his colleagues pretend that they are interested in.

That system has not even had a chance to work. It has been in place for less than 12 months and yet now, without any consultation with the people most concerned, a Bill has been introduced which will yet again throw the entire industry into chaos. The result is a loss of morale, a loss of

commitment and a very deep unease about the future of the railways in general. That does not end just with the railway system.

As soon as British Rail Engineering Ltd. was privatised, we were told that it was going to be able to provide rolling stock, to be much more efficient and was going to respond to the culture of private enterprise and bring forward much higher quality service to the customer.

What has happened is something different. The railway rolling stock industry, all privately-owned, all entrepreneurial, mostly with foreign entrepreneurial money because it was handed over not to British companies but to people from outside Britain, has given detailed evidence to this Government about its lack of orders and its lack of ability to get anyone to invest in new rolling stock or new orders beyond the end of the next year. It has done so in such detail that the Government have no conceivable excuse for ignoring the fact that, very soon, this entire industry, like the bus industry before it, will be unable to continue because it has no work on its books.

Indeed, in my constituency a major company, which is now called ABB, is tendering for many jobs overseas, and has asked the Government for support in financing a supply of rolling stock for a scheme in Chile, only to be told that, while it is in competition with the French, who are offering soft loans and long commitments, the British industry will not get any assistance.

It is told, as a civil servant said to me yesterday on the phone, that, after all, one has only to look at the size of the deficit of the public sector in France to understand why they have a different scheme from ours. Of course they have, because the French know that, without a transport system that works and carries goods and people around the country, they cannot compete in their internal market, let alone in external markets.

That is a basic economic lesson which this Government seem totally unable to understand. The reality is that this Bill should be voted down, not by Labour Members but by Conservatives. The reason is simple. Within a short time, their constituents, who do not understand about investment in new rails, but understand that all the trains are getting slower, who do not understand why there is de-staffing of stations or why there have to be fewer and fewer people to provide a service, do understand that it is a direct result of what the Government are doing.

These people will soon have to have their say, and they will make their views known very directly to all MPs in the south-east, and to MPs in the commuter belt—not just in London, but in Manchester—and even, I suspect, to those rather royal personages from elsewhere outside the great conurbations who have been honouring us today with the extent of their knowledge of British Rail.

I think that the Government will then find themselves in a very uncomfortable and difficult position, and I look forward to the day when it is the Conservative Members who firmly and definitely and with no compunction vote this Bill into the oblivion that it deserves.

8.33 pm

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I concur wholeheartedly with what she said about the Select Committee's interim report. There is no doubt that there was a heated discussion within that Committee, but those of us who were involved—a number of vacancies had not been filled at that time on the Committee—in the writing of that report were happy to put their names to it.

The hon. Lady is right to say that it was in the highest traditions of the Select Committee system. That report appeared ultimately in a more constructive tone and asked a number of questions. The answers to some of the questions have already been heard. One or two questions discussed by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) have not been discussed, and I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport commenting on them later.

I know that the 10-minute rule no longer applies, but I notice that a number of hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall follow your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and be brief.

I welcome the variety of the franchises announced today by my right hon. Friend. They represent a cross-section of the railways in Britain at present—what my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North West (Mr. Bellingham) described as InterCity routes, and also those in urban conurbations in the south-east in particular.

Now that the Bill has been published and the Government have made it clear that they intend to press ahead with these proposals to introduce new opportunities, the public are rightly asking mundane but nevertheless important questions about whether networking benefits will be continued, about whether the price of tickets will remain the same or go up or down, whether investment will continue and increase and whether the proposals will ultimately lead to a better railway.

Those are questions which the public rightly ask—and which we also ask. If the railways were working well, there would be no need to change, but unfortunately, as some of my hon. Friends have said already, they are not working as well as they might be. That is why I believe that the sensible, gradual approach by the Government, starting with this Bill, with a step-by-step introduction of new opportunities and new operators, not to mention the opportunities for rail freight, is an approach with which the Government should press ahead quickly and with vigour.

I should like to pick up two points mentioned in the debate so far. I am delighted that Railtrack will be independent. When I spoke in the supply day debate some time ago, I urged the Minister to look at this, and I know that it is something that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) feels is very important. I see that he is in his place, and I join him in welcoming an independent Railtrack.

I hope that privatisation will lead to greater efficiency and to greater transparency of the cost of running the railways. Therein lies a problem, but it is one that we can overcome. I hope that the Minister will once again take the opportunity to make it clear in his reply that there will be continued and sustained investment by the Government in the infrastructure of the railways in future. That is vital if the proposals are to succeed.

I have no doubt that there will be some broad smiles in the private rail freight industries tonight. I was particularly delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State refer to the freight facilities grant scheme. I am particularly pleased that he has also announced that, in many instances, 100 per cent. grants will be available for freight charges, because, if we are to encourage freight off

[Mr. Matthew Banks]

the roads and on to the railways and to encourage the freight that is already on rail to stay there, it is vital to address these issues, and I warmly welcome what the Minister has announced in this debate.

I cannot hide my personal concern at the fact that British Rail in one case has increased by 180 per cent. the charges levied on some rail freight users. However, I balance that comment by welcoming the fact that Trainload Freight has taken on an extra 2 million tonnes of freight. That shows that, although some freight is leaving the railways, it is being replaced by new business.

The Government and the regulator must take action to promote the rights and priorities of rail operators. Private operators are very much behind the Government and want privatisation to succeed, particularly in rail freight. When the Government do set up regulatory and consultative bodies, those who are involved in running rail freight in the private sector must have the opportunity to have their views represented on those bodies.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance which I—and, I know, hon. Members on both sides of the House—attach to achieving a more competitive pricing regime with road haulage. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell)—I know that it is something dear to his heart—that we need open competition in rail freight as soon as possible.

Mention has been made of investment. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister once again to make it clear that, in the next two or three financial years, substantial investment will be made available for the track, signalling and infrastructure schemes which are pending. My hon. Friend knows my particular concern about the west coast main line, but it is important not only to my constituents but to those of other hon. Members on both sides of the House representing constituencies on routes to the north-west, the west midlands, north Wales and, of course, Scotland.

I am concerned that there has been some distortion of the investment figures in the debtate. In the evidence that he gave to the Transport Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned that some £1 billion would be spent in each of the next three financial years. One or two hon. Members have sought to suggest that the investment in infrastructure—I am not talking about the other £1 billion to be spent on running the railways—is already committed.

In 1993-94, some £450 million of that £1 billion will be required for the channel tunnel; in 1994-95, some £270 million will be required and, in 1995-96, as the channel tunnel nears completion, some £80 million at 1992 prices will be required for it, including deferred interest and payments in advance. While I accept that, in 1995-96, we may have constraints on public sector spending equally as difficult as those we have now—no doubt it will be the same in years to come—I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to make it quite clear that, when we take away the amount required for the channel tunnel, which will decrease over the next three years, some of the investment that my right hon. Friend described to the Transport Select Committee will be spent on the schemes for improving the track and infrastructure of Britain's railways, and particularly the west coast line.

I believe that the answer will be affirmative, but I hope that my hon. Friend will make it quite clear that, although he intends to press ahead with these proposals for new opportunities, he will always recognise the requirement for important Government investment in the infrastructure of our railways.

My hon. Friend knows that I wholeheartedly support the Government's proposals for bringing in new pilot shadow franchises, and I am pleased that they have announced extra money for British Rail to ensure that they run smoothly. It is vital that we press ahead as soon as possible and do not allow the grass to grow under our feet.

With one or two honourable exceptions, there is widespread support for the Bill among Conservative Members. No matter what the difficulties—there are always difficulties involved in privatisation—they will be overcome. It is a gradual, step-by-step approach, and I urge my hon. Friend to see the proposals through for the benefit of the consumer, and to do so quickly and with the utmost vigour.

8.45 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate. As with so many other hon. Members, there is a great rail interest in my constituency, particularly in Holyhead, which has a great tradition on the Irish traffic route and an historical involvement with the Irish mail.

I should like to make two points about the Secretary of State's speech. It would have been useful if hon. Members could have had copies of the plans for the proposed franchises. It was difficult for many of us to understand what he was saying, and I have never before heard policy made on points of order.

Perhaps, in his reply to the debate, the Minister could clarify the exact position regarding the proposed franchise for Scotland. Will it go to Inverness? Will it be an InterCity service? Where will the service go in south Wales? Will it stop at Cardiff, or will it go through to Fishguard? We have a right to know whether those services will be InterCity services and whether the franchisees will have an obligation to offer those services.

Mr. Freeman: The House will wish to know that, in the Vote Office, there are maps which clearly show the precise geographical limitations of the first franchises. The answer is that it will go to Inverness and that it will go to Fishguard as an InterCity service.

Mr. Jones: I am obliged to the Minister for clarifying that.

I am sure that he will also have heard the representations made by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) about the European fast train network. I am sure that it will come as no surprise to the Minister that I disagree with those representations, because I agree with the first draft prepared by the European Commission, stating that the proper route for Irish traffic is along the central corridor between Holyhead and Dublin bay.

I urge the Minister to support the European Commission in that view. We have many advantages, particularly in terms of geography, as 50 per cent. of all freight in the Irish Republic comes within a 50-mile radius of Dublin. Therefore, it is clearly more convenient and practical for the freight to go along the central corridor.

We will be waiting to hear from the Minister about the improvements to be made to the north Wales coast main line as a result of that European network.

In the Europe of the 21st century, if the single market is to mean anything and if we are to give the business community and the leisure traveller more travel opportunities, people must be able to travel quickly, efficiently and easily. In the 21st century, we are also forced to consider the environmental impact of greater travelling opportunities. It is little wonder that, in the Netherlands, Germany, France and other European countries, investment in railways is seen as a way of transferring traffic from road to rail for environmental and social reasons.

In the Netherlands, there is a clear policy to reverse the spending balance, which is currently in favour of road building, to rail. As a result, rail travel in the Netherlands has increased by 25 per cent., and the equivalent of £1·5 billion in strategic mainline spending is under way. That would be equivalent to investing about £300 million in Wales.

We know about the considerable investment that the French are making in their rail services. In no European country with which we trade is there any talk of privatisation or fragmentation of railway services. Indeed, it is the opposite. All our major competitors think that it is vital to have a coherent transport policy and that rail services should be properly planned and resourced. In the drive to ensure a properly integrated European high-speed train network, pan-European planning and co-ordination is essential. Failure to take part in that exercise will have disastrous consequences for our economy.

A strategic European railway network must be based on through ticketing and integrated services. The present plans for services from the United Kingdom to European destinations have required detailed linking of train operations in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands on a through-service or direct-connection basis. Any attempt to operate international services on any other basis is fundamentally flawed.

The high-speed rail link on mainland Europe will transform the economies of the European core area, and those of us on the periphery will effectively be cut off from participating in that transformation. That means that countries such as Wales, which is already fragmented within British Rail's operational structure and outside most of its current core service areas, will be at a double disadvantage.

The high-speed rail network proposed by the Commission, which includes services to north and south Wales, will be jeopardised by the Bill. In the European context, the philosophy behind it shows that the Government are tackling yesterday's agenda and jettisoning today's requirements. The policy agenda of privatisation is misplaced, misconceived and will harm our long-term economic interests.

Within British Rail's current operational structure, Wales suffers from fragmentation and the lack of a coherent framework. Under the profit centre approach to franchise allocations, Wales—a small country of 3 million people—will have five operators. The section from Paddington to Cardiff on the Great Western line is regarded as a core service, while all destinations west of Cardiff are regarded as peripheral.

On the west coast main line, all services west of Crewe are regarded as peripheral. In terms of Regional Railways, services west of Cardiff, Wolverhampton and Chester are regarded as peripheral. It is little wonder that we feel under threat as a result of the policies.

We are told that Railtrack is expected to act in a commercial manner and that it will not be subsidised. It must make an adequate return on assets, but will it be able to secure adequate funding for long-term investment—for example, in the upgrading and electrification of the west coast main line and the Great Western?

I understand that the Minister has been speaking to local authorities in north Wales and the north-east about the possibility of electrification. I wonder whether he can tell the House the latest state of play on that application.

Will Railtrack be able to secure adequate funding for long-term investment? Will it be expected to produce a reasonable return on investment? Because Railtrack will have to operate on commercial lines, there will have to be subsidies for the franchisees and other operators. We must be told to what extent and for how long those subsidies will operate.

Apart from the franchise that the Secretary of State announced, what interest has there been in securing franchise services for the routes in Wales? Will there be any attempt to secure a coherent strategy for the development of the rail network in Wales, or will we for ever remain on the periphery of the United Kingdom rail network, which in turn will be on the periphery of a high speed network on mainland Europe?

The Government's obsession with privatisation, which is mirrored in the Bill, will have a catastrophic effect on rail services. It will produce fragmentation when what we need is coherence. I fear that, in many parts of the United Kingdom, it will lead to reduced investment when more is urgently needed. It will drive us into a European backwater, while our major competitors are forging ahead with a modern European transport system. For those and many other reasons, I and my colleagues will be in the No Lobby tonight.

8.53 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): I intend to take a few minutes of the House's time to put the record straight on how rail privatisation will affect Aberdeen. I make no apologies for being so parochial. Given Aberdeen's geographical position, I am sure that the House will realise how vital our communications network is.

On the last occasion that the House debated this subject, on 12 January, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) showed his usual dislike of the truth and displayed his uncanny knack of ignoring the facts if they do not quite fit his argument. He said:

"the expectation and reality must be the substantial closure of railway lines throughout the country and in particular rural lines which exist for a social as well as a communications purpose.

Nobody need be in any doubt about this . . . One has only to read about what Grampian Transport wants to do. It wants to concrete over the rails and create busways."—*[Official Report,* 12 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 853.]

I shall focus on the last part of that quote. If, as the hon. Gentleman said, Grampian Transport is interested in rail privatisation because it wants to concrete over the rails, that would be serious and would cast doubts over public transport in Aberdeen. However, it is simply untrue. It

[Mr. Raymond S. Robertson]

does not. Its interest is legitimate and genuine. Unlike Opposition Members, its interest in rail privatisation is quite visionary.

Grampian Transport is a private bus company which has taken advantage of the Government's earlier privatisation policy, and it is a success story. It has a legitimate interest in rail privatisation in two key areas. First, the company wants to involve Aberdeen city to create a partnership between bus and rail services. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North seems to be blind to the fact that the two are not mutually exclusive, but can be complementary with foresight and planning. The company has already commissioned a feasibility study into providing a rail system from one of Aberdeen's growing suburbs in Dyce—a growth area—to get commuters into the city centre speedily. ScotRail refused to do such a study.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has been reasonably offensive, but I shall not reciprocate. Is he telling me that Grampian Transport has not proposed to convert existing rail lines into dedicated busways? If he is not telling me that, I think that he should withdraw his opening remarks.

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. Gentleman listens to me, he will understand exactly what Grampian Transport is trying to do.

In addition to that feasibility study, it commissioned another study, to use the Oban guided bus system between Aberdeen airport and the city centre. That combines the flexibility of the bus system with rails to produce the maximum utility of the track.

Those two projects have an exciting potential and are long overdue. They could soon be a reality. By getting the private sector involved, Aberdeen—Europe's oil capital —could get a genuinely first-class commuter service. Those of us who are campaigning to get the Petroleum Engineering Directorate relocated in Aberdeen will welcome the fact that we will be able to tell the seemingly reluctant civil service that people will be able to get from the airport to their offices in the centre of Aberdeen very quickly if the scheme goes ahead.

Why does the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North seek to prevent that? Why does the hon. Gentleman seek to deny the people of Aberdeen an integrated public transport system which could be the envy of Europe? I will gladly give way to him if he will tell me.

Mr. Wilson: I do not want to take up the time of hon. Members on either side of the House—I have the opportunity to make a speech—but I will gladly debate with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) the public transport needs of Aberdeen, and I will also explain to him how the transport policies of the Government that he so ardently supports have failed them for many years. However, on this specific matter, he seems to reinforce my point rather than contradict it. He might have investigated the brief before he read it.

Mr. Robertson: So the hon. Gentleman is not willing to explain to the people of Aberdeen why he will deny them this.

It is not just in Aberdeen that Grampian Transport has an interest. It is now preparing plans for Aberdeen's links with Elgin and with Inverness, with combined rail and bus services, through ticketing arrangements and one timetable. Passengers will be able to go from city centre to town centre with one ticket, on one timetable—bus, train, then bus again. If that is a success, the company is interested in extending the service from the centre of Aberdeen to the centre of Glasgow, to the centre of Edinburgh and even to other areas in the central belt.

I will end by quoting Moir Lockhead, chairman and managing director of the company:

> "Lines which in the 1960s were unviable economically may have become potentially attractive to the private sector, due to the increase in congestion on the roads, pedestrianisation schemes and parking difficulties and a growing awareness of environmental issues as well as the reduction in costs from advanced technology and greater efficiency. Our approach will underpin the rail system, not undermine it."

That does not sound to me like a man who wants to concrete over the rails and pull up the tracks.

In Aberdeen, the private sector is up and ready to go. It wants the green light from this House. What has happened in Aberdeen can happen elsewhere. Tonight, the House must defeat the Luddite tendency of the Labour party.

8.59 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): In 1981-86, as leader of West Yorkshire county council, I had some political responsibility for the development of a local rail network. During that period, we were responsible for the start of the turning round of the rail network in the area, so we have something to tell the House—a story of success on the railways, something that needs to be taken into account when one is looking at the present proposals. I would judge that success by two factors. The policies that we followed and developed have been practised since, and are still in operation in West Yorkshire. In the 10 years from 1981-82 to 1991-92, we increased the passenger numbers from 6·6 million to 15·3 million—an increase of 130 per cent. At the same time, and as a result of the increase in passengers, there has been an increase in the recovery ratio—that is to say, less subsidy is now required per passenger.

At the time that I became leader of the county council, many lines produced less than 20 per cent. of their income through fares, with an average in the mid-20s. Now the average is 38 per cent., and that is a reduction from figures in the low 40s before the recession hit our area. But we have no individual line which is less than 30 per cent., and although the actual cash level of subsidy is only a little reduced, it is supporting a far larger rail network and more than twice the number of passengers. It is therefore important to ask what factors have led to those changes, because they are factors which can lead to success in the rail network.

I can list four: timetabling, pricing, marketing and investment. We have timetables which are designed to suit public use and not simply the convenience of rail operators. We introduced in 1981 a freeze on fares, and that freeze lasted until 1986. Since then, the increases have been modest. The freeze on fares was accompanied by ticketing of an imaginative kind, designed to attract more passengers to the network. The ticketing systems were accompanied by aggressive marketing, using television and posters.

But as well as that, there was investment in rail. We have invested over the years in new stations. Eighteen new stations have been opened, increasing the number from 47

to 65, a rise of 38 per cent. New rolling stock has been purchased, and more new rolling stock would be under way at the moment if the money were released for it. Instead, in the present uncertain climate, as I mentioned to the Minister in earlier debates, those orders are held up and the company in Hunslet in my constituency is unable to proceed with their manufacture. The Minister said that he would meet the chairman of the passenger transport authority to discuss the subject. I know that he has met the chairman, but I do not think that he has yet given him or the company involved a guarantee that part of that £150 million will be used on those trains that are currently held up in west Yorkshire.

Those mechanisms, which have been used elsewhere, have been successfully used to turn around a rail network. I think that the Settle-Carlisle line is an example of a line that the former Minister of State for Transport reprieved after joint action by local authorities and British Rail. Positive marketing of that line significantly increased the number of passengers on it.

Changes can be made that will improve the rail network. We have all agreed today that we want the rail network in this country to develop, but the proposals in the Bill are the politics of the asylum. If we are to have a successful privatisation, it must be based on potential profit.

When the Government have been privatising, they have generally taken industries that have clearly been capable of delivering a profit—often monopoly industries, which have been certain to deliver a profit. However, the rail network makes little, practically no, profit on most lines. It is significant that, in order to start work on the system, the Government are having to take selected lines and pull them out of the network to create an artificial profit.

Through the lines selected and a grant system, the market is being rigged to generate profit. I am not opposed to the grant system as such, but under the system, profit is falsely generated. The rail network is a public sevice and should remain so. The changes will not work unless that remains the case.

9.2 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful to be allowed to make a short speech before the wind-up speeches.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) made an eloquent speech, but it contained an error. He suggested that the Government and the Conservative party had been considering rail privatisation only for the past two and half years. It has been a subject of much debate for much longer than that.

Some four and a half years ago in the Chamber, we had a debate on rail privatisation under the Consolidated Fund. In that debate, a number of my hon. Friends and I advocated a track authority, a franchising operation, the splitting up of tracks and trains, and privatisation generally. Since then, the debate has virtually completed a circle. We have considered regional monopolies and various other ways of achieving the movement of British Rail into the private sector.

Therefore, I am delighted to welcome the Bill whole-heartedly, as it follows on so closely from that debate of four and a half years ago. During that debate, I drew an analogy between what I considered to be the success story of the airways among the airlines and what was proposed for British Rail. At that time, the recently privatised British Airways was going from strength to strength.

It is worth acknowledging the position in Europe, whereby virtually all the railways are in the public sector and are making a loss, and the vast majority of larger airlines in Europe are still in the public sector and are making a loss. However, British Airways, in the private sector, is making a profit, even during the recession, when virtually every other transport company—in both the public and private sectors—is making a loss.

If it shows nothing else, that illustration shows that, if one gets it right and produces an organisation that is customer not producer-orientated, one can attract passengers and freight, and make a success of encouraging further investment. That is a shining example of what can be done with British Rail when it moves into the private sector.

Some may consider that certain routes are cherry picked, but we can improve upon even British Rail's good routes, ensuring that they give an even better service to the public, attracting passengers away from other forms of transport and back to the rail network. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with the idea of moving even the profitable routes in the public sector into the private sector.

The Opposition are always of the view that, for a service to be improved, it must have more money poured into it. It is important to measure not the inputs, but the outputs. The success of this legislation will be judged not by the doom-laden prophets of the Opposition but by the British public, in the choice that we shall give them and in the improved rail service that they will get. I am convinced that they will choose by travelling on British Rail, by allowing more investment and by allowing the service to expand during the years ahead in the private sector.

9.10 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We have had a good, if fairly predictable, debate for the most part. I was interested to note that paragraph 1 of the Conservative central office brief advised Conservative Members to emphasise that British Rail is not working well, and all the little parrots lined up to oblige on that score.

It strikes me as cheap and pretty miserable that people who have been in Government for 13 or 14 years—one Conservative Member who spoke held a central position advising Ministers on the policies to be pursued—take no responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Instead, as a political device, all they can do is denigrate the efforts of the people who have worked valiantly over the years to keep the railways going and to create what in many areas of Britain is still an excellent and socially responsible railway system.

Out of the clutch of press releases today—the Secretary of State managed six—perhaps the jewel in the crown is the one headed

"First lines to be prepared for franchising".

We even have a helpful map to illustrate the final selection. That map will be of great interest around the country. It will not be of all that much interest in areas whose lines have been selected, where apprehension might be a better word, but people throughout Britain will notice that their lines are not on the map and it is they who will be asking questions.

Those lines and sectors that have been selected by the Government as the first to prepare for franchising will,

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

during the next year, receive the kind of attention that will presumably make them fit for Mr. Branson, or whoever, to inherit. But people served by the rest of the network will wonder what will happen to their lines. I shall be pleased to give an answer to that tonight.

If money is to be poured into the Tilbury-Southend line in order to bring it up to the standard to enable it to be sold off, will that come from within Network SouthEast or British Rail's existing capital allowances? If so, will that not inevitably be at the expense of the rest of the network?

Take note, the lines on the map are the ones that have been selected and in which the Government have a vested interest in promoting as potential franchises. But that can only mean that the fragmentation has begun, along with the rundown of the rest of the railway.

I want to start with the question of safety, as I do at a high point in every speech that I make on this subject. Since we debated the matter a couple of weeks ago, much attention has been given to the Health and Safety Commission's report. I do not object to political point scoring, but I do object to the gloss that the Secretary of State has persistently put on the report because the subject is of such seriousness.

The Health and Safety Commission gave no clean bill of health to what is being done: let there be no misunderstanding about that. In case some Tory Members still do not understand what the Health and Safety Commission's report says, I quote it again. It says:

"The consequences of failing to achieve adequate systems of control will be seen in an increased risk in the railway system and the likelihood of an increase in the numbers and possibly also the severity of accidents."

I desperately hope that will not prove true and that the number and severity of accidents does not increase. If the Bill is passed, I hope that the Health and Safety Commission's 38 proposals to ameliorate that risk will be sufficient and will be implemented.

Who in this country asked the Government to put in place a railways system that is inherently more dangerous to the extent that such safeguards must be taken? The answer is, no Member of Parliament, no one who works on the railways, and no one who travels on the railways. As the evidence given to the Select Committee proves, almost no one in the country wants the Government to do that. It is a unilateral act of irresponsibility on the Government's part to put in place a railway system that is less safe than that which exists.

We are already seeing attempts to rationalise irresponsibility. One of the alleged intellectuals of the Conservative party, the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), produced a document that is of considerable interest to my right hon. and hon. Friends, though I suspect that there is less concern among Government Members to publicise it. Such is the way that ideas start. Soon, for reasons that we can well understand from today's debate, an explanation will have to be given as to why less money should be spent on safety, because that is the direction in which all the pressure will be applied.

The hon. Member for Havant's advocacy of rail safety deregulation confirms that the surest way to be hailed as an intellectual and thinker is to say something of such stupidity that no cautious mortal would dare to advance it. The hon. Member for Havant reached the momentous conclusion that railway safety is not cost-effective and wants a moratorium on new safety measures. He has a point when he says that safety costs money and that that is reflected in fares. However, if the hon. Gentleman thinks that rail safety costs money and drives passengers away, what does he imagine their perception of danger would do?

The hon. Member for Havant should say what is the cost-effectiveness of a rail accident—of a Clapham disaster.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): In the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), will not the hon. Gentleman admit that my hon. Friend was simply pointing out that there is a statistical quirk in published safety figures—that when fewer people travel on the railways, the per capita safety record worsens, even though more money might have been spent on safety? My hon. Friend was merely making a statistical point. If the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) cannot understand that point, that reflects on him and not on my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wilson: It is not a statistical quirk but statistical drivel. I would have told the hon. Member for Havant that I intended to refer to his article, but I knew that he was around earlier and was capable of being present.

The hon. Member for Havant should not only come to the House and try to justify a moratorium on safety expenditure; he should stand outside any commuter railway station on Network SouthEast and tell passengers that Tory thinking is that too much money has been spent on saving lives on the railways, and that by some demented ideological device less money should be spent for that purpose.

Mr. Duncan: The hon. Gentleman misrepresents my hon. Friend's argument.

Mr. Wilson: I am not misrepresenting it but representing it very well. That argument is there in black and white and represents a train of thought in the Conservative party that will be brought into play more forcefully. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hear support for it from the Conservative ranks. That thinking will be brought more into play because of the need to force down——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): That is drivel.

Mr. Wilson: If the hon. Lady thinks that her colleague's words are drivel, she should so inform him.

We learnt today of the complete separation of Railtrack from the operators, in the form of a separate company, and of the appointment of Mr. Robert Horton to preside over it—a man too abrasive for BP but just the person to act as the interface between the track authority and rail users.

The Secretary of State said today that Railtrack should contract out services and that would be vital in keeping its prices down. Perhaps the Secretary of State will say which services he has in mind. Will they be the maintenance services performed by the people who work on the track and who undertake necessary safety work at present? If Railtrack contracts out those services, it can only lead to casualisation—to people working on the railway lines who are not used to that work. It can only lead to cheaper

labour. The Secretary of State confirmed that when he said that contracting out services will be vital in keeping prices down.

Then the Secretary of State tells us that track franchisees will pay only what they can afford in charges. What does that mean? Does it mean that a subsidy will bridge the gap between what it costs to maintain a safe railway and what the operators can afford? Does the Secretary of State guarantee that that gap will be fully bridged? The moment that he fails to do so, there will again be pressure on British Rail to keep down spending on safety: that is the inevitable logic of what he is saying.

Let me now deal with the general subject of network benefits. Last week, a document emerged from the Department of Transport. Its contents have, to a substantial extent, been confirmed by what the Secretary of State has said today. It is a very honest document, and I believe that its contents, and the statements that are emerging from it, will capture the public's interest in the weeks ahead as much as anything that has been said in the debate. The matters involved directly affect the travelling public.

Let us go through the headline conclusions of the document, as confirmed by the Secretary of State today. According to the Department, discounts and through ticketing "should not be imposed" on private operators. Train operators cannot be expected to sell tickets for services other than their own, because this

"runs contrary to commercial interests".

Any scheme to replace railcards should be decided by each private operator on the basis of "their own marketing strategy", and private operators might choose to retain railcards for the disabled, but would do so

"for the public relations benefit".

Those are the conclusions in the document, and the Secretary of State confirmed today that the disabled persons' railcard would be retained for public relations reasons. According to the document, only 40,000 disabled persons hold railcards. Financially it is not very significant one way or another. Many operators might consider that the public relations benefits of continuing to offer discounts to disabled people are well worth such a small cost.

Mr. Adley: Last week, some members of the Select Committee visited the networking office at Euston. We were told that if more than one operator ran trains on a piece of line, the long-hallowed advantage of being able to turn up and get on to a train would probably be lost, because everyone would have to have a piece of paper. Has the hon. Gentleman considered that, in the light of the fact that the east coast main line is to be franchised although part of it will continue to be run by Regional Railways and others?

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is transparently obvious that there will be problems in the whole business of the inter-availability of tickets once the fragmentation of operations has begun. But let me return to the question of disabled people, which, I know, concerns the hon. Gentleman as much as it concerns Opposition Members.

Let me make it clear that Opposition Members do not see the railcard for the disabled as a public relations benefit for some cheapskate operator. The Department of Transport document make no mention of rights or of social need. Only 40,000 disabled railcard holders can be bought off for the benefit of public relations; but the families, pensioners and young people who hold railcards are too numerous, and will therefore be dispensed with. There is no guarantee of a national rail network benefit for them.

Let me repeat the question that I asked the Secretary of State earlier: will he guarantee the continuation of national railcards for pensioners and for people of 24 and under? Will he also guarantee the continuation of the London travelcard, which at present covers travel on London Regional Transport, London Buses and British Rail, and the continuation of the family railcard? I am not the one who is waiting for an answer; 4 million people, many of them constituents of Tory Members, are waiting for that answer, which will be either a deafening silence or an eventual no.

Notwithstanding all the other provisions, the sheer vandalism of breaking up InterCity takes a bit of beating. How these ideologues despise anything in the public sector that actually works, and works well—that returns a profit, provides decent working conditions and gives people a reason to take pride in their work. They despise it, and they must destroy it: they cannot just leave it to operate more successfully. That has led to the breaking up of InterCity, and to the hiving off of profitable routes, especially the east coast route, from the rest. When one takes away what is profitable, what is left for that which is unprofitable?

Within InterCity, the east coast main line route makes a profit of about £60 million. If one adds together the three sections of InterCity which will be put into the shadow franchises, one has a profit of roughly £70 million. The overall profit of InterCity last year was, say, a couple of million pounds. It does not take a mathematician of even Conservative standards to work out that if one takes £70 million out of the equation and sets it against a £2 million overall profit, there will be a deficit of about £68 million left for the rest of InterCity.

Is the Minister saying that there is to be a subsidy on the parts of InterCity which remain with British Rail? Is a railway which is not at present subsidised going to be subsidised to allow the private sector to make a profit on what has been hived off? If there is to be no subsidy, who is to meet the cost of the deficit which already exists on those parts of InterCity which would remain within the public sector?

I want the Minister for Public Transport to clarify what is to happen to InterCity. I have already referred to the map which is headed

"First lines to be prepared for franchising".

There is no word of shadow franchising or experiments and no sign that it may or may not happen.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) raised the issue of InterCity being retained as a single entity. The Minister told us, helpfully, that he was shortly to meet the director of InterCity about

"retention and strengthening of InterCity identity."

That will be an interesting conversation. He will tell the director of InterCity that he is taking away three of his profitable routes to turn them into autonomous businesses within British Rail while, at the same time, he is talking about the retention and strengthening of InterCity identity. How are the two compatible?

To be fair to the Minister, I believe that in this instance his words reflected his own thinking and wishes. He said that the Government had taken no long-term decisions

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about the future of InterCity. With the authority of the Secretary of State, the Minister must tell us whether this is true or false: are the InterCity routes designated on the map the first lines to be prepared for franchising? Is that a positive categorical statement, or have no long-term decisions been taken about the future of InterCity?

The Minister should make no mistake, because no one who lives on the sections of the InterCity routes which are not covered by the proposed franchises will be in any doubt about that. If InterCity is fragmented, many of the communities which at present benefit from InterCity services, especially direct InterCity services, will not have them in the future. That message will strike a chord with everyone who instinctively understands it to be the truth.

Of course we welcome the freight initiatives which were announced today. Of course we would, because we, and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), have been arguing for them for many months. We shall make a closer inspection of the small print, but basically, if the measures are designed to get freight on to the railways and off the roads, we are behind them.

Surely the Minister can say how long we are to wait for the measures to take effect. Is it to be 18 or 8 months? Are we to stand idly by for another six months or one year watching the haemorrhaging of rail freight continue? Are we to watch the cargoes of cement, oil, bitumen and chemicals transfer on to the roads?

In referring to the central office brief, hon. Members raised the issue of charges being imposed by British Rail for its freight services. There is a problem. I deplore the increase in charges on which British Rail is insisting. There are, however, conflicting statements which the Minister can resolve now.

The Freight Transport Association and other bodies will say that when British Rail imposes large increases, the reason given is that British Rail is still required to operate according to the financial objectives set down by Cecil Parkinson in 1989. If the Government had any wish to get freight on to the railway and off the roads, instead of driving it at an alarming rate in the other direction, they would have long ago abandoned those objectives. It is no longer tolerable for the Government to tell British Rail that it must pursue those objectives and for British Rail to tell the customer that that is why it is having to impose the increased charges, while Ministers tell the House that nobody has talked about those objectives for years and that there is absolutely no requirement for British Rail to abide by them; and for Tory Members then to abuse not the Government for their objectives but British Rail for carrying them out. There is an opportunity tonight for the Minister to clarify those matters.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that such charges have led to the proposed closure of a railway line in my constituency which is used by Blue Circle to transport cement? The proposed closure of that line from 1 April will mean that the cement is carried on a rural, narrow road. The threat to the environment and to the safety of many people in the area, which the Government have established as a tourist area, will be great.

Mr. Wilson: Let us take that as a test case. The Minister could return to his office tonight and sign a piece of paper which would put an end to that proposal here and now. It is a question of whether the Government will do that. They have stood idly by and brushed aside all such ideas. It is 18 months since the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) got a bit of cheap publicity by talking about transferring freight from road to rail. Since then, nothing has been done and freight has moved at an enormously fast rate in the other direction.

Today, the Government have tabled proposals which are unexceptional. When will they be implemented? If the Government wait much longer, many more hundreds of thousands of tonnes will be lost by British Rail and many thousands of lorry loads will be transferred to the roads. That is the reality. Let us have a declaration tonight that the proposals will take effect immediately, although belatedly. All Labour Members will then be pleased to support the Government's freight proposals.

I am interested in the idea that it is possible to subsidise freight. It is possible to accept the idea of no cost being made to the infrastructure by freight. Why was not that proposal accepted six months or a year ago? Why did not the Minister accept that proposal when we discussed it in a television studio less than three weeks ago? Everything in this game seems to have been thrown together at the last minute to put some gloss on the proposals.

We have had an interesting preliminary debate tonight and we will proceed to an interesting preliminary vote. No hon. Member in the House should believe that it is anything more than that because the real debate is in the country. Today's events have accelerated the debate. The Secretary of State is losing the debate at a rapid rate of knots, even before people really start asking questions. As I said, people will be looking at the map and seeing which services are not on it.

The west coast line has been referred to frequently tonight. Conservative Members also have an interest in that. Let us have another case study. The Minister should be able to tell us with some authority the future of investment in the west coast main line if the lines on the map are the first to be franchised, and if some gritty entrepreneur races trains up the east coast main line to take advantage of the £700 million or £800 million of public money which has been invested in it. Who will invest the money in the west coast main line?

The Government must have some idea who will give the money to Railtrack for investment in the west coast main line. If the Minister cannot answer the question, it is fatuous for Conservative Members piously to hope that there will be investment in the west coast main line. The simple answer is that there would be no major investment in the west coast main line. We all know that trains can continue from Edinburgh to Glasgow as a result of development of the east coast main line.

As a result of under-investment on the west coast main line and the increasing failure rate on that line because of the age of the infrastructure, how long will it be before Railtrack decides that the InterCity line will stop at Preston and thereafter be handed to Regional Railways? A similar pattern will be replicated all around the country. There will be Rolls-Royce lines on which a limited number of services will operate, and the rest will become feeder lines—second-rate and under-invested lines.

Throughout the months of debate on the matter, I have not heard a satisfactory explanation about where the

investment in Railtrack will come from. I know the theory of where investment will come from for train operators —entrepreneurs will appear to run trains and merchant bankers will fall over themselves to invest money for the enormous rate of return which will be offered. However, I have never yet heard anyone seriously attempt to explain where the capital for Railtrack will come from—other than from the revenue raised through the operators. The operators will not be able to pay the costs needed to maintain the infrastructure. The infrastructure will diminish and we shall have fewer lines, fewer services and fewer passengers on the railways and more traffic and freight on the roads. That is the formula on offer. There will be no railcards, no national network benefits and a huge bureaucracy—a fact that will be more clearly understood as the debate continues.

Mr. Duncan: Will the hon. Gentleman be chivalrous enough to give way?

Mr. Wilson: Of course.

Mr. Duncan: The hon. Gentleman challenges us, saying that there will be a huge bureaucracy. He will be amused to know that I have a little list of his own policy proposals on how to administer the railways in the public sector. He proposes a new transport forum, new regional authorities for strategic planning, a new transport users' body, new passenger safety inspectorates, a disputes ombudsman, a consumer protection commission and a railway commission. How can the hon. Gentleman accuse us of wanting to create a bureaucracy when his policy document calls for far more bureaucracy than our proposals would ever create? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Wilson: It does not matter how much Conservative Members baa their approval The argument advanced by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) is very weak. I must make an admission: I would not know how to run up a £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement even if I wanted to, and I do not. If the hon. Gentleman reads our document, he will find that our proposals come within the existing frameworks. If he really wants a fright, let him read the Government's policy documents and discover the range and number of quangos that they plan to put in place. The only spiritual and moral consolation that I can offer the hon. Gentleman is that there will probably be a few chairmen's jobs for his friends.

We shall have more bureaucracy, fewer services, more freight on the roads, higher fares and no railcards. That is the prospectus on offer. The debate is not ending; it is beginning.

9.36 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Some 22 right hon. and hon. Members have spoken in the debate, and I shall try to respond to all the points that have been made. On those that I cannot cover —in particular, those raised by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and the hon. Members for York (Mr. Bayley) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones)—I shall write to the hon. Members concerned.

Let me correct the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who opened his winding-up speech by saying that Conservative Members had sought to denigrate British Rail. No Conservative Member has criticised Sir Bob Reid or the management of British Rail. We have merely said that we can get a better quality railway system by bringing in the private sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) was right to point out the complicated bureaucratic nature of the proposals published by the Labour party yesterday, and I shall illustrate that point.

The Select Committee rightly raised a number of unresolved issues. I shall deal briefly with five of the key issues. The first concerns franchising and open access. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has dealt with that by saying that, in respect of the first franchises, there may have to be a degree of exclusivity.

Mr. Prescott: A monopoly.

Mr. Freeman: No, not a monopoly. The competition will come from the private sector in the form of competition for the franchises. We do not rule out open access for some services, passenger or freight. We want a coherent railway system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has responded positively on that matter.

Secondly, on the separation of track and operations —the important matter raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Orpington (Mr. Horam) and for Christchurch (Mr. Adley)—there is room for argument on both sides. The Government have reached a clear conclusion. I will put to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch three questions concerning his proposal for large, vertically integrated, regionally-based franchises. First, how does one control access to those railway companies? That would be very difficult. In the late 19th century, when the House sought to legislate to encourage competition on the railway system, it found that railway companies controlling both infrastructure and operations were not keen to allow other rail operators on their tracks. Secondly, there is the difficulty of having a national, coherent track charging regime. Thirdly, infrastructure is extremely expensive. It is a little hard to accept that, in the early years of our reforms, private sector companies could be expected to come in and take responsibility not only for rolling stock but also for infrastructure.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I have 22 hon. Members to reply to, and exactly 20 minutes in which to do so, so I shall not give way.

Fourthly, it is very difficult to contemplate how a national timetable and national control over train paths would be consistent with regional, vertically integrated companies.

The hon. Member for York rightly raised the question of network benefits. First, we are proposing that Railtrack should be responsible for producing a national timetable, as it will be responsible for controlling train paths. Secondly, we have said that it will be mandatory for rail operators to ensure through ticketing. Finally, on the question of discounts, the disabled card is the only genuinely socially necessary card. All the others were introduced by British Rail for commercial reasons—to increase the number of passengers on the railway network. Ministers do not direct British Rail to introduce railcards, and there is no evidence to indicate that, with the advent of private sector operation, cards will disappear.

My hon. Friends the Members for Southport (Mr. Banks), for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) and for Christchurch

[Mr. Freeman]

asked about investment, as did the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). On the question of infrastructure, I can confirm that Railtrack, as a public sector body—which is what it will be initially—will be funded in exactly the same way as British Rail. It will have access to the national loans fund for its investment requirements and, in the case of the west coast main line, for tracks and signalling. It will be the responsibility not only of British Rail but of its successor, Railtrack, to ensure that investment is made. British Rail will make a start.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East) *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I have made it quite clear that I shall try to answer all the questions that hon. Members have put. I now have 19 hon. Members to reply to, and the hon. Gentleman is taking up time that should be spent on replies.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman has not been here during the debate.

The west coast main line infrastructure is badly needed, and I hope that in the next year British Rail will make a start on the resignalling work. That responsibility will continue under Railtrack.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury talked about rolling stock—an extremely important matter. We have asked British Rail, by Easter, to identify the lines—they may well include in the South Yorkshire PTE area the lines that the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) mentioned—on which the £150 million of additional resources for rolling stock procurement will be spent. That money will provide additional orders for the rolling stock manufacturers, and we want British Rail to continue to order rolling stock beyond that point. However, we need to see a private sector leasing market develop. I am convinced that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury indicated, the Government will have to assist that development, as no such market exists at present.

As I have indicated to the hon. Member for York, I shall be very happy to meet representatives of the large manufacturing company in his constituency, as well as of GEC Alsthom, immediately, now that we have issued our document on rolling stock procurement, to seek their participation in the early development of a leasing market. We must maintain a high level of investment in our railway system, and we are quite convinced that the private sector can come in. As my hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at the beginning of the debate, this will be supplemental to very great public sector support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) asked what steps the Government were taking to develop the rail freight industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made some very important announcements, which were welcomed by hon. Members in all parts of the House, but particularly by those on the Conservative Benches. He said that for our new regime, when Railtrack is introduced, rail freight operators will be asked to pay as a minimum the avoidable track costs—the marginal costs. That regime has applied hitherto in this country and it is favourable to the development of a rail freight industry.

But the Secretary of State said that we would introduce a grant regime to pay the track costs of rail freight operators where that could be justified, and that was welcomed on the Conservative Benches. We have said that we intend to expand the section 8 grant scheme, including giving benefit to the calculation of motorway and trunk road miles avoided by freight which is carried by rail as opposed to road.

As for combined transport, we have said that we shall issue a consultation document shortly to give a concession to lorries carrying 44 tonnes on six axles for the carriage of freight to rail terminals. I assure my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies that that concession will not apply in Kent because the channel tunnel will not be regarded as a rail terminal. We are directing the concession principally at the nine channel tunnel railheads throughout the country.

I come to the announcement made by the Secretary of State about the seven lines which are to be prepared for franchising in 1994. They are the InterCity east coast, the InterCity Great Western, ScotRail, the south western division of Network SouthEast, London, Tilbury and Southend, the Victoria-Gatwick express and the Isle of Wight line. I have noted the warm support from Conservative Members for the selection of those franchises. Four specific questions have been asked——

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I am seeking to answer the debate.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. It must be obvious to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Freeman: I am doing the House the courtesy of seeking to answer the debate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Cheadle (Mr. Day) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) have raised with me, either in the debate or separately, their natural concern about the prospect of a franchising system causing lines to close and services to end. I wish to make it absolutely clear that we intend the franchising director, when he is appointed, to start franchising with the existing timetable and existing services. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today published a map showing precisely the routes, which include Penzance, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Mr. Day: I am grateful to the Minister for dealing with the points that I raised. May I have an assurance that where passenger transport executives or passenger transport authorities exist the Bill will not affect their existence or in any way affect the structure of subsidies that the regime implies?

Mr. Freeman: I can give those assurances, and in Committee we can go into those issues in detail. We propose no change to the responsibility of the PTAs and PTEs.

My right hon. Friends the Members for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) raised their concerns about increasing fares on lines which are franchised, and even those that are not. I am grateful that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and

Malling has at least suspended judgment on the matter, and I will explain briefly the logic of our position and why we believe that we have adequate controls over railway fares.

We have said that franchising will be based on the existing timetable. We shall have a competition to see whether the subsidy that we pay to British Rail to run the existing timetable can be provided more cheaply by the private sector. That might well be an advantage. We propose a cap on fares for those services which are a monopoly, and I can confirm that the commuting lines into London constitute a monopoly.

Network SouthEast fares have risen by an average of 2 per cent. above the retail price index over the last 10 years. In Committee we can go into the detail of how fares on Network SouthEast train services will be controlled.

I should say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex that extra investment does not necessarily mean higher prices. If one takes airlines or long-distance coaches——

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the Minister would use the microphone. I find it difficult to hear and we need his remarks to be recorded.

Mr. Freeman: I shall address my remarks to the microphone, Madam Speaker. Extra investment does not necessarily mean higher fares. One can have additional investment in transport infrastructure. If it is provided more efficiently, fares are controlled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) referred to the InterCity lines. We have proposed three initial franchises for InterCity services, but we have not ruled out continued use of the brand name. It is a successful brand name, but we have not ruled out co-operation by all InterCity services using and marketing that name.

We have taken no decision on the ultimate shape of the transfer of InterCity to the private sector. That is many years in the future. We have begun the process and on the west coast main line urgent decisions about infrastructure and replacement of rolling stock need to be taken and are better taken in the next 12 months, outside the franchising system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) raised the question of management and employee participation. I am glad to tell him that some 20 management-employee buy-out groups have expressed an interest in participating in the reform of the railway system and in franchising. That is welcome and is a vote of confidence by the staff in our reforms.

Mr. Wilson: What the Minister said about InterCity needs clarification. As I understand it, he said that franchising of all sections of InterCity was far in the future. Does that mean that there will be franchising of sections of InterCity and therefore that retention of InterCity for the foreseeable future is reasonable and logical? Would that be a reasonable interpretation?

Mr. Freeman: No, it is not reasonable at all. I was talking about sale, which is far in the future. Here we are talking about franchising initially three InterCity services.

I come now to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his press statement—the three-page news release which constitutes a summary of the Labour party approach to reform of the railways. Nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said, nor anything said by his hon. Friend who wound up, shakes my belief that the Labour party still believes in total state monopoly of British Railways, even the rail freight industry. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton reminded us, we would end up with even more control, a national plan and a national railways commission. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman talks about nine quangos, but my right hon. Friend said that under our proposals the only new function is for the regulator. All the other functions are already operating. The Labour proposals call for greater state control and no role for the private sector. The core of the proposals is borrowing by British Rail not only for extra subsidy and extra staff, but for additional investment. The hon. Gentleman's document says, essentially, that British Rail should be allowed to borrow from the private sector and implies that that private sector borrowing should somehow be disregarded in the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Prescott: The Minister must know from the autumn statement that my idea of a proportion of leasing agreement—namely, 10 per cent.—would be the only amount considered for the private sector borrowing requirement. That is exactly what the Chancellor has done. One does not have to count it all in the public sector borrowing requirement to borrow from the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman has never understood public expenditure accounting rules. I quote from what he said in the supply day debate on 12 January at column *782*:

> "The private sector will not participate"

—that is to say, lend money—

> "without some guarantee from the public sector."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 782.]

Any borrowing from the private sector would not only be more expensive than borrowing from the gilt-edged market, but it would be ultimately a public sector responsibility and therefore count as public expenditure. The hon. Gentleman is asking us to take private sector money when it is ultimately the responsibility of the taxpayer to ensure its repayment, but he does not want the active involvement or management participation of the private sector which will change the culture of British Rail. The hon. Gentleman's approach is disregard for the taxpayer and the consequences of borrowing, disinterest in rail freight and little reference to the passenger. In the Labour party's document I can find only two references to passengers. It is all about state monopoly and making sure that the passenger gets the service that British Rail wants to deliver.

In the supply day debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch rightly said:

> "I should like the Government to go about bringing in the private sector initiative, energy, ambition and imagination that all Conservative Members recognise are missing from the railway system at present"—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 809.]

That sums up accurately the view on the Conservative Benches. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East wants the private sector's money but does not want private sector participation. We want to end the British Rail monopoly and bring in the private sector in partnership with British Rail both in terms of finance and in terms of operating the railways sytem so that we can develop the railways system further.

[Mr. Freeman]

I find it very hard to perceive a consistent line from the Liberal Democrat party. *The Independent* on 17 September 1992 stated:

"Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat trade and industry spokesman, called on the party to support genuine competition that will increase choice and improve services and argued that co-operation between British Rail and outside is worth looking into, but Beth Graham from Skipton and Ripon told the conference that when she first saw the document she said, 'I thought it had got into the wrong envelope and should have been sent to the Conservative party delegate.'".

The leader and the trade and industry spokesman of the Liberal Democrat party are at variance not only with their party conference but with some of their colleagues.

We want to see the development of a modern, competitive railway system which will be competitive because we want the private sector to compete in the franchising process. Already some 50 companies and 20 management-employee buy-outs have expressed an interest in running the services. That demonstrates the degree of interest in our reforms, and we have said that we will support British Rail in providing financial incentives to management-employee groups in bidding not only for parts of the freight industry but for franchises. We want a reliable railway network and a change in the culture——

Mr. Prescott: Culture!

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman mocks it, but that is what our reforms will bring about.

We want there to be an attitude of mind that puts the passenger first—a "can do" attitude. My hon. Friends will support Government proposals which put the passenger first and will ensure that with the addition of investment and the participation of the management and employees of British Rail under new leadership, the quality of our railway system will be improved. The Opposition's approach is not to end the state monopoly, to make no change in the ownership of the rail system, but to have increased national planning and extra borrowing from the public sector. I ask all Conservative Members to support the Bill and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 269.

Division No. 138] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*

Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made—[Mr. Prescott]—and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 303.

Division No. 139] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion relating to the Railways Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Railways Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Railways Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Regulator, the Franchising Director and any staff of the Regulator or the Franchising Director, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of the Regulator or the Franchising Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Regulator or the Franchising Director, or by any staff of the Regulator or the Franchising Director, in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) any sums required by the Regulator for the payment of the remuneration of the chairman of a railway users' committee, any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to such a chairman or to other members of such a committee, any sums payable by way of reimbursement of travelling or out-of-pocket expenses to members of a sub-committee of such a committee and any expenses incurred by such a committee;

(c) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants—

(i) to the Board or any wholly owned subsidiary of the Board, towards the expenditure of the Board or the subsidiary, as the case may be;

(ii) to any successor company which is for the time being wholly owned by the Crown, towards the expenditure of that company;

(iii) towards the provision of facilities which are to be provided by any person for or in connection with the carriage of goods by railway or inland waterway or the loading or unloading of goods carried or intended to be carried by railway or inland waterway;

(d) any sums required for the making by the Franchising Director of grants or other payments under or by virtue of the Act;

(e) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants or loans to a company in relation to which a railway administration order has been made;

(f) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment in respect of an indemnity given under the Act to a person appointed to achieve the purposes of a railway administration order;

(g) any expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of a successor company;

(h) any compensation payable by the Secretary of State in respect of compliance with directions given under the Act in time of hostilities, whether actual or imminent, severe international tension or great national emergency;

(i) any sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling guarantees given under the Act;

(j) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(k) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the charging on, and issuing out of, the Consolidated Fund of any sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling guarantees given under or by virtue of the Act;

(3) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act for making loans to—

(a) any wholly owned subsidiary of the Board; or

(b) a successor company which is for the time being wholly owned by the Crown;

(4) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities—

(a) of the Board, in respect of loans made to the Board under section 20 of the Transport Act 1962, or

(b) of a successor company which is for the time being—

(i) a wholly owned subsidiary of the Board, or

(ii) wholly owned by the Crown, in respect of any loans,

as the Secretary of State may by order extinguish.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10-25 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): This is a desperately important point—a small point, but one that the Government must answer. My railway line has been privatised. As other hon. Members will know, the Secretary of State said that, for the first time on a privatisation issue, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 would apply. That means that a private undertaking will have to keep every employee whom it takes over, and will have to guarantee the wages of every existing employee. That is being done only because of the regulations, which are a direct consequence of a European directive that the Government were obliged to accept, against their wishes. Hon. Members who become excited about the social chapter should appreciate that, for the first time, we are saying to any privatised firm, "You must keep"——

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the hon. Gentleman would identify the part of the motion to which he is referring.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am referring to paragraph (2), which refers to the extra cash that will be involved. It is a simple point on which we must receive an answer. The Government will be faced with an enormous additional cost.

As you will know, Madam Speaker, infraction proceedings were taken against us because formerly this applied only to commercial undertakings, but it now applies to local services and privatisation ventures. According to the proceedings, we had to agree that transfers not involving the transfer of property were covered, that non-commercial undertakings were covered, and that compensation for failure to consult could not be offset against wages or presented in lieu of notice. The only point not accepted by the Government is that those rights

should apply to all employees. I think that that is amazing. Here we have a Conservative Government saying that rights forced on us by the European Community against our wishes should apply only to trade unionists. What that means to the Southend line——

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that everyone who works on the railways in his constituency should join a trade union?

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman must accept that this is a serious point. We are being forced, whether we like it or not, for the first time to use extra public funds to ensure continuity of employment and guaranteed wages for a privatisation venture, and it is relevant to paragraph (2) of the motion.

Although we have no social chapter, the Government are saying that the only people to whom they will not give the money are those who are not members of trade unions. What do I tell the workers on the Southend line in my constituency? Presumably I am to tell them, "If you are a trade unionist, you need not worry about your job; it is guaranteed. You need not worry about your wages either. But, if you are not a trade unionist, we will kick you out of the door and offer you nothing"—and that will be that.

Mr. Martlew: I repeat the question: is the hon. Gentleman telling his constituents that if they are not members of the rail trade unions, they should join—and quickly?

Sir Teddy Taylor: This is not funny but desperately serious. We are talking about a new law that is being forced on Britain against our wishes. Instead of what happened under previous privatisations, which allowed the new employer to employ whom he wanted and to introduce new techniques, the employer is now being forced to take existing workers and to guarantee their wages.

What am I to say to my workers on the Southend line? Because of a statement made in Committee last Thursday by the Minister of State for Employment, I must tell them that if they are trade unionists, their jobs will be guaranteed with the new employer and their wages guaranteed, but if they are not trade unionists, we can offer them nothing. Am I therefore to tell my workers that, under paragraph (2) of the money resolution, the Conservative Government are saying that we shall pay for them if they are trade unionists but that if they are not trade unionists, they have no rights or prospects.

This is a desperately serious point. Public funds are involved. The Government are saying that, with these funds, they will subsidise the guarantee of employment and wages if workers are trade unionists but that they will not give the same rights to people who are not.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I shall not take an intervention from the hon. Gentleman, who merely wants to make trouble and is not interested in people or rights.

How much money will be involved in guaranteeing the jobs, wages and conditions of my trade union members working for the Fenchurch Street line? How much money will be saved by telling people who are not trade unionists that the Conservative Government will do nothing for them and are not prepared to accept the final proposal?

In my 28 years in the House, I never thought that I would live to see the day when a Conservative Government would say that they will guarantee everything to trade unionists and pay extra cash, but that people who are not trade unionists have no rights or future. While I accept that the Bill will probably do some good for the Fenchurch Street line and that the Minister of State is a conscientious and sincere Minister who is doing his best, how can we, as Conservative Members, agree that trade unionists will have rights but that people who are not have no rights at all? That is wrong and completely contradicts everything that the Conservative party stands for. Why on earth should we agree to pass a law which goes against all that we stand for?

The Secretary of State passed over the issue with one sentence, saying that the transfer of undertakings regulations will apply. The Minister of State must deal with this matter. How much money is involved, and why should we, as Conservative Members, give rights to trade unionists but none to people who think that they can protect their employment in other ways?

10.38 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If the assertions made by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) are correct, I am sure that my party will welcome the proposal. However, I suspect that they are not true. They sound superior to the provisions of the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty. I shall look forward with great interest to the Minister's response.

I shall make four brief points. First, paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) of the money resolution relate to the financial provisions of the rail regulator and the franchising director. The Government's extraordinary position is that they will be paying out up to £15 million a year on an increase in bureaucracy. The money resolution and the explanation at the beginning of the Bill mean that the Government will be paying up to £15 million a year and employing 300 extra people but no additional benefits are specified for the passengers about whom the Minister spoke when winding up.

It is worth considering the £15 million per year that the Government are so lightly casting away. The Minister of State refused to provide a guarantee for the leasing of rolling stock on the electrified section from Leeds to Bradford and the Aire Valley. As a result of that lack of guarantee, the Minister knows full well that the rolling stock on the electrified section will be not second-hand but ninth or tenth-hand. The threat of privatisation means that financial institutions are not prepared to provide finance for the building of the electrified rolling stock on that section of railway. The lack of finance means that the first job losses are in the offing at the Hunslet Engineering Company, which would have built the rolling stock if the privatisation proposals had not been forthcoming and the Treasury had provided a guarantee. The Bill that the Minister is supporting tonight is the means whereby jobs will be lost in the railway industry at Leeds and, as was shown clearly during the main debate, throughout the rest of the rolling stock and locomotive-building industries. The £10 million to £15 million provided for in paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) of the money resolution for the rail regulator and the franchising director is real money.

As outlined by the Secretary of State, the east coast main line will be one of the first lines to be franchised. The

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

electrification of the east coast main line has cost the taxpayer about £500 million. It is no wonder that it is on the first list of sections of railways to be franchised. It is the most modern and most invested section of British Railways and provides an excellent service. It is doing perfectly well. There is no need to franchise it, unless the friends of the Tory party want to line their pockets from increased passenger fares. *[Interruption.]* There is no other rational explanation. The service cannot be improved. The Minister of State made it clear in his speech that the Government had no criticisms of British Rail. The service on the east coast main line has received investment of £500 million and is first rate. We are talking about extension of a service which could not be financed because of the threat of privatisation. The money provided for in the money resolution is being thrown away on increased bureaucracy in the offices of the rail regulator and the franchising director.

My second point relates to clause 122 in the Bill, which covers financial assistance to employee buy-outs. That financial assistance covers a wide range of activities, including the preparation of an employee buy-out. I have no doubt—the Minister of State may confirm this—that when employees get together they will employ consultants. Consultants are a growth industry. Some consultants want fees of £250,000 or £500,000. Such fees will be paid by the taxpayer. Clause 122 covers the whole cost of financial assistance to employee buy-outs. Such financial assistance might well cover vertical buy-outs such as buying the track, the rolling stock, the maintenance depots and all the infrastructure complete.

What sort of money is envisaged under clause 122? Will it be £10 million, £20 million or £30 million, or even £100 million, £200 million, £300 million or £400 million? What sort of limit is being set? There is no indication of that in the money resolution. Where an assisted bidder is successful, the money will be recoverable, but where an assisted bidder is not successful, it will be lost in a big black hole of expenditure financed by the taxpayer. That is the position. I am very concerned about taxpayers' money —more so than the Government, it seems—and I want to know what sort of limit is to be set on expenditure under clause 122 and the associated provisions of the money resolution.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Has the hon. Gentleman noted that, under clause 118, which relates to financial provisions, the power to give directions with respect to public service obligations would enable payments of up to £3,000 million

"or such greater sum not exceeding £5,000 million as the Secretary of State may by order specify"

to be made under those directions?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for raising that matter, to which I was coming but with which I shall not now deal in detail. It is a matter of great importance. First, the directions should come before Parliament—there is no provision in the Bill for that—and should be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. That would at least provide some degree of parliamentary accountability. Instead of that, the Government are granting a huge open-ended sum of money on the basis of a money resolution which, in the ordinary course of events, would go through on the nod. Most Conservative Members were hoping that that was exactly what would happen tonight. There were the usual moans and groans when I rose to exercise some degree of scrutiny. Conservative Members talk about wanting to protect taxpayers' money, but in reality they are prepared to let billions of pounds go through on the nod. The hon. Member for Stafford has made a perfectly good point, but will his name be on the list in *Hansard* tomorrow of those who voted against the Bill? That is the acid test of an hon. Member's determination to protest at the flaws in a Bill.

My third point concerns railway administration orders made under clause 53 and covered by paragraph (1)(e) of the money resolution. Railway administration orders are the result of recognition by the Government that competition implies a race: the losers are the companies which are forced into liquidation and the winners are those which pick up the small companies, take them over, close them down or force them to the wall. That is the system that the Government appear to like, but in this instance things will not work in quite the same way. The Government know full well what competition means and, in the ordinary course of events, they do not mind. They do not mind if DAF goes to the wall, with 5,000 engineering jobs and a further 10,000 associated jobs at stake. That is part of competition. People will pick up the pieces. The company will be bought. The President of the Board of Trade told us that some jobs will be recoverable, but the rest will go to the wall.

In the case of the railways, however, such circumstances would result in a break in service. That does not happen with British Rail, which is bound to provide services. There has been continuity of service. If British Rail wants to close a line—even a link line on which a passenger service operates perhaps half a dozen times a year—it must use the long-established procedure and go through the Transport Users Consultative Committee. BR cannot close a line without the approval of the committee and the Secretary of State. So far, the system has worked pretty well, but the Government know that they are introducing a system under which a guarantee cannot be given, so railway administration orders are to be introduced. If a company cannot carry out its franchise—in other words, it is broke—the Government will provide loans and grants to enable the services to continue. It is a very curious system, and a complex negation of the philosophy that the Government apply outside this highly complex, difficult and crazy situation. The system that was applied to Leyland DAF is not to be applied to British Rail, where the Government are to give guarantees.

I hope that the Minister will reply comprehensively to the points raised at this stage. The ways and means motion has still to come and, as the Ministers knows, it is open-ended as regards time. If we decide that it should be examined in detail, the Government may have to resort to a closure motion. It depends entirely whether the Minister gives comprehensive answers at this stage. I hope that he has some idea of how much he is going to spend. The House of Commons is giving him authority to spend money. I do not believe that Governments should be given open-ended authority to spend. We should be told just what sort of expenditure the Government have in mind.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The hon. Gentleman has said that things have been run fairly well so far. He might be interested to look at the reply to a parliamentary question that I received last Friday, which reveals that

more than 500,000 people are entitled to concessionary travel on British Rail by virtue of present or past employment. I was told that British Rail does not know the cost of that scheme. If the cost of each journey were £5, £6 or £10, that would represent many millions of pounds per annum. I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's assertion that things have been run fairly well so far, or that there has been proper accounting.

Mr. Cryer: It is very interesting and curious that the hon. Member is so concerned about expenditure by British Rail. No doubt he, like me, wants to know the expenditure involved under all the headings in the money motion—but neither is there any doubt that if there is a Division the hon. Gentleman will go into the Aye Lobby as instructed by the Whips. We do not need the hon. Gentleman's lessons about control of expenditure and whether British Rail is subject to such control, as it ought to be. Has the hon. Gentleman ever tabled a question about the mileage that Ministers cover each year in their concessionary cars? That would be a very interesting figure, but it might be too costly for the Minister to find out. Ministers like to hide information of that sort, whereas I am all in favour of rooting it out. I hope that, in this respect, the hon. Gentleman's zeal is as extensive as mine.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I do not want to be dragged too far down these byways, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) gave the impression that British Rail did not know the cost of a scheme. I hope that it was not the hon. Gentleman's intention to give an impression of inefficiency. Does he agree that, as trains are running anyway, it is likely that the actual cost of additional passengers is impossible to calculate? The accountant on the Front Bench may be able to confirm that, while an estimate is possible, an exact computation is not. That is the economy of British Rail.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his elucidation.

I should like now to refer to the fact that the board's business is to be taken over by successor companies. The money motion gives the Minister power to provide, from the national loans fund, loans that the Secretary of State may then extinguish. That is a matter for concern. If the successor companies receive significant amounts of money by way of loans, the taxpayer will yet again have to foot the bill for realisation of the ideological fantasies of the railway lunatics on the Treasury Bench. Assets will be improved. The successor companies will take them over in pristine condition, not because of private investment—the wonderful icon of the Government—but by virtue of taxpayers' investment through the concession authorised by this money resolution.

Before the House is one of the longest money resolutions that I can recall seeing. Because this is a complicated Bill designed to apply a complicated, not to say daft, set of organisational attitudes, the Government have been anxious to cover every eventuality. I hope that the Minister will give a proper reply because we are not here just to cover the Government's idiosyncratic views. We are also here to ensure that they are not running away with taxpayers' money. Because the Government are accountable, albeit to a limited degree, the Minister must answer the questions that hon. Members have asked.

10.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I wish to raise a few points for clarification, or consolation. Will the railways, as a result of the Bill and the money resolution, be freed from the tyranny of the annual accounting which has made it difficult for investment? I recall the chairman of British Rail saying that the biggest change from the private sector, from which he had come, was that whereas if, for whatever reason—even the weather—it did not suit a private company to invest, that was all right, but if he could not make an investment when he was running BR, he stood a chance of losing the money because of the way in which the Treasury did its accounting. Perhaps the Minister will comment on that.

There is much reference in the resolution to assets. The asset that worries my constituents most is that which is involved in keeping their local stations open. May we be assured that large numbers of local stations will not be closed because of the company's intention to maximise the use of the assets in non-railway ways?

There is power under the resolution to provide subsidy, which is essential to the commuters of Kent. On the other hand, there is anxiety locally lest we become a subsidy Cinderella and be an unglamorous part of the railway system, as we are at present. Does the Minister see better times ahead in that connection?

I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State take what I hope will be the first bold steps towards levelling the playing field between railways and motorways. Life for my constituents is almost intolerable just now because we have works on every road and on railways throughout the county. Hundreds of millions of pounds are being spent by BR on the railways and equal amounts are being spent by the Department of Transport on the motorways. The difference is that BR's money comes out of the total stock of BR's money—and the railways must choose between spending it that way or buying rolling stock—whereas money for the motorways comes from the taxpayer. In the latter case, people do not have to choose between buying motor cars and buses.

I think I heard the Minister say that the freight facilities grant will now take account of a notional sum for the number of lorries removed from the roads. That is an enormously welcome development, if it is true, and it is regrettable that it was not available when RailEurope's plans for the Kent rail link were under discussion. It would have had a considerable effect on the sums in that case. It is essential to Kent to have this equalisation of the playing field. We desperately need to take lorries off the roads. Some 70 per cent. of United Kingdom trade will pass to mainland Europe and by the end of the century the great majority of that will pass through Kent.

Finally, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether some of the money under this resolution will be made available to engineer the channel tunnel rail link, when it comes to environmentally protected standards. I understand that there is a good chance that the Kings Cross low-level station is about to be removed from the agenda. If that is so, there will be a massive saving, and I hope that I can be assured that some of that saving will be spent on making the channel tunnel rail link environmentally

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

friendly, because all the rumours I have heard suggest that the link will be anything but environmentally friendly because it will be stripped to the bone.

I hope that under this resolution no more money will be given to Union Rail, whose chairman has produced what is probably the most insulting remark that even the arrogant British Rail and its subsidiaries have been able to produce over the past few months: they have said that their project is so important that no parish council should be allowed to have an effect upon it. That is the kind of contempt for democracy that means that Union Rail should cease to have any money from the Government.

10.56 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I should like to put several questions to the Minister. One was asked by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe): whether the Government will undertake, if they are to authorise by this money resolution the expenditure or borrowing of so much money, to guarantee in every case that the highest environmental requirements will be met. The hon. Member referred to reports that, for example, on the channel tunnel rail link and elsewhere on these routes, there would not be the environmental safeguards originally proposed. If we are to commit so much money additionally, and to give the opportunity to borrow it, there is no excuse for not having the highest environmental standards.

There is an even shorter point which Ministers will anticipate from me. If it is expedient to spend so much money on doing something that most people in Britain do not want, and to borrow so much money for a proposal that they do not support, why is it not expedient either to give or to borrow money to make up the £70 million necessary to give the go-ahead for the Jubilee line?

If we are asked to authorise this expenditure, it seems to me mere peanuts to ask the Government to put their hands in their pockets for the money to give the Jubilee line extension the green light. It is a mere bauble. I will reserve my position on the money resolution until I have seen that green light and heard the chinking of cash from the Government. It could be a loan, if necessary. This money resolution provides an opportunity for the Minister to be popular in one bound.

10.58 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): First, I should like to endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) about the employment provisions. There is absolute absurdity in a Conservative Government, in a nutshell, ending up protecting trade unionists at the expense of those who are not trade unionists.

I cannot for the life of me understand, even if one wanted to protect trade unionists, the idea that, with these liabilities contained in schedule 6 to the Bill, and under clause 118, in the transfer of undertakings provisions that go right to the heart of the money resolution, we should be protecting one kind of worker as compared with another. It does not make any sense. If it is going to be done at all, it should be done equally.

Having said that, I should like to refer to the way in which the subsidies will operate in relation to the money resolution. I have already raised the issue with my hon. Friend the Minister. Although we have become used to not getting answers on Maastricht, perhaps we can have an answer on the money resolution about the implications of the new privatised rail system for the subsidies from the European Community under the European regulations.

My hon. Friend knows that the arrangements which are made through the European Community go back to the Transport Act 1968 and the European Council regulation of 1969, which was amended in 1991. They raise the question of the public service obligation, which is at the heart of the financial status of the privatised rail system.

I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that directions given by way of compensation under the relevant clause would enable sums of between £3 billion and £5 billion to be given not merely by the Secretary of State, as has been the case so far, but also by the franchising director. That is a new dimension.

It struck me as interesting, to say the least, that the amount that the British Railways Board is allowed to borrow at the moment under the British Railways Board (Finance) Act 1991 is precisely the same as the amount of money that the franchising director is able to give by way of directions—the limit being £3 billion at the lower level and £5 billion at the upper level. If the franchising director is allowed that degree of power, we need to know how accountable the system will be. It is not simply a question of whether the Secretary of State has the power; the franchising director has it too.

I should also like an answer on what the European Transport Commissioner had to say about the privatisation of our rail system. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am not going outside the money resolution, because the question of moneys payable to us through the European Community arises not only by way of borrowing but also by way of grants. Grants can come from the European Community to fulfil our public service obligations.

As I understand it, the European Transport Commissioner issued a threat that, if we privatised our rail system, we could not expect the same subsidies as other member states. That is an intolerable state of affairs. I may not be an enthusiast for subsidies, but I am damned if this country should receive an unfair allocation of its share of European moneys when the French, the Germans and the other countries in the European Community are receiving subsidies, and we, as a result of going down this route, are put in an unfair and unreasonable position vis-a-vis the other member states. I raised this point in the trans-European networks debate, and I received no reply. The Minister was on the Front Bench on that occasion, and I would like some clarification.

We are not talking about peanuts but about the payment of a massive amount of money from the European taxpayer, which is directly related to the manner in which the privatised rail arrangement is being worked out.

I take something of an interest in such matters, not least because my great great grandfather founded the London to Brighton railway in 1830—a great privatised railway, in the days when we did not have to unscramble the situation. Just as he inquired into the finances of George Hudson, the railway king and great monopolist, I should like to be sure

that we are going to make everyone, whether in the House or in the European Community, accountable for the vast sums of money that are being used in relation to the Bill.

I shall reserve my decision on the vote on the money resolution until I have heard the answers to those questions. I am as interested as the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) in the Jubilee line, because my constituency is equally——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. If the hon. Member wants to hear answers, he will have to give the Minister time to give them.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have concluded my remarks.

11.5 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) asked about the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, which deal with the transfer of conditions of employment. I can confirm that British railways are in exactly the same position as any other industry or employer. The regulations apply to the franchising of railway operations in the same way as they apply to changes in the private sector—for example, when one company is reorganised or merges with another. The provisions apply to all staff, whether or not they are members of trade unions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is right when he draws a distinction between those staff who have a right to consultation and those who have not. I understand that the Minister responsible in the Department of Employment has recently made it clear that, in the Government's judgment, those consultation rights should only be extended to the recognised trade union.

As far as the Railways Bill is concerned, the railways are no different from any other enterprise, industry or business. The regulations apply across the board. I have noted carefully what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East had to say on the matter. If he will permit me, because it is important, I shall correspond with him after I have discussed the matter with my colleague in the Department of Employment.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spoke about four issues. I shall see if I can answer him in the order that he mentioned them.

First, he pointed out that the £15 million for the cost of the franchising director, his staff and the regulator would cover approximately 50 per cent. of the cost of the new rolling stock. He and I both agree that new rolling stock is needed for the Leeds-Bradford electrification system. He may not have been in the Chamber when, in response to the speech by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), I gave an undertaking that I would meet the chairman of the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority, because it is possible that British Rail could use part of the new £150 million leasing facility to lease new rolling stock to come on to the electrification system. That is a matter for BR.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South asked about management and employee buy-outs. I confirm that the limit is £100,000 per management-employee group interested in organising a bid. Obviously, the total expenditure, which must come out of British Rail's external financing limit, depends on the number of groups, but I said earlier—the hon. Gentleman may not have been here—that about 20 groups had expressed interest. Whether they will all move to the stage of requiring financial assistance for professional advice remains to be seen.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South also asked me about the budget under the railway administration orders. That will fall to the franchising director's budget, which is essentially the total of the passenger service obligation grant. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is approximately £1,000 million. We shall shortly set the sum for 1993-94. The franchising director—distributing public subsidy and accountable to this House through the Secretary of State—will have to find all the moneys that he provides for subsidised services, and he is accountable for them.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about loans to British Rail. There may be occasions when it is necessary to consider extinguishment. The channel tunnel preparations are an example. For various reasons—my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) knows this better than anyone—British Rail has been engaged during the past three or four years in some abortive work. Debt moneys have accumulated because British Rail has had to spend money on acquiring properties and preparing for routes that are not being taken forward. It may be sensible under this Bill—I give no guarantees—to extinguish that debt because it carries interest and is a burden on the railways. British Rail itself made a decision about properties purchased and preparations made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent asked me specifically about the freight facilities grant. I can confirm to him that what we have announced tonight is the extension of the grant to cover the removal of freight from the roads, motorways and trunk roads, so it is a valuable addition. At the moment, as my hon. Friend knows, it covers only urban and rural roads, but if it is extended to motorways and trunk roads there is a possibility that more shippers of freight will be persuaded to ship by rail rather than by road.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talked about the highest environmental standards.

It being three quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Railways Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Regulator, the Franchising Director and any staff of the Regulator or the Franchising Director, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of the Regulator or the Franchising Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Regulator or the Franchising Director, or by any staff of the Regulator or the Franchising Director, in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) any sums required by the Regulator for the payment of the remuneration of the chairman of a railway users' committee, any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to such a chairman or to other members of such a committee, any sums

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

payable by way of reimbursement of travelling or out-of-pocket expenses to members of a sub-committee of such a committee and any expenses incurred by such a committee;

(c) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants—

(i) to the Board or any wholly owned subsidiary of the Board, towards the expenditure of the Board or the subsidiary, as the case may be;

(ii) to any successor company which is for the time being wholly owned by the Crown, towards the expenditure of that company;

(iii) towards the provision of facilities which are to be provided by any person for or in connection with the carriage of goods by railway or inland waterway or the loading or unloading of goods carried or intended to be carried by railway or inland waterway;

(d) any sums required for the making by the Franchising Director of grants or other payments under or by virtue of the Act;

(e) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants or loans to a company in relation to which a railway administration order has been made;

(f) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment in respect of an indemnity given under the Act to a person appointed to achieve the purposes of a railway administration order;

(g) any expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of a successor company;

(h) any compensation payable by the Secretary of State in respect of compliance with directions given under the Act in time of hostilities, whether actual or imminent, severe international tension or great national emergency;

(i) any sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling guarantees given under the Act;

(j) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(k) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the charging on, and issuing out of, the Consolidated Fund of any sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling guarantees given under or by virtue of the Act;

(3) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act for making loans to—

(a) any wholly owned subsidiary of the Board; or

(b) a successor company which is for the time being wholly owned by the Crown;

(4) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities—

(a) of the Board, in respect of loans made to the Board under section 20 of the Transport Act 1962, or

(b) of a successor company which is for the time being—

(i) a wholly owned subsidiary of the Board, or

(ii) wholly owned by the Crown, in respect of any loans,

as the Secretary of State may by order extinguish.

Railways Bill (Ways and Means)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Railways Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the inclusion in licences granted under the Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State or the Rail Regulator;

(b) the inclusion in franchise agreements, within the meaning of the Act, of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising;

(c) the inclusion of provisions under which monetary penalties may be imposed on persons who contravene or fail to comply with conditions or requirements imposed by or under the Act;

(d) the imposition of charges to corporation tax by provisions relating to the taxation of persons who are transferors or transferees in relation to transfer schemes under the Act;

(e) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.10 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On this not very usual motion for receipt of moneys it is clear that the Secretary of State intends to receive moneys for licences and a good many other issues. I wish to speak on three relatively short matters and I hope that the Minister will be able to give me a reply. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is also here.

The first matter may not be strictly in order. The question is whether it is. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) mentioned Union Rail. I take it that in the ambit of the Act-to-be there will be some arrangement between the Government and Union Rail and that the latter will be paying some money into Government funds in respect of licences issued. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent mentioned the fact that Union Rail will be funded by public and private money. He also expressed some dissatisfaction about the relationships between Union Rail and its senior staff and the people in the area. He mentioned a parish council in Kent.

If this money is coming back from Union Rail when it becomes a private, floated firm under the Act, as I presume that it will, can the Minister use his powers to persuade those officials to liaise more courteously with the people on the route of the railway? When it is running, it will be paying money to the Government. At present the route has still to be decided, but I have heard from my local borough council that Union Rail officials are unwilling to go through the usual consultation procedures in a few weeks' time when the route has been made public.

I wish to express the grave dissatisfaction of the people in the Newham and Stratford area about this because it would be a major feature of the area and the Union Rail officials appear not to be very much concerned about the financial arrangements that they would make for such consultation. They will have to deal with the matter ultimately through a statutory instrument rather than a private Bill, which makes public relations on the spot even more important.

The second matter that I wish to raise—I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is here for it—is the question of payments of franchises into the Government funds in respect of this order. The Secretary of State comes from Norfolk. His local depot is, I think, Crown Point, Norwich. I received an answer from the Minister on 28 January which could well apply to that local depot of his. I asked him what would happen when various franchisees of existing services shared maintenance depots and stabling yards, and what arrangements would be made; they would all have to pay money to the Government. The Minister courteously replied:

"Where the depot concerned is dedicated to a passenger service which is to be let as a single franchise, the depot will usually be leased for the period of the franchise to the incoming franchisee. Where one franchisee will be the predominant user of the depot, he will usually acquire the lease subject to conditions requiring him to make facilities available to other operators. In some cases, it may be feasible to divide a depot into separate parts for use by different operators, or to lease a depot to a third party maintenance operator."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. *800*.]

All those involved will be paying money to the Government.

I ask the Secretary of State, who is present today and who represents an important part of East Anglia, what will happen if Crown Point depot, Norwich has no fewer than two or three franchises? It is difficult enough to run as it is, as are those at Cambridge and Ilford. Years ago, they were all run under the single administration of the former Great Eastern railway. The finances and arrangments for lessees, sub-letting, and all the operational problems that will arise under the terms of the right hon. Gentleman's answer, the Bill and the ways and means motion could cause grave difficulty and disrupt the former Great Eastern railway services between InterCity and Regional Railways. Those services are already disrupted and already cause difficulties, as the Secretary of State's constituents know.

My next question on payments is more important than the others put together. As I understand it, under the motion, payments in respect of licences will be made to the Secretary of State or the rail regulator. That money has to come from somewhere. It will come from charges made by the franchiser for the traffic, whether freight or passenger, plus any money that the Secretary of State receives for necessary public services—he currently receives money for the buses. We shall start with the existing timetable, but that could be adjusted. An amount will be paid to Railtrack and an amount to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State and the Minister have repeatedly said, publicly and in answer to questions, that the franchiser will be more effective and efficient in his operation than existing British Rail. That is a hope rather than a proven fact. I asked a question, which was again courteously answered by the Minister. I asked him to identify

"those services or operations which can be made more effective or efficient consequent to the enactment of the Railways Bill"—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. *799*.]

As a consequence of the ways and means motion, more money will be paid from those services—I see the Minister nodding. I received no precise answer, but was told:

"All passenger and freight services should be capable of more effective or efficient operation as a result of our reform proposals."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. *800*.]

I am a little foxed by that. It is a matter of hope and faith —not accountancy, on which the Minister is a known expert.

I want to ask the Minister an important question about efficiency and the income from which the money will be paid. An experienced railway person recently said to me, "Nigel, they will cut the wages and make the conditions more difficult—that is how they will improve efficiency."

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

According to that experienced person, the only scope for major efficiency increases and the only source for the funds was the efficiency that would result from reductions in labour costs and changes in the conditions of work and service. I do not know whether that is in the minds of the Government or of those currently preparing the franchises. I wondered whether it was, and I asked the Minister a question which he has not answered today.

I asked the Minister what consideration had been given to maintaining a single conciliation service consequent upon the implementation of the Railways Bill and what assessment had been made of the desirability of maintaining a single structure of training and qualifications for various grades of personnel—other than the funding, I said in qualification, of the internal training and supervision which will be required anyway. I presume that that will be done on some railway association basis because one would expect grades of personnel in training and matters of safety to be on a national basis. We would expect there to be a single national bargaining arrangement for those grades of skill, experience, knowledge and training, particularly for people in crucial positions such as signalmen and drivers on whom the lives of others depend.

Otherwise, one railway company—one franchisee—might begin to undercut another. There would be a market, just as there is informally inside British Rail, but on a single level of payment qualification and returns.

That is an important financial matter because the payments which will have to be made to the Secretary of State, Railtrack and all the others, will be crucial to the financial profits that the franchisers are expected to earn. We all know that in railways—my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will correct me if I am wrong—by far the largest expenditure, other than for Railtrack which is being dealt with separately, will be staff wages and salaries.

At this point, I conclude with a matter which both the Secretary of State and the Minister for Public Transport should bear in mind. In today's debate they have constantly used the word "culture". They are not particularly well informed on railway matters, although the Minister for Public Transport has learnt quite a lot in the past year or two, and I pay tribute to the personal care and attention that he has taken. There is and will be a railway culture. A railway requires those who operate it to have a particular way of life. I speak as a Member who has represented people working in two large railway depots —Old Oak Common on the Great Western, and Stratford on the former Great Eastern. Many of my former constituents and present constituents work in those areas.

Railway workers have 24-hour cycle. The railway is like a factory strung out over hundreds of miles where operatives are not in an office or workshop. They keep it going almost every day of the year except Christmas. That creates the sort of culture that is found among people who work together, sometimes in dangerous conditions, and who depend on one another for their own and their passengers' safety. They often come from families with the proud traditions of those who serve the railways.

There is a railway culture, and I put it to the House that it is a good, proper and useful culture which serves the passeners. I use the word "passengers" because they are passengers and owners, not just customers, as they are referred to on the tannoy. The idea of being customers of a public service that we currently own is one that jars.

Conservative Members mistakenly believe that some of the things that they would like to see—which we would all like to see, but which do not always happen—are the fault of some trade union or Labour plot to hold up progress. There may have been some tiny grains of truth in that in the past, or even in the present, but it is largely a myth and a miasma. As to the culture among the conciliation grades —I use that word advisedly—before the public ownership of railways, the Association of Railway Companies got together and agreed with the National Union of Railwaymen historically as to the conciliation grades. A national machinery existed to deal with such matters.

In my experience—and, I am sure, in that of virtually all right hon. and hon. Members—if one meets railwaymen and their families, one knows of the attitude that railwaymen bring to their jobs. If there is a negative culture, it is with management, who have been forced into adopting certain attitudes and ways which have not been entirely healthy in the past few years. If there has been a negative attitude, it has been found among management, not in the conciliation grades.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give an assurance that neither he nor the franchise holders to whom he will grant licences are seeking greater efficiency not through better services but through lower costs, by providing lower returns to those who give their lives—often to the inconvenience of their families, because of non-social hours—to the service of the public in our great railway industry.

11.25 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport on offering to franchise the dreadful line that goes through my constituency. It could not possibly be run more inefficiently or unreliably than it is at present, so therefore——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Lady continues. I remind her that the resolution's subject is fairly narrow and does not allow for debate on general policy.

Mrs. Gorman: I was coming to the important point, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that the Government have already promised £50 million to update that line. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I would like him to confirm that that money is still on the table and will be in addition to any other moneys allocated to that line.

As to through ticketing—which is another financial issue—will my hon. Friend confirm that the proposal will not in any wary harm bus companies that want to take on a franchise, and that they will not find themselves falling under the auspices of the Office of Fair Trading, which might otherwise consider that a monopoly was being developed?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That issue is beyond the scope of this debate.

Mrs. Gorman: I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have concluded my remarks.

11.27 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have two questions about the charges that can be imposed under the ways and means resolution. The first relates to the exceptionally large number of small concerns—many of them run voluntarily—embraced by the Bill.

It is not generally appreciated that clauses 6 and 7 of the Bill apply to every railway of any description whatsoever —not just to British Rail but to the Tyne and Wear Metro; London Underground; the Ffestiniog railway; the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway; the Tanfield railway; the Heatherstane Law railway; and the Keighley and Worth Valley railway—with which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is well associated. For that matter, clauses 6 and 7 apply also to the 9in gauge railway capable of carrying passengers that runs through a park or one that is erected on a temporary basis for a particular event, such as a model railway exhibiton. That still constitutes the running of a railway.

It follows that all railways embraced by clauses 6 and 7 can be the subject of charges imposed as part of the licence conditions by the Secretary of State or the regulator. Voluntary railways had no idea until the day that the Bill was published that it would embrace them, and they are concerned to know the charges and licence arrangements to which they will be subject.

From the day of Royal Assent, it will be an offence for those railways to run unless they have an exemption certificate or licence granted by the Secretary of State or the regulator. We do not know the charge that will be imposed for that certificate or licence. Will it be nominal —50p, say—or will it be related to the scale of operation of a big franchise holder, such as that which takes on the east coast main line and be many thousands of pounds? How is a small organisation such as the North Yorkshire Moors railway to find the money to pay such a charge, if it were that kind of figure?

Is it certain that, on payment of the charge, the exemption or licence will be issued immediately? These are railways that organise for the tourist trade each season, and will not necessarily know—even if they have paid the charge specified in the motion—that they will be free to operate when the operating season starts. What will be the position of voluntary model railway organisations that pay the charge but do not know whether they will receive a licence in time for children to ride on their trains on the day of the fete?

Although all that is embraced in the Bill, nothing said by the Minister has explained why all those railways are involved, or why they are to be subject to charges. In fact, I know why they are all involved: they are all involved in the Government's desperate attempt to prevent the Bill from becoming hybrid. The Government have taken every inch of railway track in the country into the scope of the Bill, and said, "Never mind; there will be licences and exemptions. You will be all right." The ways and means resolution, however, allows charges to be imposed with those licences.

In my view, none of those organisations should be charged a penny. What have they done to deserve it? They have simply set up trusts to run railways, often taking over railways abandoned by British Rail. They provide a popular and attractive tourist facility which is much admired by visitors to this country. Now they are being told that they cannot operate unless they obtain the necessary exemption or licence from the Secretary of State or the regulator.

We are not talking here about light railway orders or safety provisions; those are covered separately in existing regulations. We are talking about an Act that will prevent operators from running any such railway unless they have satisfied the Secretary of State that they should have exemptions or licences—and, under this motion, he may impose a charge for a licence. Moreover, for all we know, he may take months to grant it.

The Minister may think that that is no problem. He may say that the Government had to include the provision to prevent the Bill from becoming hybrid. But he should know bureaucracies well enough to realise that that could become a significant obstacle to a great many organisations running the railways to which I have referred.

My second question about the charges that will be imposed under the ways and means resolution relates to operators who take on franchises for the main routes—for example, the east coast main line. Will the imposition of charges and the monetary penalties mentioned in paragraph (c)—penalties

"imposed on persons who contravene or fail to comply with conditions or requirements imposed by . . . the Act"—

be used by the regulator as a means of maintaining quality of service? That is an important question.

We understand that Mr. Richard Branson is willing to take on the east coast main line if he can run a non-stop line from London to Edinburgh. That may be fine for people who wish to travel from London to Edinburgh, or vice versa; but it is not much consolation to the inhabitants of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Alnmouth, Newcastle, York, Northallerton, Durham or anywhere else between the two cities.

This afternoon, the Secretary of State made an important and relevant statement: he said that the franchises would be based on the existing timetable. From that we must conclude that all the stops that now exist at such places as Alnmouth and Berwick must be maintained by the franchisee. But what happens if the franchisee says, "I have had enough of this; I do not want my trains to stop at these places. I think that I might be able to get some more Edinburgh passengers if I go flying through all these stations"? Will he incur a monetary penalty under paragraph (c)? If not, has the regulator any other way of controlling a franchisee who starts to depart from the existing timetable?

I an not arguing that existing timetables are sacrosanct; indeed, the best argument for bringing private contractors on to the railways is the possibility of their adding services that are not on the existing timetable. We all know, however, that the reverse could easily happen: under these arrangements, stations that now have services may lose them. I want to know whether Ministers see the penalties referred to in the motion as a way of ensuring that franchisees provide services to all the stations that now have services on the line. If not, what will be the mechanism for ensuring continuing compliance with the responsibility to maintain the existing timetable?

11.33 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend the Minister be good enough to deal with some of the matters that I raised on the previous motion, as they apply to the ways and means resolution?

11.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I too want to deal with the private railways established from the 1960s onwards. Some Tory Members may not think that the legislation is needlessly bureaucratic or that it will impose another layer of administration, but they are wrong.

The Keighley and Worth Valley light railway in which I happen to own five £10 shares, which have never paid a dividend—and I should reject it if they ever did—was established as a preservation society in 1962. It obtained a light railway order in 1967 and a transfer order in 1968. An inspection of the operation and rules of operating the railway was carried out under the chief inspecting officer, then Colonel J. R. H. Robertson. From 29 June 1968, that five-mile branch of railway has been operating safely in the metropolitan borough of Yorkshire. Over the years, it has developed a relationship with British Rail which gives it access to traffic that it obtains via the British Rail network. For example, it sometimes runs excursions from the Worth valley to various destinations, hauled in part by steam trains which are attractive and delight many people.

What will happen under these arrangements when the Rail Regulator will be responsible for administering railway licenses and approving access agreements? Clause 6 states:

"No person shall . . . provide or operate any services for the carriege of passengers or goods by railway . . . own a network, a station or a light maintenance depot, or . . . provide any network services, station services or light maintenance services . . . unless he is authorised to do so by a licence or is exempt, by virtue of section 7".

The railway to which I referred has been operating for many years, largely on a voluntary basis. It will have made 25 years' of payments this year and will finally be purchased from British Rail. It would have been an abandoned line if it had not been taken over, and that is true for many railways, as the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said.

I cite as examples the railway that runs from Sherringham to Holt, the North Yorkshire Moors railway, the Severn Valley railway and a dozen others. Incidentally, those railways followed the form of agreement negotiated between the Keighley and Worth Valley railway and British Rail way back in the early 1960s in order to bring to a successful conclusion the aim of reopening the lines.

All those railways are now subject to a licence. Will they operate as they do now? What if they have access to part of another railway? What does "access" mean? Does it mean running into goods yard as happens at Keighley and picking up wagons or coaches which have been transferred from British Rail to the Keighley and Worth Valley railway? That is access of a sort. It means that a separate licence will have to be given unless, under clause 7, the Secretary of State, who must consult the regulator, by order grants

"exemption from the requirement to be authorised by licence to carry on such activities falling within section 6"

to which I referred earlier.

It is fair to ask the Minister to say whether the Secretary of State is minded to produce an order once, or if, the Bill is passed, to grant exemption for all the existing privately operated railways which have been established for a long time and after a struggle.

The Bill establishes an administrative superstructure which the privately operated railways can do without. They do not need the superstructure, because they come under the Health and Safety Executive. Any accidents must be reported.

The rules and operation of the railways are to the highest standards. There are no other standards. Railways cannot afford to be 50 per cent. safe. They must be 100 per cent. safe when they deal with passengers, four or five coaches weighing 120 tonnes and a locomotive weighing 50, 60 or 70 tonnes. They cannot afford half-measures. They have passed the test.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Prime Minister announced today his wish to reduce the amount of bureaucracy? Are not the proposals a clear case of increased bureaucracy?

Mr. Cryer: I was about to make that point. Hon. Members might be interested to know that the Government produced 3,359 statutory instruments in 1992. The Government are supposed to be lifting regulations off the backs of people, although they produced more regulations in one year than any other Government in parliamentary history.

Will this ways and means motion, which is the ways and means of raising revenue for which the legislation provides, extract money from private railways which are run on a voluntary and democratic basis, in the case of the Keighley and Worth Valley light railway and many others, for the pleasure of those who run them and those who see them? I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that they are reasonable organisations. They are run properly and have the best aspirations. Why then should they be burdened?

Even if the Secretary of State makes an order, such an order is still highly qualified. The whole of page 7 and half of page 8 of the Bill relate to the qualifications which apply to the exemptions. I hope that the Minister can give an unequivocal guarantee tonight that, if the Bill is passed and the order-making powers are granted to the Minister, he will produce another instrument. Such regulations are required only under the terms of the Government's legislation. As a result of the ideological perversity of the Government, more regulations will be produced to keep the bureaucracy off the backs of railways which do not need it.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend agree that the matter can be disassociated entirely from the general attitude on both sides of the House to the Bill? It is conceivable that such a proposal would result in British Railways staying intact.

The Association of Railway Preservation Societies is made up of charitable, educational and heritage organisations. There is no political difference across the House about them. I suggest that we all want to encourage them, within reason. Can my hon. Friend tell me whether there has been much consultation between the Association of Railway Preservation Societies and the Government, who pride themselves on consultation, before the matter was dealt with in the way he has described.

Mr. Cryer: So far as I am aware, there has been no consultation on the ways and means motion. That contrasts very much with the Transport and Works Act 1992. One of the curiosities of the proposals in the ways and means motion is that, according to the Government, the Transport and Works Act 1992 was designed to simplify the position for light railways—small railways with a gauge up to 4 ft 8½ in. Railways now have a gauge of about a metre or whatever.

I would be interested to hear the Minister's comments on the licensing and the revenue that derives from that. How can the Government reconcile this legislation with the Transport and Works Act 1992, which was designed to provide the Secretary of State with order-making powers to simplify the procedure and avoid private Bills being promoted to secure the operation of minor railways?

I hope that the Minister will reassure us on that point. I am not referring to the kernel of the Bill, the whole of which remains objectionable, but it would be valuable if the Minister gave an indication that it was not the intention to use the fee-levying power to impose an additional burden on the light railways.

I emphasise that many people have struggled hard to get the railways operating; they are not rich men and women's playthings. People have worked their guts out in their spare time—sometimes without much enthusiastic support from British Rail or anybody else. That was certainly true of the Keighley and Worth Valley railway. Local people thought that the idea of a group of people taking over a railway was barmy, but now everyone thinks that the whole thing is marvellous.

I hope that the Minister shares the view those railways are marvellous a chievements, that he will strive to the best of his ability—the Secretary of State can nod his head while the Minister is saying this—to avoid putting any further burdens on them, and that an order will be forthcoming.

11.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I wish to draw the attention of the House to paragraphs (b) and (c) of the motion. It seems legitimate to draw attention in particular to the absurdity of paragraph (b)—which deals with the rendering of payments to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising—as it relates to at least one of the prospective franchises that were announced by the Secretary of State earlier today. I refer to the Tilbury-Southend line, in which my constituents have some considerable interest.

I say that that part of the motion is absurd because there will be no prospect whatever of payments being made to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising by the people who are successful in landing—or who receive as a gift from the Government—the franchise for the line. It is, by general agreement, a totally clapped-out line which cannot generate revenue. To all intents and purposes, the Government will have to give it away. They will dress up the exercise, of course. They will no doubt find someone to take it off their hands.

Mr. Spearing: Public money.

Mr. Mackinlay: As my hon. Friend says, they will have to make public money available to keep the line ticking over. The tragedy is that it needs major public investment on a scale that the Government are not prepared to fund. The consequence is that commuters from Essex to London will continue to have a totally inadequate form of transport for their recreation and to get to their work.

It should be made clear that a fraudulent prospectus is being offered to commuters on the Essex line. Their line cannot generate moneys to be paid to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising. A public asset is to be given away so that the Government can shed their responsibilities and hide their failure to fund that railway line over a decade or more.

Both the Bill and the ways and means resolution disguise the fact that the Government are probably already scurrying around trying to cobble together something that they will describe as a management buy-out so that they can shed the line. The Director of Passenger Rail Franchising will not receive money as a consequence of the franchising of the Tilbury line—far from it. It is clear that the Government intend to exercise the right, provided in the Bill, to make money available to the managers of lines —including this one, I suspect—so that they may put together a cosmetic buy-out.

Mrs. Gorman: Does the hon. Gentleman know that at least three organisations have expressed an interest in taking over this line, which I understand makes £60 million a year?

Mr. Mackinlay: The second part of the hon. Lady's news is breathtaking. If the line makes so much money, the commuters will ask where it is all going and why some of it is not being invested in the line to provide a modern system of transport from Southend, via Tilbury, into Fenchurch Street. Clearly that is not happening.

The hon. Lady alleges that three bodies are interested in taking over the line. It remains to be seen, but I expect that the interested parties will turn out to be of the James Sherwood variety—people interested in franchising lines provided that they can do so on their own terms. I shall be very surprised if anyone, other than managers, is prepared to take on this line. No one could fund it to the extent required by the commuters. It is a matter of simple arithmetic.

While I am thinking about Sir James Sherwood and others, I should say that there are people who are interested in privatisation of the railway network but make it abundantly clear that they are not interested in the Government's proposed methods. Only time will tell, but I believe that the hon. Lady will find——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman is wide of the ways and means resolution, the scope of which is fairly narrow.

Mr. Mackinlay: I accept your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I succumbed to temptation following the hon. Lady's intervention.

Paragraph (c) of the ways and means resolution refers to penalties that may be imposed on franchisees who fail to comply with conditions or requirements imposed on them. It seems to me that, in terms of ensuring that franchisers fulfil their obligations, the Bill is fatally flawed, and the motion is inadequate. It is time the Minister told the House how he intends to guarantee the continuation of services when a franchiser fails. Monetary penalties will not get people home from a central London station if a company fails at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The passengers will be stranded. There is no indication that

[Mr. Mackinlay]

there will be any system of bonding, any guarantee that money will be available for continuation of the franchise should there be a failure.

The Bill contains explicit requirements regarding safety. It is clear from the Bill, as well as from replies to parliamentary questions that I have received, that there is no mechanism to ensure compliance with safety requirements in the event of a train failure or crash. It seems to me that the Government intend to reply on some cosmetic monetary penalty to give the impression that there will be sufficient sanctions to guarantee continued service and safety standards once a line is franchised or privatised. This is wholly inadequate. As several of my hon. Friends have said, there is great danger in this respect. Much more needs to be done. Monetary penalties will be wholly insufficient to guarantee safety and quality of service on the lines that are franchised.

11.55 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I shall be concise but clear in responding to what has been a brief debate.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) raised a number of points. I assure him that, when Union Rail, with permission from the Secretary of State for Transport, goes out to consultation on the rail link, there will be thorough consultation with his local authority. If there is not, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will let me know.

He asked about depots in Norfolk where there are more than two or three franchisees. That seems most unlikely, but as my right hon. Friend said when moving the Second Reading, he will publish a map in due course showing the nature of the franchises throughout Great Britain, and I am sure that any problems will then be identified.

Mr. Spearing: It was an example.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position that he was giving an example. That is why I have answered in general terms. The map will show where the franchises overlap.

The hon. Member for Newham, South next asked about franchisees paying money back under the resolution. That is the way in which, on profitable lines, the state will receive money on an annual basis for running a franchise, and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) referred to the east coast main line. That will, in essence, enable the public sector to cross-subsidise, for example, InterCity lines that lose money.

I was then asked about the industrywide conciliation and training service. The Health and Safety Commission report on safety recognised the importance of staff qualifications and training. It recommended high level core standards set on an industrywide basis, possibly by the Railway Training Council.

The hon. Member for Newham, South went on to speak about what he called a danger of wage-cutting. I think that the reverse is true, that we will see greater wage flexibility and the introduction of performance and bonus pay. I would expect to see an industry with better trained and better paid staff.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) was out of order for part of her remarks, but in respect of the beginning of her comments that were in order, the re-signalling contract has been signed and is going ahead. We would welcome the bus companies bidding for franchises. If there is concern about anti-competitive legislation, we invite the bus companies to talk to the Director General of Fair Trading.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred to preservation railways. I was fascinated to read of the authorship by the hon. Member for Bradford, South of a document entitled "Steam in the Worth Valley," volume 1 of which he wrote in 1969 and volume 2 in 1972. We now know where his sympathies and interests lie, and I am delighted to learn it.

I have a simple answer to the points that were made at considerable length, although I appreciate the need to express them in that way. The Secretary of State intends to exempt preservation railways from the licensing system under the provisions of clause 7. That is a clear assurance.

In relation to franchising, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed asked about penalties for failure, and the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) raised essentially the same point. If a railway train run by a franchisee fails in the technical sense, Railtrack is responsible. That is the safety authority, and it will ensure that the train is removed from the station or tracks.

Mr. Mackinlay: How?

Mr. Freeman: Because Railtrack will have the necessary equipment. Obviously, as the safety authority, it will have to do that. If a franchisee loses financial standing and credibility, the franchising director shall step in and ensure that service continues. If the franchisee fails to meet the performance standards, financial penalties will be incurred and there may be receipts by the franchising director.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked about the European Transport Commissioner and an alleged threat not to support with European money the privatised system. We are not aware of such a threat, but in any case, Railtrack, which will be the consumer of large amounts of public sector money, will still qualify to receive money from the European investment bank and from other Commission sources.

We are determined to ensure that this country receives its fair allocation of funds that are contributed by the taxpayers of this country, and I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Railways Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the inclusion in licences granted under the Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State or the Rail Regulator;

(b) the inclusion in franchise agreements, within the meaning of the Act, of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising;

(c) the inclusion of provisions under the monetary penalties may be imposed on persons who contravene or fail to comply with conditions or requirements imposed by or under the Act;

(d) the imposition of charges to corporation tax by provisions relating to the taxation of persons who are transferors or transferees in relation to transfer schemes under the Act;

(e) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.

Customs and Excise

12.1 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that, after motion No. 5 on the Order Paper, we read that the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments has not considered the instrument. Since that was printed, it has considered it, but I suggest to you that one of the duties of the Chair is to protect the rights of Back Benchers. It is an unsatisfactory state of affairs if that Select Committee produces a report—and I understand that there are copies on the Table and in the Vote Office—indicating that there is a defect in the drafting of the order if Members do not have a reasonable amount of time to look at it.

I ask you at least to consider drawing to the Government's attention the fact that it is not satisfactory for them to table an order like this until the Statutory Instruments Committee has had an opportunity to consider it and to make a report to the House on which hon. Members can form an opinion so that there may be an informed debate. You will be aware that the Select Committee receives a large number of orders during a year and the whole purpose of the Committee considering them is to produce reports and to inform the House. I hope that you will rule that it is not satisfactory that the Committee should consider a matter like this at half-past four in the afternoon, with the House considering it late the same evening.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The ordering of business is not strictly a matter for the Chair, but the hon. Member has made his point and no doubt it will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

12.3 am

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I beg to move,

That the Customs and Excise Duties (Personal Reliefs for Goods Permanently Imported) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3193), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motion:

That the Customs Duty (Personal Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3192), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Sir John Cope: I shall come in a minute to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

These two orders concern personal reliefs for people coming into this country. They are both made necessary by the start of the European single market and both have the effect of continuing the reliefs which concern travellers from outside the European Community. They both replace orders which previously applied to all countries, including the Community. However, under the single market, we do not need reliefs on the same basis because travel within the EC is covered by other regulations.

The two orders basically continue the old reliefs for travellers from outside the Community. The first, No. 3193, primarily continues relief on the personal belongings of people who come to live here. The second order, No.

[Sir John Cope]

3192, provides for continuation of the familiar duty-free and duty-paid allowances for those arriving from outside the EC. As we have discussed on other occasions, travellers from within the Community now have different rules under different legislation, but for those arriving from outside the European Community the allowance for other goods has also been increased by this order to £36—not a large increase, but nevertheless a small improvement.

As the Member for Denton and Reddish mentioned on a point of order, the Select Committee has put before the House today a report drawing the attention of the House to the instrument, because there is an argument as to whether the drafting is correct. It is all to do with the definition of "third country", as hon. Members will have seen from the note on the Table. The Customs and Excise says, as is clear from a memorandum which it submitted on the point, that it considers that the legal effect of the present order is clear. Evidently there is room for argument.

It is an extremely abstruse point of parliamentary drafting, but I am advised that it is clear. We will try to persuade the lawyers on both sides of the argument to reach agreement, and, if it is necessary to do so, I shall bring a further order before the House to amend the existing provision.

12.4 am

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I shall not detain the House long, but I should like to echo the point raised by my hon. Friend the member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). It is clearly important that the drafting of the orders is right and we are indebted to the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments for drawing the error to our attention. I take the Paymaster General's assurance that the matter will be put right.

As I understand the orders and what the right hon. Gentleman said, they amend the personal reliefs from customs duty to remove from relief those goods purchased by travellers from other European Community member states who will now be catered for in another order, but leave in place the previous allowances for travellers arriving from outside the Community.

The orders are part of the general change that we welcome, opening up opportunities for members of the public to derive some personal benefit and enjoyment from the operation of the single market. For many millions of our citizens, such changes do more in an immediate sense to give meaning to the European Community and the freedom of movements of people and goods than many of the economically and constitutionally grander principles and declarations of the Maastricht treaty.

The second order, which applies to permanently imported goods, has the same effect on people importing belongings when moving house, honorary decorations, awards, goodwill gifts, inherited goods and certain goods ancillary to specified visiting forces. It also reflects the commendable achievement of the Community in making it as easy as possible for people to move home from one Community member state to another, thereby rendering the old reliefs redundant except for those moving to the United Kingdom from beyond the European Community.

We welcome the orders, but I wish briefly to press the Paymaster General on the staffing consequences for Customs and Excise services, which we touched on briefly in last week's Maastricht debate on the harmonisation of indirect taxation.

It is generally accepted that the creation of open border crossings for EC citizens and the fact that excise goods will no longer be taxed at the frontier enormously increases the scope for smuggling. I am talking not about cross-border shopping, which the Paymaster General has already estimated could cost £250 million per year, but about smuggling for resale on the black market. Given the relatively high excise duties on some items in the United Kingdom, the potential financial gains to smugglers are enormous. For example, I have heard that one container shipment of Spanish cigarettes alone could net £30,000 or more in profit.

In regard to the numbers of excise staff, I understand that the board's management plan for 1991 made an allocation of an additional 248 staff for the extra inland work arising from the single market, but following the 1991 autumn statement, this was reduced to 178 staff. That is not many staff, given the potential scale of the problem and the shift to inland scrutiny that the single market necessarily involves. There must be literally hundreds of thousands of potential outlets for smuggled goods.

Secondly, the small increase in staff for inland scrutiny must be set against an overall reduction in staff in the service. I understand that the projected outturn for Customs and Excise staff for the current financial year is 27,800 staff years, of which 2,200 are on excise work, as compared with 28,400 for 1991-92 in the board of management report, of which 2,300 were on excise work. Notwithstanding the allocation of 178 staff to which I referred, the excise department has fewer staff to undertake what is undoubtedly a far more difficult job. The same arguments apply to customs staff, for whom the 1992-93 projected outturn is 9,900 staff, compared with 11,000 for 1991-92.

Those are serious issues and I want a clear assurance from the Paymaster General that they will be kept under the closest review, that staff numbers and the extent of smuggling will be carefully monitored, and that, if it becomes apparent that additional staff are needed, the Government will not hesitate to appoint them, for the public would have it no other way.

12.10 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I have three brief comments to make on order No. 3193. In view of the lateness of the hour, I shall be happy if my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General wishes to write to me about them, rather than attempting to answer me now.

First, paragraph 13 contains two references to a person becoming "normally resident" in this country. My right hon. Friend will be aware that there are a number of slightly differing definitions within the tax Acts of what is normal or ordinary residence. It would have been helpful if the appropriate statutory reference had been given in the order to show which definition is to apply, or whether the definition which will apply is to be included in the Government's domicile Act, when that appears.

Secondly, I am slightly worried about the reference in paragraphs 13 and 15 to the registration of property brought in and given relief in the order, which is wholly

laudable. A favourite way to explain undeclared income used to be to suggest that it arose, in the case of someone coming to this country to marry, from property brought in before the marriage. I notice that under the order such property would have to be declared. I want an assurance from my right hon. Friend that, under the parallel order —under the single market—there will be some way to check on what might otherwise be a false claim to explain otherwise unexplainable income.

Thirdly, paragraph 16 of order No. 3193 deals with relief for scholastic equipment. I notice that students coming into this country are entitled to bring with them normal scholastic equipment,

"including calculators or typewriters."

There is no relief for computers, although some students might be coming here to attend a course requiring their use. It would seem odd if they had to pay duty on second-hand computers with no great value when they do not have to pay duty if they bring in a separate calculator and typewriter. I should be grateful for reassurance from my right hon. Friend on that.

12.13 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): A fair amount of confusion will flow in the public mind from the orders. That is no fault of the Minister's, but he must be aware that he may have to take some steps to deal with it. Some of the confusion probably arises because, with all the publicity about the new arrangements for moving duty-free goods across frontiers within the Community, people have got used to the idea that they can buy large quantities of alcohol and other goods and have nothing to pay, so long as they are importing it for their own use.

However, people coming from outside the Community —as many people returning from holiday will be—are still subject to stringent restrictions. For example, even with the revalorisation, the allowance amounts to only £36 in respect of gifts. Officers at the ports will have quite a difficult time, at least initially, explaining to people coming from non-Community countries that they have grossly overestimated what they are allowed to bring in.

There will also be a problem at some of the ports which have both Community and non-Community traffic. Take a port such as North Shields or Harwich, where the morning boat will come from Denmark and the evening boat from Sweden. I am not quite sure how Customs and Excise will manage the now very different requirements for staff in that situation, because the morning boat from Denmark will require only the sort of overview that customs officers will now take of people coming from a Community country, whereas the boat from Sweden will require the full application of all the provisions to which these orders refer, with the very strict limits that they include.

Since one of the consequences of the changes has been a considerable transfer of staff to landward duties—with some argument about whether enough staff are available for those very different duties—I wonder how Customs and Excise will manage this very different pattern of operation at the ports, where some vessels will come from Community countries and some not.

Something else that people may not realise but which is underlined by the orders is the extraordinary range of exemptions and mystifying allowances which exist, like the allowance of up to £800 for a wedding present, or the fact that someone coming back as an official visitor—I am not sure how far that category extends beyond Ministers to other office-holders—can bring back without paying duty a gift from some oil sheikh who has very kindly bestowed it on him, as well as the scholastic items mentioned by the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

A wide and mysterious range of exemptions already exists in our legislation and presumably will now be carried over into the new system, but I envisage considerable confusion. Confusion at the port of entry, when it gives rise to arguments with customs officers, can lead to frayed tempers in rather unhappy circumstances, not to mention considerable queues building up behind as other people wait to go through customs. I hope very much, therefore, that the Minister has these problems in mind.

12.16 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I raised on a point of order the question of the report from the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, and the Minister conceded, perhaps a little grudgingly, that he was prepared to meet the point that the Committee had raised; but he did not refer to the problem of the House having to scrutinise the order tonight, having only just had the report from Committee put before it. I accept that it is a very minor report, but I am concerned about the principle. It seems to me totally wrong that the Government should put an order down before scutiny by a Select Committee has taken place and before the Government can anticipate whether it will be an important or a minor report.

I simply ask the Minister to look at this problem. Repeatedly, the Chairman of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), other members of the Committee and I have argued that we should have the same Standing Orders in the House as in another place and that the Government should not be able even to put the order down until scrutiny by a Select Committee or a Joint Committee has taken place. If the Government are not prepared to accept that as a new Standing Order, however, it is incumbent on Ministers to try to ensure that instruments are brought forward by their Departments in a way which helps rather than hinders scrutiny by the House.

It is very odd that this set of orders came forward on, I think, 17 December, which makes it most difficult for the House to carry out its scrutiny. It seems to me that it was all done for the convenience of people in the Department, to get the order laid before Christmas, with no thought for the possibility of scrutiny by the House. I hope that the Minister will say that, in future, his Department at least will try to make sure that orders are not put down for debate in the House until scrutiny by a Select Committee has been completed.

12.19 am

Sir John Cope: As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, the order was laid on 17 December. We would like to have laid it before the House earlier, but as he will probably know, negotiations on the single market continued until late last year, into December. That meant that we were unable to lay the order as early as we would wish. However, as soon as we could, we laid all the orders and others involving the single market, as we were anxious for them to be known about and in operation as soon as possible—on 1 January where possible.

[Sir John Cope]

The issue that gave rise to the worries of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments is—as I said, and as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish acknowledged—a small and highly technical point on legislative drafting, about which there is room for disagreement. Had it been a significant issue that went to the heart of the order, I would have hesitated to lay it before the House until the matter had been cleared up. However, I thought that it was a highly technical issue. If it turns out to be necessary for us to correct it, we shall do so. Obviously, I hope that it is not—it is an abstruse point.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) spoke of the possibilities of confusion under the new arrangements. Any such major change is likely to cause problems for the public, and we have also had to carry out training for the customs officials and others to ensure that the new arrangements are understood. It will take some time for the public to take them on board.

We have produced and, I think, sent to hon. Members, a small guide for travellers that has been widely distributed on aircraft and by travel agents. It assists people with the changes. It is intended for the ordinary reader and does not go into nearly as much detail as the order on matters such as what one can bring to the UK after marriage, which is not necessary in such a leaflet. If the right hon. Gentleman or anyone else finds the categories listed in the order mystifying, I can assure them that, I think without exception, they are the same as before. They are almost identical to the previous categories. Most of us do not have cause to use the provisions at any time in our lives, let alone regularly, and I do not think that the measures will cause too much difficulty.

The right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) drew attention to the staffing considerations that will arise. The remarks of the hon. Member for Oxford, East went much further than the review, and I cannot confirm his figures off the cuff. Clearly, considerable differences have been required in the deployment of staff by customs. I can readily undertake to keep matters under the closest review, particularly in the early stages of the single market—indeed, we are already doing so. As I have told the House before, we are determined to ensure that smuggling, bootlegging and the resale of goods brought back without UK duty having been paid are pursued with the utmost vigour of the law by all the customs officers that it requires.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's commitment. Will he add to that an assurance that he will appoint additional customs and/or excise staff should it appear necessary in the light of that monitoring?

Sir John Cope: Yes. The customs and the Government must determine how we define necessary, but we shall keep the position under review and see what we determine to be necessary in order to police such matters firmly. It is extremely important, particularly in the early stages, that we do our best to counter the opportunities for smuggling that might occur.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) raised three points, starting with the definition of "normally resident" for the purposes of the order. He will find that paragraph 3 of the statutory instrument, No. 3193, to which he referred, sets out the rules for determining where a person is normally resident. They are not precisely the same as some in other parts of the taxing statutes, but those are the ones that apply in this case.

My hon. Friend also asked about the bringing into this country of property on marriage by people coming from other countries within the EC. The order deals with people coming from outside the Community. People coming from within the Community can bring with them, not only on marriage but at any other time, any property on which the normal duty has been paid within the country from which it is brought.

Mr. Stern: The point that I was making concerned not so much the ability to bring in property as the laudable provision in the order that property should be declared on being brought in. There is some concern that within the EC no such declaration will be required.

Sir John Cope: That is true. As far as I am aware, no such declaration will be required, because we are in the process of getting rid of the fiscal frontiers, so that people can travel as freely as possible from one part of the EC to another.

My hon. Friend also asked about instruments usually used by students, particularly computers. If he looks, he will find that that part of the order refers to instruments normally used by students, including calculators and typewriters, but it does not exclude computers. If a computer is regarded as the sort usually used by a student, I believe that it will be covered, but I shall check that. If necessary, on that or on the other technical points that my hon. Friend raised, I shall write to him. He kindly gave me the opportunity to do so, but I hope that I have given him sufficient answers on the points.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Customs and Excise Duties (Personal Reliefs for Goods Permanently Imported) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 393), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Customs Duty (Personal Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3192), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Value Added Tax

12.27 am

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I beg to move,

That the Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Designated Activities) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3220), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Percentage Addition) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3221), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

That the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3222), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

That the Value Added Tax (International Services and Transport) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3223), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Sir John Cope: The first two orders, No. 3220 and No. 3221, concern the flat rate scheme for farmers introduced in the Finance Act 1992. The first order specifies the agricultural activities that the scheme covers and the second order fixes the flat rate percentage at 4 per cent.

The House will have seen that the agricultural activities covered are wide-ranging and that the percentage is in the range that we forecast last summer and is calculated to compensate farmers overall for the VAT that they have spent on business purposes.

The third order, No. 3222, makes arrangements to continue into the single market the tax arrangements for blocking input tax deduction on business entertainment and motor cars and second-hand goods which are taxed only on the gross profit margin.

The order makes no substantive change in the arrangements. It may appear rather complex, because the opportunity has been taken to consolidate a series of existing orders, as well as making the changes necessary for the single market.

The last order, No. 3223, is about services, including transport. For exports to and imports from countries outside the European Community, there is no change—no VAT will be chargeable in such cases. For other services, there will be no charge to tax where, in future, the system provides for treating them outside the scope of United Kingdom VAT.

Input tax will still, subject to the usual rules, be recoverable if supplies would have been taxable if made wholly in the United Kingdom. If they would have been exempt, another order that is not before us—the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) (Special Provisions) Order 1992—provides for the recovery of input tax. Again, it is a slightly complex order but, without making major changes, it will help to implement the single European market.

12.32 am

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): The orders are fairly unobjectionable, but I have a few observations and questions. On the value added tax flat rate scheme for farmers, the Paymaster-General will be aware that we did not oppose the insertion of the scheme into last year's Finance Bill, and we acknowledge that its introduction as an option will be welcomed by those concerned with farming and related activities, who may derive some potential benefit from its provisions.

The scheme is optional, and some farmers on the margin may get a headache calculating whether or not to join it, but at least they can choose what best suits them, given the nature of their business and customers, and the volume of paperwork in which they want to become involved.

The flat rate addition has been set at 4 per cent., which is at the lower end of the 3 to 6 per cent. band that the right hon. Gentleman indicated in our deliberations on last year's Finance Bill. The method of calculating that 4 per cent. and its selection remains something of a mystery. When the Paymaster-General replies, perhaps he can explain the basis of that calculation and reveal the outcome of his discussions with the European Commission.

The House should be told the Government's estimate of the scheme's costs to the Exchequer. I know that will depend in large part of the level of take-up, but it would be useful to know the assumptions used by Customs and Excise. It would be interesting to know also how many farmers have registered under the scheme so far and their response to it.

Can the Paymaster-General assure us that data relating to the scheme's operation will be comprehensively maintained, so that in future it will be known how many farmers fall within how many bands, in terms of the total amount they have levied under the scheme over the year? That will be especially relevant when the scheme is reviewed.

I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman will say how often the scheme and the rate will be reviewed. Article 25(3) of the sixth VAT directive states:

"Member States shall fix the flat-rate compensation percentages, where necessary, and shall notify the Commission further before applying them. Such percentages shall be based on macro-economic statistics for flat-rate farmers alone for the preceding three years."

Will the Government apply that by reviewing the percentage every year, with a rolling three years' macro-economic statistics, or by reviewing the rate every three years or some other interval? I shall be interested to know the Government's decision, as will flat rate farmers involved in the scheme.

My next point relates to the bloodstock industry. When the Minister of State, Treasury announced the introduction of such a scheme in October 1991, she explained that one of the Government's intentions was to help to put United Kingdom horse breeders on a more equal footing with the rest of the European industry. Since then, in correspondence with me, the Paymaster General has again pointed to the flat rate scheme as one of the measures taken by the Government to assist the bloodstock industry.

Yet it is clear from reaction in the industry, and in particular from the decision by Tattersalls to transfer this year's Houghton yearling sales to Fairyhouse in Ireland, that the introduction of the scheme as such falls far short of the industry's needs. In last week's debate on indirect taxation in relation to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, I referred to what Tattersalls had said in a new release on 24 November last year:

"Additionally in the last few days an unexpected change has emerged from discussions with Customs and Excise. Previously we had been assured by HM Government that all

[Mr. Andrew Smith]

horses coming to Newmarket from Ireland and France and being sold by UK Flat Rate Farmers would be sold free of all UK VAT"—

as Tattersalls had stated in a previous press release.

"Customs have now changed their previous interpretation so that all Yearlings, previously purchased with Irish or French VAT charged in either of these two countries, would have to be sold by Flat Rate Farmers with VAT in Newmarket or VAT would have to be charged on entry into the United Kingdom."

In his otherwise fairly comprehensive reply last week, the Paymaster General did not touch on that point. Will he tell us tonight whether Tattersalls was given the assurance that I have just quoted—that all horses from Ireland and France being sold by United Kingdom flat rate farmers would be sold free of all United Kingdom VAT—and whether Customs and Excise has changed that interpretation, so that even yearlings on which Irish or French VAT had previously been charged would have to be sold by flat rate farmers with a United Kingdom VAT charge, either at Newmarket or on entering the country? I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can make the position clear, because it seems that the flat rate scheme cannot meet the concerns expressed by the industry.

As I understand it, horses brought to the United Kingdom for sale which have previously been purchased in other member states, subject to VAT in those states—either by way of normal sale, or following dispatch, acquisition or distance selling arrangements—would be treated as acquisitions in the United Kingdom, and the flat rate farmer would be required to register for VAT in the United Kingdom once his acquisitions exceeded £36,000 in any one period of 12 months. Accordingly, virtually all the breeders at the important Houghton sale would not find it viable to sell as flat rate farmers.

Another supposed potential benefit of the scheme was the option for United Kingdom vendors to deregister for VAT, and to become flat rate farmers themselves. That, too, is unlikely to prove an attractive proposition for bloodstock businesses: if they became flat rate farmers, they would lose the ability to recover input VAT on their expenses, and would have to finance an additional overhead. They would be better off staying registered, continuing to reclaim their input VAT and selling in Ireland or France, at the price of sending their horses to the sale rather than selling them here.

I appreciate that discussions with the industry are continuing, not least about the important question of allowing owners to register for VAT; but I wish to emphasise that there is more than a little urgency in the present position. People in the industry, and those whose livelihood depends on it, are understandably concerned. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General would tell us when he expects to present new proposals.

I understand that the practical effect of the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) Order 1992 is essentially to change the application of the exclusions of input tax from being reclaimed on the goods listed by the Paymaster General at the point of importation to being reclaimed at the point of acquisition in the case of goods from other member states. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General could confirm that my understanding is correct and that no significant change is being made which does not result directly from the operation of the single market.

I understand that the changes made under the Value Added Tax (International Services and Transport) Order 1992, cover transport and associated services and result essentially from the application of the place of supply rules under the sixth VAT directive, so that activities are counted for tax purposes as happening, as far as possible, in the state or place where they in fact occur.

However, there is a complication, in that, where the customer of a transport or ancillary service is registered for VAT in the same member state as the transport provider, VAT is charged and deducted under normal procedures, but where the customer is not registered in the same member state, VAT is not charged but is treated as reverse supply on the customer's VAT return, so that it appears there as both input and output tax. What is more, if the transport provider serves a customer who is not registered for VAT, he must charge and account for the VAT in the member state from which the goods departed.

That may or may not be more straightforward in practice than it sounds in theory, but it seems bureaucratic nonsense in what is supposed to be a simpler VAT regime for trade within the single market to have essentially two systems of VAT operating alongside each other.

There is particular room for confusion where the destination of cargoes is switched en route or where the customer for part of the consignment is registered for VAT in the same member state as the carrier and the customer for the rest of the consignment is not. I should be grateful for the Paymaster General's comments. Would it not have been simpler to stick to a zero-rating system, at least for as long as the present transitional destination system for VAT lasts, as I envisage complications arising from the operation by business of the terms of that order?

We do not oppose the orders, but it is important that the House receives answers to the questions that I have asked.

12.42 am

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I shall not detain the House for long, but I want to take up the points raised by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) about the bloodstock industry, which, as the House may know, is very dear to my heart.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the flat rate scheme was heralded as the salvation of the bloodstock industry, given the widely varying rates of value added tax which would face the industry after the advent of the single market. In fact, they existed before then, but their significance was greatly enhanced by the introduction of the single market at the beginning of January.

The flat rate scheme will not work, partly because of the confusion over the status of horses sent in from Ireland and France, as the hon. Gentleman outlined. It also will not work because the fundamental requirement of getting back one's input tax is that one charges the 4 per cent. flat rate—the rate that has now been decided—to the purchaser of one's horse, if he or she is registered for VAT. Of course, we know that the vast majority of purchasers are not registered for VAT. Putting one's horse into the auction ring at Tattersalls is quite a lottery—one does not know whether the successful bidder will be registered. Therefore, the scheme was not the salvation for which we had wished.

Registration is now the most important issue facing the Government. I realise that the hon. Gentleman might not

have caught up with the written answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to a question tabled by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). The question dealt with registration. The answer stated:

"Customs and Excise has drawn up a technical memorandum of understanding to be agreed with the industry as soon as possible."

I welcome that step forward. It moves forward my proposition that racehorse owners should be able to register for VAT. I raised that proposition on 19 October when I initiated an Adjournment debate on the subject. I still believe that there is no reason why all racehorse owners should not be able to register under the sixth VAT directive. I know that the Government are not prepared to accept that position.

We must remember that we are trying to get round the problem of the differentials in VAT. The solution which we come up with must nullify that effect. As today's written answer suggests, it is clear that a solution which helps only some owners—we do not know the definition or proportion of "some"—is unlikely to solve the overall problem. Unless the vast majority of owners are able to go to Tattersalls and buy a horse without being concerned about the implications of VAT, they will not buy. If they do not buy, Tattersalls will have its principal sales at Fairyhouse and vendors will want to sell in Fairyhouse or at Deauville in France.

We must have a system of registration which deals with the vast majority of racehorse owners. I should like a system which covers all racehorse owners. The fundamental problem is that we need a system which is designed to help the industry and which is not so hedged with restrictions and criteria for registration that it rules out the vast majority. I fear that we may find that that is the case under the memorandum. I have not yet seen the memorandum, so I cannot comment in detail on it.

Our system contrasts with the position in Europe. France has a system of restriction on registration, but the effect of it is that almost all owners can register. The restriction may be couched in words which are a double entendre, but the vast majority can register. I hope that my right hon. Friend will address those points.

We must ensure that the blodstock industry, which is pre-eminent in the United Kingdom, can compete with the rest of Europe, continue to have a sound basis in its stud farms and sell its stock at Newmarket and Doncaster. If the industry starts to consign abroad, the studs will soon follow. We know that that is beginning to happen, and the trend will accelerate dramatically.

The VAT order is the first bite at the cherry. The flat rate scheme is the first bite which the Government took. My right hon. Friend's initiative of distance selling—great credit must go to him for it—was the second bite at the cherry, and registration was the third bite. We cannot expect a fourth bite. We must get it right this time. The two earlier bites failed to solve the problem. I hope that we will succeed this time.

We should avoid a bureaucratic approach that so constrains registration that the vast majority are ineligible or feel that it is simply impossible to register because of bureaucratic nonsense. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that the technical memorandum of understanding which is referred to in the written answer given only this afternoon provides ample opportunity for almost all racehorse owners in the United Kingdom to register for VAT. If it does not happen that way, the memorandum will not have the effect that we all want, which is to offset the differential that so besets our industry.

I am grateful that a few of my hon. Friends have come into the House after seeing my name on the screen. I am surprised that most of them did not go home. It demonstrates the significant concern on both sides of the House about this vital issue.

12.54 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in this important debate.

The Paymaster General will recall that my colleagues and I warmly welcomed the introduction of the flat rate scheme for farmers. We continue to do so, not just because we believe that it may be helpful in particular cases. In that respect, I endorse wholeheartedly the comments made by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), whom we should really call the hon. Member for Newmarket. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the bloodstock industry, and we hope that the Paymaster General will find a way to meet the proper anxieties that have been expressed.

The flat rate scheme was introduced partly because the industry felt that it could be helped significantly by the removal of the piles of paper that seem inevitably to be generated by the normal VAT scheme. The scheme was introduced to try to educe the bureaucracy.

I know that the industry has been widely consulted and is very enthusiastic about the scheme, but I want to express one or two misgivings about the way in which it has been presented to us. We know that schemes are available to farmers in all the member countries of the Community except Denmark, so we are taking a step forward in terms of harmonisation. It is, however, important to learn the lessons of the other member states. The critical issue with any exemption is to ensure that it is so easy to claim that there is an effective take-up. Without an effective take-up, there is not much point in trying to produce a scheme in the first place.

That brings me to the critical question of the selection of 4 per cent. As the Paymaster General will recall, there was much discussion, in the House and outside it, about that figure. During our debates in the Committee that considered the Finance Bill, it was suggested that the figure would be in the band 3 per cent. to 6 per cent. Clearly it is within that band. It is important, however, that the Paymaster General should tell us where that precise figure has come from. Has it been plucked out of the air? Is it a firm figure on the basis of which we can be clear that enough farmers will take up the scheme to make it really worthwhile and of real help?

It is by no means certain at this stage that there will be an effective take-up. The National Farmers Union and other organisations in the industry have no notion whether 4 per cent. is the figure at which the measure should be pitched, and so far there is nothing to suggest that the Government have undertaken a survey to establish whether there will be an effective take-up.

How will the scheme be reviewed? What mechanism will be used to monitor take-up and to try to ensure that, over the years of its operation, the scheme operates at optimum level so that we effectively produce for the farming industry a real concession with real take-up and real impact?

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

I am sure that the Paymaster General will be able to answer those questions and satisfy me on those points. In the meantime, I know that the agricultural community will welcome the scheme.

12.53 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My first question relates to statutory instrument No. 3220—the designated activities order. Can my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General confirm what he said in his reply to me regarding my constituent, Mrs. Anne Jenks—that the flat rate scheme will apply to stud farming? Paragraph 1 of part I of the schedule refers to "General agriculture, including viticulture." Can my hon. Friend confirm that that description and the reference to "general stock farming" in part II of the schedule include stud farming, as he told me in his letter about my constituent?

I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). Although in principle the scheme is welcome to one or two very small horse owners, it is so limited in scope that it is totally inadequate. It seems to me absolutely crazy that horse owners can send their horses over to the Republic of Ireland or France, sell them and bring them back again and so avoid paying VAT. The southern Irish and French Governments help their industries to a considerable extent by having a rate of VAT significantly lower than ours.

I am sure that it is not beyond the wit of my right hon. Friend's civil servants to find a way round this problem so that this industry, which has been pre-eminent here since the 17th century, may retain its position. Otherwise, the studs and the rest of the business will simply go to southern Ireland and France. I cannot see in European law any reason why owners should not be allowed to register for VAT in the same way as any other trade and thereby be enabled to reclaim all the input taxes. Of course, output taxes would also have to be taken into account.

I urge the Paymaster General to consider these points carefully. Otherwise, this industry will just disintegrate, to the country's great detriment.

12.55 am

Sir John Cope: I should like to deal first with what the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said about matters unrelated to the flat rate farming scheme. The hon. Gentleman asked whether I could confirm that there is no change that does not arise from the single market. I can. Indeed, I believe that in my opening remarks I said something along those lines.

On the question of transport—services and so on—everything is related to the place-of-supply rules. The matter is very complicated, and, while I hesitate, after a single hearing, to confirm the hon. Gentleman's summary. I can say that it sounded broadly correct.

The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the difficulty arising from individual countries having different VAT schemes and from travel between countries. As he said, it would be simpler if every member state were prepared to zero-rate all transport and other related services. However, we come back to the question whether it is desirable to have identical VAT systems in all countries. No doubt that idea appeals to the tidy-minded, but this country and the other countries in the Community have expressed the view that the finance Minister of each state should enjoy flexibility. Matters are, of course, discussed, and there are many agreements. Indeed, these orders take account of harmonisation agreements. Nevertheless, we retain the right to flexibility. While that leads to some complications, it is right in principle.

Most hon. Members have referred to the flat rate scheme for farmers and to related matters—in particular, registration in the context of horses, especially racehorses. I was asked how the 4 per cent. had been arrived at. The VAT-carrying goods and services purchased by farmers have been examined, and it is estimated that the figure that has come out will give back to the farmers who choose to become flat rate payers the VAT that they spent on business purchases—what, in ordinary circumstances, would be the input tax. As this is a brand-new scheme, we have had to do much estimating.

I was asked when the rate of 4 per cent. would be reviewed. It should not be necessary to review it annually. As the hon. Member for Oxford, East said, when we are in a position to do so we shall have to consider how the scheme has worked out over a period of three years and whether it is working in the way I set out. I hope that we shall not need to alter it frequently, though we shall have to monitor the scheme in the early years. The figure will not rise and fall with inflation, and it is dependent on the working of the parameters over the years. I hope that 4 per cent. will prove to be a stable figure.

Not many farmers have so far registered for the scheme. As hon. Members have pointed out, it is desirable that registration should be optional. Indeed, that is an important feature of the scheme.

Mr. Andrew Smith: How many is "not many"?

Sir John Cope: I cannot give the figure offhand. I will find out. It has not been very high so far.

It has been suggested that I thought, or some people thought, that the flat rate scheme was, by itself, the solution to the problems of VAT and the horse racing industry. I cannot recall claiming that or others making such a claim. When the present Secretary of State for Employment was doing my job, there was not much enthusiasm for the scheme. By the time I took over, a certain amount of enthusiasm for it had built up.

It was not announced in the Budget, but it was introduced in the Finance Bill last year at the request of people involved in the horseracing industry, particularly on the sales side. I recall pointing out at the time that part of the exercise was to reassure Irish flat rate farmers—breeders and so on—who seemed remarkably reluctant to register for VAT in the conventional manner, that they could make use of such a scheme if they came here.

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Minister said that the scheme was introduced at the request of the bloodstock industry. I have with me a letter from Tattersalls, which says of the scheme:

> "It has to be stressed, first of all, that contrary to certain statements that have been made, the flat rate farming scheme was not introduced at the request of the industry. The industry in fact turned the scheme down in January 1992 when offered it by the then Minister of State, Mrs. Gillian Shephard."

Sir John Cope: I said that. I was requested to introduce it, which is why it was brought in at a later stage. I do not

want to get into a wrangle with Tattersalls or anybody else over the matter. I am aware of the press release from which the hon. Gentleman quoted and in which Customs was accused, in my view wrongly, of having changed its interpretation of the scheme. There were some misunderstandings at that stage, and I do not want to exacerbate them.

I say that because, as hon. Members, and particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said, we are in the middle of trying to agree a memorandum of understanding with the industry, particularly with the new board, about the registration of at least some racing owners. The problem is not the registration of breeders and trainers. They have been registered all the way through. The question is whether the racing owner—the person who owns a horse or a number of horses or part of a horse for the purposes of racing, or the person with a different type of business but who does some racing as well—can be registered for those activities.

That is what the memorandum of understanding is about. It is still at the draft stage. We have given it to the industry, and the industry first gave us some proposals two or three weeks ago, which involved some changes to the rules of racing. Our memorandum of understanding responds to that and takes the whole matter forward in what I hope hon. Members will think is a positive way.

But there has been too much difficulty, for which we must take responsibility as well as other people. There has been too much argument and bad feeling between the industry and Customs and Excise and ourselves and I do not wish to add to it by going into too much detail on something which is in any case not relevant to the order.

I reassure hon. Members that the intention of the memorandum of understanding is to be as positive as we possibly can be and to seek to solve the problems not solely by the flat rate scheme, but by going as far as we can on the registration point.

Mr. Paice: The House will understand why my right hon. Friend does not wish to go into the detail of the scheme he is trying to agree with the industry, but I wonder whether he will accept the fundamental point that I was trying to make, and have tried to make before, that unless the majority of owners are able to register, under whatever scheme his Department comes up with, it will not have the effect we seek of circumventing the differential in VAT rates.

Sir John Cope: I understand the point which my hon. Friend has made. He has made it before. We want to be as positive as possible and to get as near his position as we possibly can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) asked whether a stud farm is included in the scheme under the definition of stock farming. It includes it.

I do not claim that the flat rate scheme solves the matter. Otherwise we should not be bothering to talk about registration or anything else, but we are taking the discussions with the industry positively forward. This flat rate farmers scheme is a contribution to the problem. For that reason, I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Designated Activities) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3220), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Percentage Addition) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3221), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3222), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (International Services and Transport) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3223), dated 16th December 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

PETITION

Pit Closures

1.7 am

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): The petition I am about to present contains 13,000 signatures of Stockport people opposing the pit closures programme. Although there are no pits in Stockport, people are outraged by proposals which will result in yet more unemployment. The ever-rising numbers of people who are unemployed, particularly young people who can see no future for themselves, is of great concern to my constituents.

I was asked by people who attended a meeting at Stockport Labour club last Saturday when presenting the petition to ask the Government to tackle the problem of unemployment before it spreads like a cancer and destroys the very lifeblood of our nation.

The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will instruct the Government to reverse the pit closure programme at once, to stop the importation of subsidised coal from abroad, and to put the employment of people before profit to ensure a healthy community where all people can share in the wealth of the nation.

To lie upon the Table.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

1.8 am

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I welcome this brief but timely debate on the swiftly flowing events and spiral of violence in Bosnia. The House will look forward to learning from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State the Government's latest estimation of the problems and future plans and, above all, the safety of our 2,400 troops there.

I am not of the school of thought which considers that the western response to the horrendous happenings in the former Yugoslavia has been indifferent and inadequate. Frankly, I am at the other end of the spectrum from the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who is strong on describing the horrors but weak on telling the country precisely what should be done. We have yet to learn from him how many brigades of British troops at present in Germany should be tipped into the cauldron. I tend to think of the 70 potential flashpoints in the world and the 25 substantial conflicts. I recall and regret the reduction of our British contingent with the United Nations in Cyprus—where we have historical ties and direct responsibilities—in order to make way for further roles.

The conflict in Bosnia has lasted for 10 months, it has claimed 18,000 lives and we are told that 100,000 people are missing. That conflict results from centuries-old ethnic feuds which are bound to continue. Essentially, there is a bitter and bloody civil war which the United Nations can seek to damp down but which in reality it is incapable of controlling. We should concentrate on making sure that the flames do not spread to neighbouring homes—one thinks particularly of Macedonia.

I have sought this debate to raise two specific military matters, which I have brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend beforehand, and I hope that he will concentrate his reply on them. First, there is the danger of blurring a United Nations peacekeeping role with that of a conventional military response. Secondly, there is the possibility of the United Nations calling on the United Kingdom to assume a more direct role in Bosnia which could include separating the warring factions and, no doubt, trying to control their heavy weapons.

I have taken the opportunity presented by no fewer than three Adjournment debates over the years to give the House my views on United Nations peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping has become an essential part of the work done by the United Nations for international harmony and, above all, security. My right hon. Friend will know that while I fully supported the dispatch of medical personnel, engineers and signallers to the United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia, I had reservations about the dispatch of the Cheshire Regiment —a fine professional unit with an outstanding commanding officer—and the role that has been allocated to it. After all, the carrying of humanitarian aid is normally left to United Nations agencies and civilian transport. That said, the Cheshires have done a magnificent job. *The Times,* in an editorial on 26 January with which I largely disagreed, said:

> "Britain has responded to Bosnia's suffering by sending in troops whose logistical skills and determination have set them in a class of their own."

I certainly share those sentiments.

The Cheshires may have saved the lives of thousands of men, women and children this winter, mainly Muslims, but the risks that they run hour by hour are very great: If, God forbid, 20 of these fine soldiers should be killed by random shelling in the interfactional fighting, or perhaps by mines, it is not hard to imagine the response of the British people. Frankly, they would want them to be withdrawn. The Government know only too well how easy it is to commit troops and how difficult it is subsequently to withdraw them. I should make my own position perfectly clear: at this stage our troops should not be withdrawn, but I expect the moment to come before long if the fighting continues to intensify—and the Cheshires should not be replaced at the end of their six months period of duty.

Following an increase in the number and seriousness of the attacks on our forces, the Secretary of State for Defence announced further deployment on 14 January. He told the House that the additional forces

> "will be available to provide additional protection to British forces while they are involved in humanitarian operations." —[*Official Report,* 14 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1057.]

The use of the word "while" worries me. The brief from the Conservative research department—having worked there for five years, I know that such briefs should be taken like tablets of stone—said:

> "The provision of artillery in particular will enable British forces to respond to the kind of attacks faced at Tomislavgrad."

I detect that Ministers have wisely shifted their stance in recent weeks, but I emphasise that our humanitarian relief effort in Bosnia, under United Nations auspices, relies on the support of all parties to the civil war. it would be a disaster to seek to get relief convoys through with artillery and air support. That would change the entire nature of the operation.

I understand that the Secretary General of the United Nations has made known his views on the subject. It is good sense to have the additional forces available to cover a withdrawal of British forces if needed, but it is nonsense to believe that the additional forces could support the relief effort. The House would welcome a clear assurance from the Minister on that. It might become a crucial issue for the Government, and we must know their intentions when the lives of British soldiers are involved.

Secondly, last Wednesday *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

> "United States pressure for greater military involvement in Bosnia Hercegovina is developing into a key test of Anglo-American relations in the Clinton era. There is concern in Whitehall that President Clinton will press for a substantial contingent of British ground forces to become involved in separating the warring sides."

The report rings true, and the issue presents real difficulties for the Cabinet. There have indeed been calls from across the pond for Britain to take a European lead in resolving the Balkan crisis, and of course the Conservative side of the House in particular is anxious that Britain should continue to be seen as a reliable ally of the United States. We are aware, too, that pressure for Britain to give up its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council would be increased by a clear refusal to take a more active role in the former Yugoslavia—but the arguments on the other side are stronger.

I quote from the Foreign Secretary's thoughtful and distinguished speech at Chatham house last week:

"We must make it clear that however good the institutions, however robust our decision, it is impossible to guarantee order and good government everywhere . . . Where we act, our action must be proportionate. For example, to impose and guarantee order in the former Yugoslavia would take huge forces and huge risks over an indefinite period—which no democracy could justify to its people. British troops there have a humanitarian, not an enforcing role".

My right hon. Friend will know of the disquiet on the Conservative Benches, especially among those of his colleagues with knowledge and interest in defence matters, about the lack of clear political and strategic objectives in the former Yugoslavia. Escorting food convoys can be understood, although the risks are understood as well, but a wider role in such a hopelessly confused and complex political situation would not be understood. The difficulties of military action, especially involving armoured vehicles in such a heavily wooded and mountainous country, require little imagination. There are already sizeable armies there, and new and more sophisticated weapons, including missiles, arrive every day. It is a perfect setting for guerrilla activity—a form of fighting at which the Yugoslavs excel.

Colonel Michael Dewar, deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, has estimated that effective military intervention in Bosnia, including the defeat of the Serb militias and military occupation, would require something like half a million men, and it is almost certain that regular Serbian forces would become involved. Every city, town and village in Bosnia would require a garrison. More important, they would require a garrison for the foreseeable future. There is no clear or possible cut-off date.

My view, and that of many supporters of the Government, is that military intervention is not the answer and should be discounted. It could even be counter-productive and suck other countries into the conflict. For example, Russia might be sucked in on behalf of the Serbs. We would be wise to understand that, however horrific and intolerable the situation there is, when the inhabitants of any country are determined to fight each other and bring about mass rape, starvation, ethnic cleansing, misery and ruin, there are real limits to what can be performed by the United Nations on behalf of us all and of the civilisation that we hold so dear.

1.21 am

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me the opportunity to participate briefly in this debate, which he will be aware, as I am sure the Minister is aware, is the subject of great concern to many of my hon. Friends and to hon. Members in all parts of the House who share our worry about the dangers of greater British military involvement in Bosnia and in the former Yugoslavia.

I was one of an all-party group which visited Bosnia just before Christmas. With my hon. Friends and hon. Members from the Liberal and Labour parties, I saw something of the complexities of the conflict in Bosnia and visited positions in and around Sarajevo. The problem at present is that the western response to the crisis is being substantially dicated by the emotional attitude of the press and other media in this country and, to a greater degree, in the United States and in Germany. It has largely dictated our response so far. We must be wary of allowing ourselves to be pushed by the Americans or by the Germans into military intervention in the Bosnian civil war, which could easily escalate into a general Balkan war, with incalculable consequences for this country and for the whole of Europe.

Two issues concern me. The first is the no-fly zone. I am glad that the threat of Britain's being pushed into enforcement of the no-fly zone appears for the moment to have receded; nevertheless, it is still there, and it would be military folly and extremely unwise politically for us to be pushed into any attempt to enforce the no-fly zones in Bosnia Herzegovina.

The other question that we are likely very soon to face because of substantial American pressure, particularly if there is a negotiated settlement as a result of the initiatives of Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, is United Kingdom participation in a peacekeeping force. Even on that issue, many of my hon. Friends would feel extremely concerned about the United Kingdom putting troops into a peace-keeping force unless there had been a clear settlement, which had been adhered to by all the parties in the conflict for a considerable time.

Will my hon. Friend be extremely careful about giving any commitment of British forces in a peacekeeping role unless it is absolutely clear that there is a workable, negotiated peace settlement which can stick? Otherwise, we shall find that we are embroiling British troops in a Balkan quagmire, with terrible consequences for this country and the whole of Europe.

1.25 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on securing this debate, and I welcome the opportunity to be able to respond to the points that he has raised. I also appreciate the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), who speaks with much knowledge on the subject.

The House knows that Britain has been at the forefront of international efforts to restore peace in Bosnia and to bring relief to the suffering civilian populations. The first priority in Bosnia and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia must be a lasting political settlement which respects the legitimate concerns of all the people involved. The international conference on the former Yugoslavia in Geneva, under the chairmanship of Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, is working hard to resolve each of the different aspects of the crisis. We and our European partners have given those negotiations our active support, both by diplomatic persuasion and by exerting political and ecomomic pressure, notably through United Nations sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

We have never had any illusions that the talks would be simple or quick. The issues to be resolved are extraordinarily complex and sensitive, but, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, sooner or later there must be a negotiated settlement. The only question is whether it comes now or following further suffering.

For the time being, in spite of the pressures which President Milosevic has apparently exerted—not before time—on the Bosnian Serb leader, neither the Bosnian Serbs nor the Muslims have accepted the comprehensive

[The Minister of State for the Armed Forces]

proposals which Lord Owen and Mr. Vance have put forward for a peace settlement. The Bosnian Croats alone have done so.

Although all three factions have agreed to the proposed constitutional arrangements, the division of territory on the map presented by the co-chairmen remains a point of contention between the Serbs and Muslims. The co-chairmen have asked the United Nations Security Council to support the proposals and to encourage, and if necessary bring pressure to bear on, the parties to negotiate seriously on the basis of them. We must hope that the talks continue and achieve a successful outcome, as the plan—with whatever refinement is necessary—represents the only real chance for peace.

In the meantime, the position on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina is, of course, a matter of serious concern. The military position remains unpredictable, as fighting continues along the Posavina corridor, where the Bosnian Serb army and the Muslims battle to control what is a vital supply route for the Serbs. Fighting has also continued in and around the areas of Bratanac in eastern Bosnia. In central Bosnia, there is continuing tension between the Croats and Muslims, despite the recent signing of a ceasefire.

While we are doing all we can to promote a political settlement, the Government have also had as a high priority the provision of aid to alleviate the appalling suffering which the conflict has caused. I shall speak in a moment about our battalion group. On the civil side, Britain has contributed more than £70 million to date, which includes, for example, a £3 million programme to provide winter shelter in central Bosnia to house up to 20,000 displaced people, £2·75 million-worth of medical supplies, and 60 civilian drivers and support staff, who have now run about 150 convoys carrying over 10,000 tonnes of relief supplies. We are also maintaining heat and power supply for a million people in central Bosnia by ensuring that coal mines and power stations continue to operate.

Turning to the military involvement in humanitarian relief, 4,545 tonnes of aid have been flown into Sarajevo by the RAF Hercules since the humanitarian airlift began last July; and the British infantry battalion group, which has been deployed since November, has now escorted a total of some 15,121 tonnes of aid.

The Government naturally understand and share the concerns of the House about the safety of our infantry battalion group. The battalion is deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina for a purely humanitarian purpose—helping, as part of the United Nations protection force, to provide protective support for relief convoys operating under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The aim is to proceed by negotiation and with the co-operation of the Yugoslav parties. That picks up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North—that it is not our business to take on one side or another in some form of battle. Our troops are not there to take sides in the conflict or to fight the convoys through, against opposition.

As yet, the fighting has not significantly affected the battalion group's task, although it has caused some disruption to the convoys. But the risks to our troops, and to all involved on the ground, are clear. The tragic killing of Lance Corporal Edwards on 13 January brings them home all too sharply.

I can assure the House that the safety of the British contingent and of others on the ground is kept under continuous review. The Government remain committed to sustaining our participation in the humanitarian effort as long as conditions on the ground permit, but not at unacceptable risk to our people.

It is against that background that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence informed the House on 14 January, we have deployed to the Adriatic, as a precautionary measure, a carrier group led by HMS Ark Royal, with a number of capabilities embarked, including fixed wing Sea Harrier aircraft and light artillery. The purpose, as my right hon. and learned Friend explained, is to have them available for deployment ashore should the need arise, either to provide additional protection for our personnel or to assist with a withdrawal of United Nations personnel if it were to come to that.

The Government will not allow any blurring of the distinction between a humanitarian effort and the use of force. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said on 14 January, there is no suggestion on the part of the Government that it would be appropriate or sensible to contemplate a humanitarian operation that could take place only through the use of force. What we have in mind is that there may be occasions when the availability of additional protection will enable individual convoys to proceed safely. But if it became clear that the convoys could proceed only with the constant use of force, that would be totally incompatible with the purposes of the United Nations task in Bosnia.

The Government remain clear that military intervention does not offer a solution to the problems of Bosnia. It would make an already serious situation worse and would compromise the humanitarian relief operations on which hundreds of thousands of lives now depend. Massive military intervention might suppress the conflict for a time but, in the absence of a negotiated settlement, the withdrawal of the intervening force would be the signal for a resumption of fighting. I can assure the House that the Government have no intention of being drawn into a peacemaking role of that kind.

We of course recognise that there will be a role for peacekeeping forces in Bosnia as and when the international conference in Geneva has achieved a negotiated settlement, to help the settlement stick, on the basis of a ceasefire and the co-operation of the parties. There is no reason, however, at this stage to think of changing the role of United Kingdom forces, as the likelihood is that they will be required for some time. Further contributions will therefore be mainly a matter for others.

I can assure the House that the Government are in no danger of losing sight of the distinction between a humanitarian and an interventionist role in Bosnia. The Government will continue to play their part in helping the international community to work with the parties to try to find peaceful solutions to the political problems that are the root cause of the fighting.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Coal Industry

1. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the numbers employed in the coal industry in Scotland in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* currently.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): British Coal has informed my right hon. Friend that in March 1980 and March 1990, its own employees in Scotland numbered 22,000 and 1,600 respectively. The current figure is 1,424. In addition, the opencast industry currently provides employment for more than 1,500 people in Scotland.

Mr. Clarke: Has the Secretary of State met British Coal in Scotland to establish why it did not tender for the full amount of coal required by Scottish Power? He should bear in mind that Scotland has millions of tonnes of coal stocks. If he has not had such a meeting, will he say when he will have one—because it will have an effect on employment?

Mr. Stewart: I am, of course, aware of the correspondence that the hon. Gentleman has had with the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry and of the reply that came from British Coal on this matter. In that correspondence the hon. Gentleman expressed himself in his customary robust way.

These are matters for commercial agreement between British Coal and Scottish Power, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured by British Coal's success in selling not only 250,000 tonnes under the 1992 tender, to which he referred, but 440,000 tonnes under the negotiated contract ending 31 March 1993. Both those sales are over and above the existing five-year contract between British Coal and Scottish Power.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: While ever mindful of the contribution made by coal to fulfilling Scotland's energy requirements, does my hon. Friend agree that the levels of investment and numbers of jobs involved in the North sea oil and gas industries must be fully taken into consideration when assessing Scotland's future energy requirements?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend, who is particularly knowledgeable about matters relating to the oil and gas industries, makes a valid point. Coal has an important role, especially in the export of electricity from Scotland, but my hon. Friend is also right to point to the key importance to the Scottish economy of the oil and gas-related industries, which currently employ—from memory—97,400 people, almost 70,000 of whom are onshore. These industries are, therefore, of crucial importance not only to Scotland's energy needs but to the general health of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister accept that part of the reason for the decline in mining jobs in Scotland is the Government's complete lack of an integrated energy policy? In support of my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), whose point I raised earlier with the President of the Board of Trade and to which I am still awaiting a satisfactory answer, may I ask the Minister to investigate the astonishing claim by the chief executive of Scottish Power to the effect that British Coal did not even bid for a contract to supply 800,000 tonnes of coal to Scottish power stations? Is it not about time that the Government exercised their responsibility to intervene to stop this nonsense and to save Scotland's mining industry?

Mr. Stewart: British Coal made a bid to supply 250,000 tonnes and in its letter to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) it gave Scottish Power's explanation of the change in circumstances that led to increased orders under that tender. I reassure the hon. Gentleman that Scottish Power has said that 80 per cent. of its coal purchases in 1992-93 will be from Scottish sources.

Local Authority Finance

2. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the finances and value-for-money record of Scottish local authorities.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): The Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland is statutorily responsible for ensuring financial propriety and that value for money is achieved in Scottish local government. I have at present no plans to review that position.

Mr. Shaw: Would my right hon. Friend consider it appropriate for the commission to investigate the allegations of corruption against Monklands district council? Those allegations relate to serious matters which include nepotism, the employment of perhaps 30 close relatives of councillors, religious discrimination, and political favouritism in the direct works operation and the housing departments. Does not he think that there is real concern about bias in expenditure between the constituencies of Monklands, West and Monklands, East? Is he aware that one councillor who endeavoured to expose all the wrongdoing in that council was wrongly accused of being involved in a criminal act but has now been exonerated and the allegations against him found to be totally false and fraudulent?

Mr. Lang: I understand that the Comptroller of Audit is presently investigating to see whether there has been any improper use of public funds by Monklands district council. I am not aware of any evidence of any breach of any statutory obligation on the part of the council. Certainly the kind of charges to which my hon. Friend refers are serious. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said on Thursday:

"It is a time of growing disillusion and increasing cynicism which if it continues unchecked will eventually corrode public confidence in our whole political system."

The Labour party is right to set up its own in-depth inquiry, which I understand it has done, into the affairs of Monklands district council.

BCCI

3. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on proposals to assist the local authorities that lost money in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to a similar question on local authorities that lost money in BCCI from the hon. Gentleman on 18 November last.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister assure the House that if the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report, which is to be published in a fortnight, recommends the payment of compensation to Scottish local authorities and the other victims of BCCI, he will accept the recommendation and the Government will pay the compensation? Does he accept that as long as there is money left in this bank liquidators will be at the door? Will he join me in condemning the huge fees—£700,000 a week—currently being charged by Christopher Morris and Touche Ross to conduct the bank's liquidation? If that money had been given to the Scottish local authorities, every one of them would have been paid in full twice over. Will he draw that matter to the attention of the President of the Board of Trade?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that, as always, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will read the report of our proceedings very carefully tomorrow morning.

Let me emphasise again that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland granted Western Isles islands council consent to borrow £24 million, and granted Ross and Cromarty district council consent to borrow £1·8 million, to help the councils to cope with the losses to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Our response to any recommendations from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but no doubt the Government will, as always, take any recommendations from that Committee as seriously as we take recommendations from any Select Committee.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend agree that the drop in interest rates over the past year will be of considerable help to councils such as Western Isles? Does he agree that the interest rate reduction has injected many millions of pounds into the coffers of local authorities throughout Scotland? *[Interruption.]* Should not those authorities be able to use the money to improve services, and to reduce council tax demands?

Mr. Stewart: I entirely agree, and I am astonished that Opposition Members should jeer the good news for Scottish local authorities to which my hon. Friend refers. I should have expected them to welcome the news that authorities will now face lower interest rates.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced substantial reductions in interest rates. Our base rate is now the lowest in the European Community, and the lowest since 1977. There is no doubt that those reductions will be of immense benefit to public organisations that have borrowed, to the private sector and to the whole Scottish economy.

Mr. Macdonald: I thank the Minister for adopting my suggestion last year that an inquiry should be held into the islands special needs allowance and for his decision at Christmas to implement the inquiry's findings. His action will go a considerable way towards meeting the special needs of the islands following the BCCI affair.

The economic situation in the islands, however, is still difficult. Will the Minister give equivalent financial support to the ferry service across the Sound of Harris proposed by the islands council? Such projects will include the islands' economy, and provide much-needed jobs immediately.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his recognition—*[Interruption.]* I am thanking the hon. Gentleman for his recognition of what we have done in response to his representations on behalf of his constituents.

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Minister quite understood the reason for the interruption. A Back Bencher behind him was a reading a newspaper; that is what hon. Members were complaining about—the reading of a newspaper in the Chamber.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker. I cannot, of course, see what goes on behind my back. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We must make some progress.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). I assure him that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider his point about ferry services very seriously.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I refer to the Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). If the Select Committee report mentions compensation, as we hope it will—Ross and Cromarty was one of the afffected councils—will the Minister take a slightly more enlightened view of the word "compensation" than the Treasury might and allow the local authorities involved longer to plan their borrowing and expenditure in order to offset the immediate impact of the losses incurred as a result of the BCCI affair?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is asking a hypothetical question, although I am sure he will agree that I am one of the most enlightened of Ministers. Ross and Cromarty had £1·8 billion invested in BCCI, but it did not ask us for additional borrowing consent in that regard.

Hazardous Materials (Emergencies)

4. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the ability of emergency services under his control to deal with any potential situation involving hazardous materials.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The emergency services are not under my right hon. Friend's direct control. In the light of inspection visits to police forces and fire brigades, HM inspectors of constabulary and fire services consider that these services handle incidents involving hazardous materials efficiently and effectively.

Mr. McAvoy: Is the Minister aware of a recommendation made by the Select Committee on the Environment to ban the transport of radioactive material by air? Is he further aware that in the past 14 months, plutonium has been transported by air from Germany to Wick in containers that can withstand falls of only 27 ft? What action will the Minister and his right hon. Friend take to prevent such flights from passing over Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for alerting me to the problem. The Scottish Office has recently issued guidance on composite materials in burning aircraft. The issue was considered seriously at the time of Lockerbie because certain elements of the aircraft involved had radioactive particles. In co-operation with the Department of Transport, I should like to look into the point that the hon. Gentleman raises, and come back to him in due course.

Mr. Fabricant: Although I agree to some extent with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), may I urge the Minister not to involve himself in anything that might prevent trade between Scotland and other parts of the European Community?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have some of the most advanced scientists in the world dealing with the reprocessing of nuclear waste and they are able to use their expertise to make certain that extremely dangerous materials are processed with the maximum safety. People not only in Scotland but elsewhere in the world should benefit from their expertise and we should keep that thought very much in mind.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern felt by hon. Members who represent the Renfrewshire area over the emergency and ambulance services and how quickly they would be able to respond in the back shift to any serious accident? The people of Renfrewshire await an answer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for health boards to determine provision for any major emergency in their own area. They of course draw up contingency plans which are tested regularly and have been found to be highly effective. The hon. Gentleman asks how quickly ambulances could respond. I believe, very quickly indeed, although I shall mention the hon. Gentleman's interest to the Minister of State responsible for the health services in Scotland.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that following the Braer disaster there was widespread concern, not only north of the border but all along the coastline of the United Kingdom, about the ability of the emergency services to respond to oil pollution? Will he reassure the House that there is no complacency among Ministers in dealing with oil disasters and that there are regular meetings between all the emergency departments and those responsible for dealing with oil pollution?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend's point is well taken. Exercises are, of course, held periodically, as should be the case. With regard to Shetland, the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit, the Shetland islands council and the emergency services all have contingency plans ready, and they are to be strongly commended on activating them so promptly. However, there will, of course, be lessons to be learnt from the results of the inquiry and, in due course, I hope to go to Shetland to follow up these matters.

Mr. Wallace: I certainly endorse the commendation that the Minister has just given. Does he also agree that prevention is always better than cure? Therefore, it was a matter of considerable concern and dismay to read reports that, following the meeting last week of EC Environment and Transport Ministers attended by the Secretary of State, Britain has been described as one of the laggards in relation to taking action. When will the Government announce the interim measures promised by the Secretary of State for Transport in respect of marine surveillance pending the outcome of the Donaldson inquiry?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman's impression of the discussion was not the same as that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. However, the hon. Gentleman is correct to say that prevention is very much better than cure. I will consider the hon. Gentleman's particular point about any interim arrangements that may be necessary.

Nicotine Patches

5. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons nicotine patches are not prescribable in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The position on nicotine patches is the same throughout the United Kingdom. One type of patch is not available on prescription under the NHS on the advice of the advisory committee on borderline substances. The product is now available on private prescription or over the counter from registered pharmacists. The committee is liaising with the manufacturers of two similar products so that they can be considered as quickly as possible.

Mr. Wray: Is the Minister aware that in Scotland 34 per cent. of those aged 16 and over smoke, compared with 29 per cent. in England? Is he also aware that the death rate from lung cancer in Scotland is 28 per cent. higher for males and 36 per cent. higher for females than in England? That causes an horrendous cost in respect of hospitalisation and creates great strains on the health service budget.

I understand that the nicotine patches cost £186 for a course, or £15 a week. I read in the press last week——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman ask his question?

Mr. Wray: I was reading in the press last week that one can obtain those patches for £4 on a prescription south of the border, but they cost us plenty in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point, because some of the press reports have been misleading. The position is exactly the same north and south of the border. Specific advice on the prescribing of nicotine patches has not been issued. The House will agree with the first point raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) and I am certainly aware of the figures. That is why the Government have a policy of reducing smoking in Scotland in accordance with quite specific targets—to reduce the number of smokers aged 12 to 24 by 30 per cent. and those aged between 25 and 65 by 20 per cent. by the year 2000.

Mrs. Fyfe: May I welcome the enforcement of the law announced this week against selling tobacco to anyone aged under 16 and the Minister of State's recognition that we need to reduce teenage smoking? Will the Minister therefore support the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to control smoking in the workplace? Will he take the logical step and support our call for a ban on tobacco advertising? This week marks the 75th anniversary of women getting the vote. Clearly, we still have a long way to go. Women want sensible and effective legislation, not half measures. Will the Minister listen to women, or does he prefer to listen to the tobacco companies?

Mr. Stewart: I assure the hon. Lady that I very often listen to women. I am grateful for the hon. Lady's first point. In relation to the workplace, I had a very useful meeting with the chief medical officer and employers' organisations to encourage greater attention to health promotion with particular emphasis on reducing smoking in the workplace. The CMO has had similar discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

The hon. Lady will know that the Government have brought in at the United Kingdom level a new, tougher voluntary agreement with the industry on tobacco advertising. That agreement is now in force and it is the sensible way forward.

Lanarkshire Economy

6. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the Lanarkshire economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The coming into operation two days ago of the Lanarkshire enterprise zone has been widely welcomed as the latest step in the Government's extensive programme of special help for Lanarkshire.

Dr. Reid: I do not need to remind the Secretary of State of the continuing need for investment in Lanarkshire. We welcome the additional resources that were made available to Motherwell district, in particular for 1992-93, but I remind the right hon. Gentleman that that was before the closure of Ravenscraig, and there is a continuing need, particularly for infrastructural projects, especially the M8 upgrading and the M74 link. May I commend to the right hon. Gentleman the five-year plan developed by Motherwell district council for economic and commercial development?

I was at the Ravenscraig Burns supper on Friday night. The right hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that there were 500 people there, although Ravenscraig was closed, but less pleased to know that not one of them sent him their regards.

Mr. Lang: Perhaps when I answer the hon. Gentleman's question they will wish to do so belatedly. The Government's commitment to upgrading the infrastructure of Lanarkshire is very marked and is readily demonstrated not only by what we have already announced but by what we plan. I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the upgrading plans for the A8 between Baillieston and Newhouse are making good progress, we are increasing the roads budget for Strathclyde regional council, totalling £7·4 million over the next two years, and we have also designated the enterprise zone which, on nine sites covering 500 acres, will provide very welcome attractions for incoming industry to Lanarkshire.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decision by Hoover to concentrate all its European production at Cambuslang will have a beneficial knock-on effect in the economy of Lanarkshire? Does that not wholly vindicate our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's decision to push for an opt-out of the job-destroying social chapter?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Clearly, President Delors was right when he said that Britain, by opting out of the social chapter, was creating a paradise in this country for inward investment. Not only have we won those 400 jobs for Hoover, but we have had the announcement today of Direct Line Insurance creating 200 new jobs in Glasgow and of Escom UK Ltd. creating 140 new jobs in Ayrshire—and, of course, we had the recent announcement of 700 jobs at the Army personnel centre in Glasgow. A lot of good things are happening for jobs in Scotland.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is continuing confusion in Lanarkshire due to the lack of a strategy embracing the steel site, which is where the problem began and is the biggest area of derelict industrial land in Scotland? Mistakes are being made in planning and in capital programmes because there is no coherent development strategy. Will the Secretary of State make sure that the options are fully spelt out forthwith and taken into account by all the authorities concerned?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that there is no coherent strategy. British Steel and Scottish Enterprise are working closely together on the problems of the steel site. It is not something on which there can be a quick fix; it has to be done gradually over time and at considerable cost. That is one reason why the enterprise zone that we have designated does not include part of that site. The £50 million of anticipated public expenditure costs associated with that site over the next decade can be under way as quickly as possible, with the attraction of new industry into the area.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On the serious issues in Lanarkshire, does the Secretary of State accept that unemployment has increased by 25 per cent. in that county in the past three years? Nothing that the Government have done on derelict sites, the failure to resuscitate Gartcosh or even the

proposals for rail privatisation will help those problems in the least. Given that when Ravenscraig closed, the Prime Minister said that he would not forget Lanarkshire, Lanarkshire still feels very much a forgotten county. What does the Secretary of State for Scotland intend to do about that?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman does not know, he should get out and go around his constituency. He would see on the ground evidence of all the work that the Government are doing. Lanarkshire development agency's budget next year will approach £50 million. The Government have encouraged the development of the Mossend rail terminal, which is of great importance to the future of the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Although unemployment in Lanarkshire has risen by about 2,000 this year, the figure is still more than 15,000 lower than it was at the height of the previous recession in 1987.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

7. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers eligible for the hill livestock compensatory allowances there are within each district authority in the Strathclyde region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): My Department's records of hill livestock compensation allowance recipients are held by parishes and the former counties. The total for Strathclyde is 2,825 for the 1992 scheme.

Mr. Davidson: Is the Minister aware that I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Scotland referring to the hill sheep subsidy which tells me, and I quote——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to give a little guidance to the hon. Gentleman. Quoting during Question Time is not allowed. It would be helpful if he could simply summarise.

Mr. Davidson: I received a letter from the Secretary of State saying that there should be rejoicing among the hill sheep farmers of my constituency. Can the Minister tell me how many hill sheep farmers he believes there are in Glasgow, Govan? Can he tell me whether the letter was seen by the Secretary of State or whether a blank piece of paper à la Kynoch was signed by the Minister and submitted by a civil servant, perhaps by one of the guilty people in the dock across there?

The hill sheep farmers of Govan are the only people in Scotland I am aware of who support water privatisation. Will the Minister confirm that ewe after ewe is searching the hills of Govan—indeed, ewes are searching the whole of Scotland—seeking the green shoots of recovery but they cannot find them anywhere? Will the Minister confirm that sending that letter to me was an insult and that the section of the letter that tells me that larger numbers of people in Scotland on low incomes and no incomes have their incomes going down than have them going up is to be regretted, and will he consider resigning?

Sir Hector Monro: What a pathetic choice of quote. If the hon. Gentleman cannot do better than that, it is a disgrace to his party. Surely he is glad to know the exact position of hill sheep farmers in Scotland. We all know that it is a difficult place to make substantial profits—and of course there are sheep in Govan: I have seen them on football pitches and rugby pitches.

Mr. Kynoch: On a more serious note which affects hill farmers in Scotland, will my hon. Friend say what he projects a net farm income in a less-favoured area hill farm with sheep and cattle will be in 1993-94 and how would that compare with the average net farm income in 1988-89? Does he not agree that from such a low level of income the small increase achieved through the HLCAs and sheep annual premium adjustments is only a beginning and a first move in the right direction, upwards?

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful for a sensible question from someone who knows something about hill farming. My hon. Friend realises that although we reduced the HLCA for sheep by £2·25, the sheep annual premium increased by £4·05, which represents a net change for the better of £1·80 and is certainly welcomed by hill sheep farmers in Scotland. I explained to the National Farmers Union last week that last year there was a 21 per cent. increase in income for less-favoured areas and 40 per cent. over the 1991 period. I am glad that the trend is in the right direction. I hope that with the substantial increase in the sheep annual premium this year, while maintaining the cattle amount of £63·30, incomes will continue to increase.

Mr. Foulkes: The Under-Secretary of State knows that there are a great many sheep farmers in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. He will recall that when David Purdie, the president of the National Farmers Union in Ayrshire, came along with all the hon. Members from Ayrshire to see him, he indicated that there would be no reduction in the hill livestock compensatory allowance. Will the Minister admit that he was overruled by the Minister of Agriculture and that this means that £20 million is coming out of the rural economy of Scotland, which will be devastating for all the rural areas? If he is to be told what to do by the Minister of Agriculture, is it not time the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland gave up and let someone else take over?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is always very enthusiastic on behalf of his farmers. He will be glad to know that the sector that is doing best in farming at the present time is dairying. He knows that the figures that I have given relative to the increase in the overall position of the sheep annual premium and the HLCA are very favourable. An amount of £29·50 for each ewe on a hill farm is very significant indeed, and I welcome this trend. I accept that farming started from a relatively low base over the past few years, but things are improving and the hon. Gentleman should welcome that.

House Conditions Survey

8. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the results of his house conditions survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes, as the main contractor for the house conditions survey, hopes to complete the survey report before the summer recess. A final publication date has yet to be decided.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that the further delay in completing the report means an even greater and

disgraceful delay in tackling the bad housing problems in Scotland? Has he read the Shelter report, "Broken Dreams", on health and housing in Scotland? Does he realise that 100,000 children in Scotland now live in damp houses, which is affecting their health? Will he announce an emergency programme to tackle the problem?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In relation to the national house conditions survey, we are considering whether it would be helpful and feasible to release preliminary findings earlier, so that there will be no such delay as the hon. Gentleman suggests. With regard to condensation—*[Interruption.]* I should say dampness; I appreciate that there is a difference—councils should, as a matter of priority, tackle these matters within their mainstream allocations. I am glad that some 40 councils in Scotland have carried out local house condition surveys, which will enable them to target resources more effectively. Since 1979, some £10 billion has been allocated to public sector housing in Scotland.

Mr. Dicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that municipal housing in Scotland is absolutely deplorable and that the architects and local government of Scotland have a lot to answer for? I have made many trips to Scotland, which I love. Does he agree with me that he ought to get the message across to local government and architects that good design does not cost any more than bad?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend has a good point. Some 257,000 houses have been built in Scotland. Of these, a proportion has been built by the public sector. Taking into account housing associations, as well as local authorities, some 66,000 new houses have been built in that time. If local authorities wish to build new houses where there is a perceived need for them to do so, they can put that in their housing plans and go forward, if they treat that as a matter of priority. My hon. Friend's point is valid.

Water and Sewerage

9. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations were conducted prior to the announcement that he was ring-fencing section 94 capital consents for water and sewerage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The decision to vary the terms of the consent that I give for local authority water and sewerage capital programmes was taken to ensure that resources continue to be targeted in the most effective way in the run-up to local government reorganisation and restructuring of water and sewerage services. It is consistent with the existing separate accounting arrangements for those services.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that Borders regional council, using consent scheme finance, has been able to direct £1·5 million from water and sewerage to other budgets in a way that was in no way detrimental to the water and sewerage scheme? That was permissible under the original rules of the scheme. Bringing in ring fencing nine months into the financial year has left the council in a difficult position by making that transfer of £1·5 million of capital consent illegal under the new rules. That will require the money to be clawed back in the fiscal year 1993-94 in a way which will occasion cuts in capital consents of up to 19 per cent. in some of the budgets in the Borders. Will the Secretary of State look again at the summary introduction of those rules, find some way of easing the difficulties of Borders regional council, and try to make sure that it has some way of managing the problem occasioned by a summary change in the middle of the financial year?

Mr. Lang: Yes, I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman. We made it clear when we introduced the arrangements that we would deal sympathetically with any genuine difficulties, having in mind precisely the kind of situation that the hon. Gentleman has described. My officials have been in touch with officials in Borders regional council. They have provisionally agreed a method of operation in relation to the enhancement or abatement of underspend and overspend which will enable Borders regional council to continue its other programmes without being unnecessarily restricted as a result of this.

Mr. McAllion: The capital consents for water and sewerage in the current year amount to just over £221 million. Is the Secretary of State aware that if that level of spending were maintained for the next 10 years it would amount to less than half the sum that he himself has identified as necessary to meet European Community targets? Is it not, therefore, obvious that his mind is already made up to find the missing £2·5 billion by privatising Scottish water in one form or another? Will he therefore now give an unambiguous assurance that he will not seek to change the law of Scotland to allow disconnections of domestic consumers from the water and sewerage services? He should understand that if he does not give that commitment it will be he and not those who resist him who will be acting illegally in the eyes of the people of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that capital expenditure on water and sewerage in Scotland has doubled over the past four years. He mentioned a figure for the current year; next year it will be £237 million, rising to £248 million a couple of years after. There is a continuing and developing need to increase capital spending on water and sewerage in Scotland to an estimated £5 billion in the next 10 to 15 years. Part of the consultation exercise that we have just concluded is to find the best way of raising those resources at minimum cost to the consumer.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. Friend must believe that it is intolerable that hon. Ladies and Gentlemen in all parts of the House are not getting water and sewerage matters sorted out because of problems of public sector financing. Is not the sensible idea to move quickly towards a privatised water industry so that the investment can be made in water and sewerage services, as is happening in England and Wales?

Mr. Lang: It is precisely to find the best way forward for water and sewerage in Scotland that I issued a consultation paper, and the consultation period has just ended. The purpose of the section 94 capital consent arrangements that we have announced is to ensure that capital continues to be expended on water and sewerage. There has been an average underspend of £3 million per year in the past few years, and it is plain that the heavy burden imposed by our

needs in the water and sewerage industry in the next few years must be met by resources being directed towards them.

Mr. Welsh: Is the consultation a sham or is it for real? If the majority are opposed, will the minority Government in Scotland start listening to the Scottish people and abandon water privatisation in any shape or form? Or is the Conservative party also making democracy redundant under its current policies?

Mr. Lang: Is the Scottish National party for real? We have consulted extensively and widely on a range of options for the future of water and sewerage in Scotland. We have received some 3,000 replies. We shall examine them with great care, analysing the recommendations made and the way in which they address the eight specific questions that we asked in the consultation paper, and then agree on a way forward.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In the light of the Secretary of State's enthusiasm, expressed the other day, for local authorities raising private capital for a new bridge over the Forth, why does he exclude that principle for water and sewerage provision? Above all, will he for once answer the question about disconnections? Will he introduce legislation, or will he accept the overwhelming view of the Scottish people that privatisation of water and sewerage is totally unacceptable to us and ought to be withdrawn?

Mr. Lang: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's last question many times. As to the question of the relationship between public and private sector expenditure, if the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to read our consultation paper, he would have found a range of options of that sort laid out on which advice was requested. It is a great pity that the party that the hon. Gentleman leads in Scotland has behaved so irresponsibly as to ignore the important underlying issues which affect the future of water and sewerage. It has failed to submit positive and sensible forward-looking suggestions and, instead, has indulged in nothing but mindless rhetoric.

Legal Aid

10. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from lawyers in Scotland with regard to fees charged for legal aid work; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on proposed reductions of legal aid in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates have been informed of my right hon. Friend's intention that, to assist in overall control of public expenditure, no increase should be made in legal aid fees in Scotland in 1993. Both organisations have made representations against that proposal.

My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the Government's proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for legal aid in Scotland from the Law Society of Scotland, consumer interests, solicitors firms, Members of Parliament and members of the public. Those representations are being carefully considered.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Minister aware that his reply confirms the deep disquiet about the fact that the Government are proposing that anyone above income support level will be excluded from access to the law? Is it correct that people on invalidity benefit, sickness benefit and unemployment benefit will be excluded and that the sliding contributory scale will be scrapped? If so, who but the rich will be able to afford justice?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: People on income support levels of income will continue to receive free legal aid and advice and assistance. Eligibility will continue to be based on an individual's disposable income. When the issue was discussed in Standing Committee in 1989, I mentioned that the total figure for legal aid at that time was £54 million. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), with characteristic directness, said:

"That is a hell of a lot of money."—[*Official Report, Second Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments*, 19 April 1989, c. 4.]

The sum has increased enormously since then.

In 1991-92, the total figure for legal aid was £86 million. This year, it is expected to be about £104 million, and in the planned expenditure we have an anticipated increases in legal aid by a further 40 per cent. over the next three years. I stress to the hon. Gentleman that the purpose of the changes is to maintain free access to justice for the most needy while asking those who can afford it to pay more.

Sir David Steel: Which of the Minister's figures apply to criminal legal aid and which to civil legal aid? Does he recognise that what the people in Scotland find most offensive about the proposed cuts is that they are being tacked on to the proposed cuts in England and Wales? The legal aid system in Scotland has proved most cost-effective because it is different and more efficient. Does the Minister accept the basic proposition that justice denied to ordinary people through cost is injustice and not justice at all?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman because these measures do not extend to criminal legal aid in Scotland. It may be within his recollection that it was the late Willie Ross who tightened up the rules relating to criminal legal aid and took action to curb the rise in legal aid unless cases were of exceptional length or complexity. The current measures do not extend to criminal legal aid in Scotland.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I do not know whether I must declare an interest, but I do so. May I remind my hon. Friend that criminal legal aid was provided for in the 1959 Act and introduced into England, but was not introduced into Scotland until 1964 for absolutely specious reasons. The tort of legal aid is that it deprives all but the poorest and the richest from going to justice at all. These proposals will increase the number of people who cannot afford to go to justice and who will have to pay towards it if they do. Furthermore, in my brief forays into the English courts as counsel I have found that the English legal aid provisions are vast compared with the Scottish equivalent. What does my hon. Friend intend to do about that difference?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have to tell my hon. and learned Friend that those measures relate to civil legal aid. In the main he is a criminal lawyer, although on occasion he has dealt with civil cases. I stress that legal aid is estimated to have increased by 50 per cent. this year and

the aim is to take action to control the growth in legal aid expenditure, while ensuring the continuation of reasonable access to it for the most needy. The numerous representations that we have received are being carefully considered.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that the finance required for the rise in civil legal aid assistance in no way compares with the rise in criminal legal aid assistance? Does he also acknowledge that the performance of the courts in recycling people due to inefficient and ineffective sentencing policies means that the same people are soaking up legal aid funds time and time again?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad that legislation reflecting my hon. Friend's question—giving prosecutors a right of appeal against sentences that are too lenient—has gone through Parliament as a result of widespread support. That will help to avoid any need for recycling, as my hon. Friend puts it.

Mr. McFall: Can the Minister honestly argue that it is consistent with the values of a civilised society that from 1 April no one earning more than £42·50 per week—the basic income support level—will be entitled to free legal advice and assistance? What does the Minister say to James Cowie—a registered blind person from Glasgow—who last year, through that scheme, was able to convince the courts to allow him access to his children in care? Will the Minister agree to meet James and myself to explain why James Cowie and up to a million other Scots will be denied invaluable assistance from 1 April? Does the Minister not agree that if justice means anything it means access to the courts?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am seeing the hon. Gentleman at an official meeting in a few minutes, so we can discuss arrangements then. On eligibility, I should make clear to him that we estimate that 45 to 55 per cent. of households would be eligible to civil legal aid, and that 20 to 30 per cent. would be free of contributions, which is a significant figure. A total allocation of about £104 million is to be spent on legal aid this year, which is also a substantial figure.

Devolution

11. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to introduce devolution of decision taking in Scotland to the lowest possible level.

Mr. Lang: I am glad to say that the policy of devolving decision making in Scotland to the lowest possible level, which the hon. Gentleman advocates, is at the heart of the Government's approach. For example, the creation of local enterprise companies, national health service trusts, school boards and our proposals in the citizens charter and for local government reform are ample evidence of that.

Mr. Home Robertson: None of those bodies is elected. Scots did not vote to be guinea pigs for rail privatisation, any more than they voted to be guinea pigs for the poll tax. Has the Secretary of State not noticed that what we have been voting for—consistently, and by very large majorities, for 20 years—is control over our own affairs in Scotland? Is it not sheer hypocrisy for Ministers to plead for subsidiarity from Europe while denying Scotland's local and national democratic rights? Finally, will the Secretary of State tell the Prime Minister that any stock-taking exercise that fails to take account of those matters can only be described as fraudulent?

Mr. Lang: I should have expected the hon. Gentleman to know that article 8b of the proposed new European Communities treaty refers specifically and exclusively to relations between the Community and individual member states and is not concerned with those states' internal affairs. For the past 20 years, and for a very long time before that, the people of this country have been voting for Members of this House and, thereby, electing a Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Salmond: If we are to believe the inspired press leaks about "taking stock", the Secretary of State will be styling himself as Scottish prime minister. Does he not believe that a real Prime Minister in a real Parliament should have a real mandate? The Secretary of State clearly has no such mandate. Does he think that the people of Scotland do not know the difference between a prime minister and a Westminster puppet on a string?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's speculation is entirely unfounded. I advise him to wait patiently as, in due course, the outcome of the stock-taking exercise will be made plain even to him.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to the people of Scotland it is a matter of grave concern indeed that, while the Labour party chunters on daily about a Scottish assembly sitting in Edinburgh, fewer than half the Scottish members of the parliamentary Labour party bothered to come up to Edinburgh for the meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee on Monday?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This says very little for the Labour party's commitment to Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: Following the Prime Minister's patronising and pathetic remarks in Scotland at the weekend, can the Secretary of State indicate when the so-called stock-taking will end? Will he acknowledge that there can be no real substitute for decision-making powers in Scotland, exercised by a Scottish parliament? We do not want further debating opportunities; we want real decision-making power. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the most important stock-taking issue about which we want to hear from him is Rosyth naval dockyard? We want to hear that Rosyth will get the nuclear refit, securing jobs in Scotland and, in particular, in Fife.

Mr. Lang: Conservative Members believe in devolution, but not devolution from one government to another government in Edinburgh. We believe in devolution from government to people. That is what imbues all our policies, and it is what the hon. Gentleman and his party ought to learn.

Army Manpower

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about Army manpower.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) set out our plans for Britain's Army for the 1990s in June and July 1991. Those reflected the United Kingdom's leadership of, and substantial contribution to, the new Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, as well as the need to provide for the direct defence of the United Kingdom, our responsibilities in our dependent territories and elsewhere and our continued support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland. He envisaged at that time that there would be some 116,000 regular personnel in the Army by the mid-1990s. That figure included some 12,000 personnel under training, giving a total trained strength of around 104,000.

Both he and I have repeatedly emphasised the importance we attach to ensuring that the armed forces are able to respond to the demands we place upon them. The requirement to allow sufficient leeway to deal with the unexpected was one of the major considerations underpinning the original work on "Options for Change". My predecessor and I have also made it clear that we shall keep the position under review and that, should we judge it necessary to look again at planned force levels and the balance between capabilities, we shall do so.

The judgments made in "Options for Change" remain valid. The threat to our national security is much less than it was. Since 1991, however, there have been a number of developments which have added significantly to the commitments that the Army is required to meet at the same time as it is in the process of reorganising. Additional battalions have been deployed to Northern Ireland, and our overall contribution to United Nations peacekeeping tasks—in Cyprus, Cambodia, the former republic of Yugoslavia and elsewhere—has almost trebled.

The effect of these additional commitments, combined with the disruption caused by the restructuring and drawdown, is placing increasing pressure on individual soldiers and their families. This is something about which many hon. Members have understandably expressed concern. As planning for the Rapid Reaction Corps and other elements of the force structure has been taken forward, a number of requirements for additional manpower have also been identified.

Against that background, I have been considering for a number of months, with my military advisers, the need to adjust the force levels set out by my right hon. Friend. I have concluded that there is a case for an adjustment in the planned strength of the Army. I am therefore announcing today measures which, together with initiatives already in train, will make available 5,000 additional men and women for the front line units of the field Army.

First, I am announcing that the planned strength of the Army in the mid-1990s should be increased by 3,000 to 119,000. In determining how to use that additional manpower, I have been influenced by two considerations. The first is that it is desirable to bring up to strength a number of units which would otherwise have to be reinforced in order to undertake their peacetime operational commitments; a significant proportion of the additional manpower will be used for that purpose.

The second consideration is that the Government attach importance to increasing the emergency tour interval towards the target of 24 months, to which we remain committed. That can best be achieved by revising the number of battalions that will be available in future. I have decided therefore to permit the retention of two further infantry battalions. There will therefore now be a total of 40 battalions—including two Gurkha—in 1998, compared with the 38 previously planned. That will have the effect of increasing the average interval between emergency tours from 15 to 17 months this year and providing an additional margin above 24 months once restructuring is complete, which would make it easier to accommodate any further commitments.

I come now to how the two additional battalions which I have consulted the Chief of the General Staff and my other colleagues on the Army Board of the Defence Council. After considering all the reductions currently under way or planned, it is our unanimous view that the amalgamations of the Cheshire Regiment and the Staffordshire Regiment and of the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers should not now proceed.

The funding for that additional manpower will be met from within the financial provision announced for defence in the November 1992 autumn statement. We are at present considering the consequences for the armed forces of the financial provision available. Today's announcement will make those decisions more difficult, but I am in no doubt that the need to increase Army manpower is the highest priority currently facing my Department.

This leads to the second area where extra manpower will be released. As well as the increase of 3,000 in the total size of the Army, the development of detailed plans for reorganisation, and the implementation of market testing and other initiatives aimed at improving efficiency should release approximately a further 2,000 personnel, mainly from the support area, over the next few years. Some of that manpower will be available for redeployment to field army units.

While it is important that the armed forces should be large enough to carry out the tasks required of them, manpower is a very expensive resource and I do not believe that it is sensible in terms of the overall defence programme and profile to view their size as permanently fixed. I will continue to keep the long-term strength of the Army under close review in the light of changing circumstances. Such circumstances will include any changes to current and foreseeable operational commitments, including the planned withdrawal from Hong Kong.

More generally, they will also include further progress with the Government's market testing and other initiatives, which should help us to reduce our requirement for service and civilian manpower across the programme. It is also important that senior commanders should have the flexibility to decide on the balance of manpower and other resources that they use to meet the objectives placed on them. Finally, following the publication last year of the open Government document on the future use of reserves, we have yet to complete our studies of how best to integrate both regular and volunteer reservists into the post-options force structure. That too will have implications for the long-term strength of the Regular Army.

In "Options for Change", we committed ourselves to an Army which is fully manned, properly supported, and well

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equipped. The decisions I have announced today reflect that commitment. I have arrived at those decisions only after several months of consideration with my professional military advisers. It represents a small but sensible adjustment to the planned size of the Army, which will ensure that it has the flexibility and resilience that it needs to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, as one would the words of any sinner who repenteth. I welcome his admission that the armed forces of this country are over-stretched, but I suggest that this form of crisis management is not really the way to run an army. If the Government have got their sums wrong about the infantry, how can we trust them to have got the figures right overall?

The Secretary of State's announcement, long and complicated as it was, raised many issues of national concern—among them the key question, what is the extra cost of today's announcement? The right hon. and learned Gentleman failed to give us the precise figure, although he did make it clear that the cost had to come from within the defence budget. He also admitted that the results of these cuts would be "difficult decisions ahead". How can he come to the House to announce such cuts and speak of difficult decisions ahead when he has not yet worked out the consequences of the cuts for the other arms of our services? These strike us as panic measures.

Are we to understand that the Navy's budget is to be cut? Does that mean that the vital helicopter landing ship will not be built, in spite of Government reassurances to the contrary only last week? Or is it the turn of the RAF? Will this mean that the mid-term refits of essential aircraft will be delayed?

Will the Minister give the House a categorical guarantee that, as a result of this statement, no one serving under fire in Bosnia or Northern Ireland will be served with his redundancy notice while serving in those theatres?

I have mentioned Northern Ireland. May I press the Secretary of State on that? Will the emergency tours of four months be extended as a result of this statement, or will it be possible to reduce them to the four months originally envisaged? We have a right to know that.

Finally, what is the position of the service personnel due to be made redundant on 25 February?

Given the decision to replace the Army's Bedford trucks with DAF models, has today's announcement that DAF Trucks is to be placed in the hands of administrators had any effect on the Army's ability to do its job and move its personnel about?

Is not the Secretary of State's statement merely an acknowledgement of the Government's failure to have a national strategy for defence? Will he explain why, in the event of momentous strategic change—the end of the cold war—the Government have refused to implement a full-scale defence review? Will he now follow the advice of Field Marshal Lord Bramall and of the Select Committee on Defence, who have joined the Labour party in calling for such a review?

Does not today's statement merely confirm that "Options for Change" was merely a response to Treasury diktats, not a policy to defend Britain and the free world?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's reference to repenting sinners comes well from a former member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament who now projects himself as the champion of the armed forces. Such remarks also come ill from representatives of a party which, at its last conference, once again called for a 25 per cent. reduction in the defence budget but which now seeks to chastise the Government.

Notwithstanding his pedigree, the hon. Gentleman asked a number of perfectly reasonable questions to which I shall now be happy to respond. He asked about the cost of today's announcement. It will be about £80 million in a full year. That £80 million is a significant sum, but it should be put into perspective. It represents about one third of 1 per cent. of the defence budget. At the moment, we are involved, as we are every year at this stage, in reconciling the resources that have been provided as a result of the public expenditure round with the continuing programme of the Ministry of Defence. That programme has to be assessed annually. Today's announcement has been included in that review and, in due course, we shall reach conclusions about any adjustments in the programme that will prove necessary.

I am aware of various press reports about individual procurement items and whether they affect one service or another. No decisions have been reached, nor do I anticipate any for some time on any of these matters. As I said in my statement, of course there will be difficult decisions. They would have been necessary irrespective of the statement, and that continues to be the case.

The hon. Gentleman asked about redundancies, and he must also put that in the proper perspective. As a result of "Options for Change", the overall size of the Army is coming down substantially from 156,000. That means an overall reduction before today's announcement of some 40,000. Today's announcement could have some implications, but clearly they will not be profound, because of the factors to which I have referred. It is of course welcome that most of the redundancies that are likely to arise will be voluntary, and that the number of compulsory redundancies will be relatively small.

The hon. Gentleman asked about a defence review. I have said on numerous occasions that "Option for Change" was itself a comprehensive assessment of the needs facing our armed forces. The assumptions of "Options for Change" remain valid because of the way in which the international situation has developed. The adjustments that I have announced will make a useful contribution to relieving some of the pressures on our armed forces. They will be warmly welcomed, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming them.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): My right hon. and learned Friend will be well aware that the Select Committee on Defence has been conducting a review of "Options for Change" and that our report is due to be published on Tuesday. He will also be well aware that our conclusions were comprehensively leaked to "News at Ten" last week and will therefore know that my Committee wished for substantially more than my right hon. and learned Friend has offered. None the less, I wholeheartedly welcome his statement and thank him for showing the flexibility of being prepared to move towards the level of manpower that our armed forces need. There is no doubt that his announcement will help in the critical stage that has been reached in the emergency tour plot and

will also help to flesh out the inadequate level of manpower in our existing battalions. The 580 strength that we have had until now was inadequate and adding to it will inestimably help the strength of our armed forces.

I have two questions for my right hon. and learned Friend. First, he was good enough to tell the House that he will remain flexible about further changes should the need arise. It is probably the feeling of the House that in future we may need to increase the level further if the requirements imposed upon us by the United Nations and the peacekeeping and intervention roles that we now play increase. Will he confirm that that matter will be kept under constant review?

Secondly, how will my right hon. and learned Friend assist the reprieved regiments to repair the damage that has already been done to their recruiting ability? What can be done to ensure that they can now recruit back up to strength as soon as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Notwithstanding today's announcement, I look forward to the publication of the Select Committee's report so that we can study not only its general conclusions, but its detailed analysis of any specific points that it wishes to draw to our attention. I am sure that it will contain much that is worthy of serious consideration. I assure my hon. Friend that, as I said, we must remain flexible.

The whole point about "Options for Change" is that it did not seek to implement its recommendations overnight. Quite deliberately and quite properly, there was to be a gradual implementation over several years, and that has given us the opportunity to monitor not only the implications for the armed forces, but the changing international scene that has led to my announcement.

Of course we all wish to take into account my hon. Friend's points about recruitment in the regions affected by today's announcement. We seek to ensure that it continues to be of a very high order, as it has traditionally been.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is entitled to the good will of the House following today's announcement. He will appreciate that the overstretch to which the Army has been subject has been paid for by serving soldiers themselves; today's announcement will come as some consolation to them.

The financial consequences for the armed forces as a whole, to which the Secretary of State referred in his statement, are rumoured to include the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Is it not now clear that we require a full-scale defence review in which we ascertain what our obligations are, or are likely to be, and then determine what military and financial resources are necessary to meet those obligations properly?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his initial comments. As for the wider issues, of course our armed forces will continue to have difficult problems to resolve as between resources and commitments—that is true around the world—but I believe that the fundamental assumption of "Options for Change" remains unchallenged. It is no coincidence that, around the world, particularly in the western world, major reductions have been and continue to be implemented.

The United Kingdom still spends perhaps a higher proportion of its gross domestic product on defence commitments than most countries. I make no apology for that, and a number of reasons could be cited. However, at a time when France, the United States, Germany and other countries—quite apart from the countries of the old Warsaw pact—are making major reductions in their defence budgets, it is right and proper for us to do the same, thereby releasing resources for other requirements. It is important to get the balance right, and I believe that the adjustment in manpower that I have announced will help us to do so.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will be aware of the interest in the statement, which means that I cannot possibly call all the hon. Members who are rising. I appeal to hon. Members to ask the Secretary of State a single direct question, with no accompanying statement or preamble, so that he can reply as speedily as possible—which, with respect, I hope that he will do. There is a great deal of interest in the statement, and I want to call as many hon. Members as possible.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for putting his statement in context, and for confirming the undertaking that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and I always gave at the time of the announcement of "Options for Change"—that we would keep the matter under review and, should circumstances require it, ensure that our forces were adjusted to meet current needs.

I consider the changes announced by my right hon. and learned Friend to be sensible, in the light of the new circumstances. I also recognise that the real extra pressure has resulted not from peacekeeping, but from the additional commitment to Northern Ireland. May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to continue his discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ensure that the resources applied to essential security work utilise our Army, the other armed forces, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Irish Regiment in the most sensible and cost-effective way?

Mr. Rifkind: I pay tribute to the great care that my right hon. Friend devoted to such matters when he was Secretary of State for Defence. He is right: we have a huge commitment in Northern Ireland. It is in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland that we use our highly qualified, expensive military manpower in the best way possible to counter the terrorist threat, and to ensure that they work effectively in support of the civil power.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I support what the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King)—a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—said about the priority to be attached to the defeat of terrorism. Will the Secretary of State for Defence give an assurance that Her Majesty's forces will be used primarily for the defence of Her Majesty's subjects and the protection of British interests, and not for the recolonisation of territories from which Britain was forced to withdraw prematurely by critics at home and abroad who are now standing on their heads?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the first obligation of Her Majesty's armed forces is the protection of United Kingdom territory and United

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Kingdom citizens. Only when we are satisfied that we have discharged that obligation fully can we consider other commitments in other parts of the world.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I also welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement. He talked about the difficulties in making certain decisions. Will he reassure the House that he attaches the utmost importance to maintaining the flexibility of our rapid reaction forces stationed in Europe—a flexibility which is so important to his strategy—by ensuring that the rapid reaction forces are kept up to the mark by having the most up-to-date equipment to discharge their responsibilities?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend. The rapid reaction force is perhaps the single most important component of the new NATO force structure. It has a United Kingdom commander and, of course, it is important that it has the equipment to fulfil its responsibilities.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): Your warning, Madam Speaker, and my elation at the saving of the Staffordshire and Cheshire Regiments inhibits me from gloating or saying, "I told you so," but I very much welcome the belated decision and thank the Secretary of State and his predecessor for being here to make it. However, does it not reflect badly on how decisions are made? First, there was the stupidity of making the decision in the first place, but the strength of our system is that stupidity can at least be rectified by the House, by a Select Committee and by public opinion. Will the Secretary of State try very hard to ensure that there is a little more far-sightedness in future, because the rationale that he gave for changing the decision was obvious to everyone 18 months ago, even before the decision was made?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair and uncharitable. If he thinks back two years, in 40 years the United Nations had agreed a further 14 overseas commitments, but in the past two years it has agreed a further 14. I do not remember the hon. Gentleman predicting that that would happen.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Having just had a lunch engagement, quite by chance, with Major General Peter Martin and a senior representative of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association, may I tell my right hon. and learned Friend that his announcement will be warmly welcomed by the services, not least the Staffordshire and Cheshire Regiments? Will he accept that his announcement will go a long way to putting right the overstretch which has been one of the major problems facing the Army, not only the serving personnel but their families, and which sometimes leads to great distress, separation and divorce? He has given me and the House great reassurance that he listens to informed and constructive advice from colleagues and others on important matters.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is important to consider not only the political and geo-strategic issues but the human implications for individual soldiers who carry out considerable responsibilities on our behalf and sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. That is an obligation that we recognise.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome the announcement, or tactical retreat, as far as it goes, especially as it will secure the future of the first regiment of foot of the British Army, the Royal Scots. However, as it has taken 51 weeks for the Ministry of Defence to grasp that point set out in the latest Select Committee's report from February last year, would it be fair to say that the Secretary of State could not give a damn about military overstretch in the army but that what concerned him was the prospect of political overstretch when the Select Committee publishes its next report on Tuesday?

Mr. Rifkind: That is a very silly remark. The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that I have said several times in the House that, if I ever became satisfied that there was unreasonable pressure on our service men and women, I would not hesitate to respond. That is what I have done.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his encouraging and realistic statement, but please will he reconsider the proposals to amalgamate the Glorious Gloucesters, who are shortly to celebrate their tercentenary of wonderful service from the Nile to Korea, and especially during the two world wars? If my right hon. and learned Friend is really to be a flexible friend, will he please save the Gloucesters?

Mr. Rifkind: I pay tribute to the remarkable traditions and achievements of the Gloucesters, and my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to them. It is always difficult and painful when the Army Board has to make such judgments. It has taken into account all the proper considerations and reached a unanimous conclusion. However, I appreciate that, inevitably, it cannot please everyone.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I congratulate the Secretary of State on at last agreeing with the view which I have expressed since I became a Member of the House and which was expressed by the Labour party throughout the election campaign and before it. Serving soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment and their families will welcome today's statement, particularly in relation to soldiers serving in Bosnia.

I also welcome the fact that the Secretary of State recognises that issues of family stress are involved in the current structure of the armed forces. Will he therefore continue to ensure that family stress issues are properly addressed? Will he help that process by answering my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and confirm that there will be no redundancies among the Cheshires serving in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no intention of making an announcement today about that matter. It is a very difficult, sensitive and important issue. I intend to be fair to the armed forces as a whole and not to comment on the implications for any one regiment. While I welcome the congratulations of the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) in respect of the statement, I am bound to add that, given the apparent unanimity of Labour Members in favour of defence expenditure, it is a pity that they cannot persuade their party conference to agree with them.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there will be great rejoicing in

Staffordshire at the reprieve of the Staffordshire Regiment? Will he bear in mind that the Staffordshire Regiment fought a tremendous battle in the Gulf and that the Cheshires are fighting such a battle in Bosnia? Those of us in Staffordshire and Cheshire congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his flexibility, and we trust that the resilience that we have shown in the light of adverse circumstances in battling for the Staffordshires and Cheshires will be borne in mind on the other side of the fence.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The statement is welcome as far as it goes, but does the Secretary of State understand that it is very difficult for those of us representing northern seats, in Scotland, to understand why the amalgamation of the Gordons and the Queen's Own Highlanders is to go ahead, particularly when a platoon of the Gordons is being sent to Bosnia? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain very simply what criteria were applied when deciding which amalgamations would proceed and which would not?

Mr. Rifkind: I obviously pay the same tribute to the Gordons and to the Queen's Own Highlanders that I paid to other regiments a few moments ago. The criteria applied by the Army Board were the same criteria that were applied two years ago. The hon. Lady will recall that my predecessor declined—I believe correctly—to comment on the details of the criteria. These are very difficult matters, and I believe that it is appropriate to say simply that the Army Board took into account all the relevant criteria and the considerations that were before the board two years ago and came to what would inevitably be a difficult judgment.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I heartily congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on a statement which was full of thoroughly sound common sense. It goes some way to reassuring those of us who have been long-time critics of the mathematics of "Options for Change".

Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that it makes sense in the next phase of the review of the levels of forces to look to 1997 when we are to withdraw from Hong Kong? Will he also keep the special problems of the Household Division under further and continuing review?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend. Of course it is important to remain flexible over the next few years. As we have seen over the past few years, unforeseen circumstances inevitably arise—some of which will lead to a reduction in our need for manpower while others may lead to an increase. I appreciate that the Household Division has particular responsibilities because of its ceremonial duties. Clearly, that must be taken into account when determining its manpower requirements.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman understand that his decision in respect of the Cheshires will be greatly welcomed in my constituency, where recruitment is quite strong? The decision taken by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor in respect of the Royal Welch Fusiliers was very well received. The Secretary of State might agree that the Royal Welch Fusiliers is one of the finest regiments in Britain.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement is most warmly welcomed, especially his announced reprieve for the Cheshire Regiment, which is very much in people's minds at the moment, being in the front line in Bosnia? His statement will be greatly welcomed by my constituents in Greater Manchester and Cheshire. Furthermore, does he accept that, as he has said, it is but a modest step in the right direction? Significant overstretch will remain in the Army. Will he make a further step should, in his judgment, the situation require it?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Our armed forces will always be under pressure; it is the nature of armed forces and the nature of the work that they do. A judgment constantly has to be made as to what is the unacceptable level of pressure. I believe that the degree to which international events have required the United Kingdom to make a useful and important contribution justify the consideration that we have given to these matters and the decision that we announced today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must move on. *[Interruption.]* Order. There will be other opportunities.

Points of Order

4 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I draw your attention to page 119 of "Erskine May", which states that deliberately misleading the House may constitute contempt. At column 142 of yesterday's *Hansard*, the President of the Board of Trade claimed that there was not "one shred of evidence" that the minority of the banking consortium which had asked for delay in the rescue of DAF were British banks. It has today been confirmed, particularly by the *Financial Times*, that the minority were indeed three British banks—NatWest, Barclays and Lloyds.

I would not wish to believe that the President set out deliberately to mislead the House, and I am willing to accept that he was badly informed. However, the House has been misled about the contribution of British banks to the collapse of DAF. I therefore ask you, Madam Speaker, to confirm that there is precedent for a Minister of the Crown who discovers that he, perhaps in good faith, has misled the House to make a statement to correct the record.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time.

As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and the House will appreciate, that is not a point of order for the Chair. The hon. Gentleman has put a direct question to me. The answer is that, if a Minister wishes to make a further statement to the House, it is up to that Minister to seek an opportunity so to do.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order on that matter; I have dealt with it.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to yesterday's *Hansard* and its account of the debate on rail privatisation? No fewer than three Opposition Members —the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson)—criticised me by name because of a paper that I published on deregulation. They even alleged that I was an intellectual—and if that is not an unparliamentary term, it should be.

None of those three Opposition Members chose to inform me in advance that he intended to criticise me by name and therefore did not give me an opportunity to intervene to correct their caricatures of my argument. Will you explain, Madam Speaker, why the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, on that one occasion, lacked the courtesy and delicacy for which he is so well known?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps this is an opportunity for me to let the House know that, whenever an hon. Member intends to refer to another hon. Member in terms which call for a response, that hon. Member should of course be informed. But that does not mean that every passing reference or straightforward disagreement, of which there are quite a number in the House, on matters of policy call for notification. It has been left to the good sense of the House to maintain the conventional decencies which are the necessary foundation of our sometimes rather robust proceedings.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Let me remind you of the debate on sending the task force to the Falklands. A dissenting voice was not heard—it was not called by Mr. Speaker, even though there was dissent in the House, as has subsequently become known. During the statement by the Secretary of state for Defence today, you, Madam Speaker, did not call one dissenting voice. I rose as a dissenting voice, and some of my colleagues did as well. Surely the role of the Speaker is to ensure that all shades of opinion are heard in the House. I ask you, to reflect on that point.

Madam Speaker: Of course I will. I am not to know where the dissenting voices will come from, although I sometimes guess where they might come from. Some hon. Members approach me when they know a statement is to be made, and that is always appreciated. I cannot always accommodate them, and I do not give commitments, but I try my best, and in future I shall certainly remember what the hon. Gentleman has said to me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Earlier you heard from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about the President of the Board of Trade. I shall not go over that again, because you have already dealt with it, but would it not be advisable, when Ministers come to make statements to the House, if the Chair could be absolutely sure that they would get the thing right? The President of the Board of Trade got it wrong over the pits, he was not even informed about the lowering of interest rates, and he got caught out on the wireless. Yesterday he came here again without being informed. It is wasting your time, Madam Speaker, and that of the House. Just check with him next time he opens his gills.

Madam Speaker: I spend a lot of my time listening to the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): May I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the guidance that you have just given the House in answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts)—and let me assure you that there are no circumstances in which I would ever refer to him as an intellectual. It honestly did not occur to me that, in a debate such as yesterday's on the future of railway services, an hon. Member who felt that his constituents should be denied the safety facilities that could be introduced would not be here to defend that argument.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am not having yesterday's debate prolonged.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I point out that the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) was in the Chamber last night? Will you confirm that it is not the responsibility of hon. Members to check on whether another hon. Member has left before the closing speeches? Will you further confirm——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I have got the point. All hon. Members who are interested in a debate and have taken part in it should come back to hear the closing speeches. It is a matter of courtesy.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Earlier, during Scottish questions, you reprimanded an hon. Gentleman for reading a newspaper. I am afraid that that was me, and I want to apologise for that. The reason was that I had spotted a headline which said, "Council in disgrace", and I wanted to know which council it was——

Madam Speaker: Order. I saw enough of the hon. Gentleman during Question Time. I think that he hoped that the television cameras were on him; I can assure him that they were not.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you be prepared to consider adjourning the House so that the Leader of the House might propose a period in which we could debate the defence statement we have just heard so that the position of the Labour party could be put, as that was not mentioned in questions on the statement which announced a further 25 per cent. cut in the military budget?

Madam Speaker: Of course I would not consider adjourning the House, but I remind hon. Members, if they need reminding, that there are business questions on Thursday, when questions can be put to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Secretary of State has, I am sure inadvertently, misled the House, or at least partially misled the House, in the statement that he has just made and I wonder whether you can advise me on how the matter can best be rectified. He said that he intends to spend an extra £80 million from a fixed budget, but he has not told the House from where that money is to come. You will be aware that there is widespread concern, not least on Tyneside where the future of the shipbuilding programme is of vital importance——

Madam Speaker: Order. That was a very good try on the part of the hon. Gentleman, who I know was standing during the statement seeking to be called. He must not try to put that one over on me.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Yesterday, in answer to question 7, the Secretary of State for Education made an inaccurate series of references to me and I thought that in subsequent supplementaries he used the words, "I apologise". However, nowhere in my scrutiny of *Hansard* can I see those words. I wonder whether it is your recollection that he used those words. May I also say, to help progress, that I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman's personal attack on me was made in good faith.

Madam Speaker: I know that the Minister concerned did apologise to the hon. Gentleman, and it has been brought to the attention of the Editor. Perhaps we might now make some progress with the day's business.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 01(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

FISH POLLUTION

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Oil and Chemical Pollution of Fish) (No. 2) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 143) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 98(5) (Matter relating exclusively to Wales),

UNEMPLOYMENT (WALES)

That the Matter of unemployment in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 98(5) (Matter relating exclusively to Wales),

STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT (WALES)

That the Matter of the structure of government in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Widowed Father's Allowance

4.15 pm

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to apply the National Insurance Fund to provide an allowance for widowed fathers with dependent children equal to that provided for widowed mothers with dependent children.

This is a Bill about equality, fairness and the importance of family life. I am sure, therefore, that it will commend itself to all hon. Members on both sides of the House.

When the national insurance system was introduced in 1948, following the Beveridge report of 1942, the majority of married women stayed in their homes. Indeed, the Beveridge report was drawn up on the explicit assumption that wives were financially dependent upon their husbands and should receive benefits based on their husbands' contribution records.

Many women, of course, still choose to stay in their home when their children are young, and I am sure that most hon. Members believe that they have a right to do so. If that is the case, if the husband dies and the principal source of income is lost, it is right that the widow should receive a replacement income based on her husband's contribution to the national insurance fund. Widows with children receive such an allowance—the widowed mother's allowance—£54·15 a week, with additions for each dependent child, based on the husband's contribution.

Fifty years on from the publication of the Beveridge report, we need to look again at whether the assumptions in that report are still appropriate and whether the benefits on which those assumptions are based give an equitable system. Circumstances have changed radically. In those days, fathers were not expected to look after their children and, if the mother died, would obtain paid help or help from family or friends, or the children might be put in care.

Nowadays, many fathers—indeed, I hope many fathers in the House—are perfectly capable of looking after their own children, and play a full role in bringing them up. In some cases, parents have chosen to reverse their roles, with the woman being the main breadwinner and the man staying at home to look after the children. If a wife dies, the man may well wish to stay at home to ensure that one parent, at least, can have a full-time role in bringing up the children.

In these circumstances, however, there is currently no help from the state through the national insurance fund. Despite the fact that it is the man's contribution to national insurance that qualifies his widow to receive widowed mother's allowance, that contribution by him does not secure benefit which would enable him to stay at home. Nor can he receive other contributory benefits, for he is disqualified for unemployment benefit because, by definition, he is not available for work. He may, of course, be eligible for income support if his savings fall below a certain level, but that does not compensate him for not receiving a contributory benefit to which he should be entitled through his contribution record.

I therefore believe that a widowed father's benefit should be introduced to enable widowers to stay at home to look after their young children, if that is what they choose to do.

In recent years there has been discussion of the need for the equalisation of survivor's benefit. In 1989, the House of Lords European Communities Select Committee recommended that men and women should be provided with survivor's benefit on the same terms, but that a substantial period should be allowed to introduce this. The Committee feared that compulsory equality immediately might deprive widows of benefits they still need because of their different position in society.

I do not believe that there should be total equality of survivor's benefit. A widow can receive a widow's pension if she is aged 45 or more when her husband dies. This is in recognition of the difficulty that she may find in re-establishing herself in the labour market if throughout her married life she has not worked outside the home. Such a benefit would not be necessary for a man, who would be more likely to have been in full-time work previously, and would be able to return to work when his children no longer needed his full-time care.

Nor does it seem necessary to have the same conditions for the widowed father's allowance as currently apply to the widowed mother's allowance. A widowed mother's allowance continues to be paid based on her late husband's contributions, regardless of her own earnings if she returns to work. It is taxable, but it is not withdrawn while she has dependent children. Since the main feature of our social security system is that it is a social insurance against the interruption and destruction of earning power, it is perhaps odd that a widow can both earn and receive this benefit. It is because it is based on her husband's contributions, and perhaps we should look again at the circumstances there.

Certainly any widowed father's allowance should be designated to compensate for loss of earnings while the father is not employed outside the home, and should cease when he returns to full-time work. That would substantially reduce the cost of such an allowance, recently estimated at some £90 million a year. If it was given only to those fathers who chose to stay at home on the death of their wives to look after their children, as is the case with one of my constituents, and ceased when they returned to full-time work, the cost would be relatively small.

Its value to the family, however, would be immense. It would ensure that the best care was available for children who had already suffered a tragic loss and who would benefit greatly from the full-time care of their fathers. The number who choose to do this may not be large, but, in all fairness, they should receive a benefit equal to that of widows in similar circumstances.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Judith Chaplin, Mrs. Angela Browning, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mrs. Cheryl Gillan, Mrs. Angela Knight, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Lady Olga Maitland, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and Mrs. Marion Roe.

Widowed Father's Allowance

Mrs. Judith Chaplin accordingly presented a Bill to apply the National Insurance Fund to provide an allowance for widowed fathers with dependent children equal to that provided for widowed mothers with dependent children: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February, and to be printed. [Bill 126.]

Local Government Finance (England)

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move,

That the Local Government Finance Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 422), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

Madam Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the Special Grant Report (No. 5) (House of Commons Paper No. 423), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 424), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) (Amendment) Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 443), which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.

Mr. Howard: The four reports, taken together, embody the local government finance settlement for the coming year. They represent the culmination of a long process which began a full 12 months ago. During that time, the Government have held extensive discussions with the local authorities and their associations about the cost of local government services. We have examined at length the methodology and formulae for standard spending assessments. We have also developed a method for calculating each authority's tax base for the new council tax.

Last November, in the light of those discussions, I announced my proposals for the coming year. I made proposals for the total provision for spending and grant, and the methodology for SSAs. I also made proposals for the relevant notional amounts which will be used as the basis for determining whether the increases in authorities' budgets should be capped.

Since then, we have gone through a further formal consultation process with local authorities. We have received 400 letters about the settlement and a further 250 about notional amounts. We have also held 90 meetings with local authorities and hon. Members. We have carefully considered everything that we have heard, and my decisions—in the light of all of this—are set out in these reports. My aim has been to satisfy myself that the settlement which I have proposed is appropriate and realistic, and that the legitimate concerns of local government are taken into account.

We are planning for local government to spend a total of £41·2 billion next year. That is £1·2 billion more—an increase of 3·1 per cent.—over the provision that we made for the current year, after adjusting for changes in local authorities' functions. We are providing £33·5 billion—an increase of £1·2 billion, which is 3·7 per cent. on the same comparative basis—in Government support. Against a background of inflation at 2·6 per cent. and falling, and with a public sector pay policy limiting increases to a range between zero and 1·5 per cent., that is an eminently realistic settlement.

I suspect that we shall hear ritual protests from Opposition Members that the settlement is inadequate. When they make those protests, I hope that they will tell us how they would finance the additional amounts which they doubtless say they would make available. Perhaps they would increase income tax. Perhaps it will be another penny on the standard rate to deliver an extra £1·5 billion of spending. Perhaps they would have higher council taxes. Every extra £1 billion of spending would mean another £60 on the band D council tax. I invite the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) to give us his prescription. Which of the two prescriptions does he recommend?

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that, within the funding available, the difference between the authorities should be reduced? Why does my authority have 70 per cent. less than Manchester, for example, to provide the same level of service? Surely, within the total amount of funding available, there can be a more equitable distribution.

Mr. Howard: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is to be found in the reports which I have referred to and which are available in the Library and the Vote Office. They set out in some detail the methodology which leads to the results which form the basis of the report. If the hon. Gentleman restrains himself for a moment, he will hear even more about how we propose to deal with those matters not only in 1993 but in future.

I give the hon. Gentleman credit at least for saying that he was protesting not about the overall level of the settlement but about the distribution. I hope that no one will participate in any protest against the adequacy of the settlement as a whole without telling us in detail how they would raise the extra money they want.

I have one prescription to offer. All local authorities need to ensure that they make the best possible use of their money. Over the past week or two, we have become all too well aware of just how badly several local authorities are short changing the people whom they were elected to serve. Some of the stories of incompetence and mismanagement are truly dreadful, and time and time again Labour councils are seen to be responsible.

Eighteen of the top 20 community charges this year were set by Labour councils. Seventeen of the 20 councils with the worst community charge collection records are Labour councils. That is little wonder when they have councillors such as the three in Lambeth who owe £3,000 themselves, despite collecting £35,000 in allowances for the year in question.

Examples are legion. For example, Sheffield proposes to spend £54,000 on offices for hon. Members opposite, when it has just lost more than £10 million on the world student games.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe) *rose*——

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman rises to the bait.

Mr. Betts: Has the Secretary of State read in the *Local Government Chronicle* of the survey carried out on behalf of the Local Government Management Board, which showed that chief executives of all local authorities throughout the country have named Sheffield as one of the 16 best-managed local authorities in the country? Sheffield has shown that it is an efficient local authority. Other authorities such as Birmingham, Bradford and Islington are included, but not Wandsworth or Westminster. Perhaps the Secretary of State will take account of those findings in what he says about Sheffield in the future.

Mr. Howard: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who led Sheffield council when it lost the £10 million on the world student games, has the temerity to rise on such matters. I suppose that the best way to describe the study to which he referred is to say that it is little more than a "straw survey". It is totally unrepresentative.

Mr. Illsley: I apologise for rising on a point of order so early in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the Secretary of State could have misled the House by saying that Sheffield made available finances for "hon. Members opposite". If he checks, I think that he will find that Sheffield makes available finance for hon. Members from both sides of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Whether or not that is correct, it is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Howard: Not only was it not a point of order—it was not accurate. We have canvassed that matter at length, and the hon. Gentleman is a wee bit behind the game.

I was about to mention Monklands, which is represented in this House by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, who has maintained a studious silence over the serious allegations about Monklands council contained in the *Sunday Times* recently.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State is making a statement about the rate support grant settlement for England. He should stick to that and give Opposition Members an opportunity to question him about it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair normally allows a certain latitude, but that has been considerably extended. Perhaps the Secretary of State would return to the main subject of debate.

Mr. Howard: Of course—that is exactly what I shall do. It is understandable that Opposition Members should be so touchy about such matters; we quite understand.

I do not intend to predict levels of council tax, but I note in passing that others have not been so coy. The *Local Government Chronicle* conducted an independent survey of local authorities at the start of the year, which predicted an average tax payable of £505—far less than some of the scare stories bandied about by Opposition Members. What is more interesting, it concluded:

"Labour councils cost you more."

It found that an average Labour band D council tax was nearly 20 per cent. higher than the comparative figure for Conservative councils.

Surely it is significant that, on that evidence, Labour-controlled councils will charge on average nearly £100 more council tax than Conservative-controlled councils, and that Liberal Democrat-controlled authorities will charge nearly £50 more. Time and time again, we find that Labour councils cost more and give little but waste and inefficiency in return.

Mr. Betts *rose*——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: As the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) has already made one intervention, I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Riddick: Is it not the case that one reason why council tax bills will be higher in Labour authorities this year is that last year many Labour authorities grossly overspent, in the hope and expectation that an incoming Labour Government would bail them out? Is it not the case that the chickens of Labour's incompetence and profligacy are coming home to roost?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right. That was the attitude taken by many councils controlled by the Labour party. The sadness is that those people whom they were elected to serve are having to pay the cost of their profligacy because of those expectations.

The settlement is designed to ensure that the burden on local tax payers can be held down to fair and reasonable levels. Overall there should be no need for councils to raise any more in real terms in the coming year from their local tax payers than they have budgeted to raise this year, but clearly it will help if one lives in a Conservative-controlled authority.

Of course, the introduction of the council tax will mean some differences in the burden on individual households. I understand the concern which many hon. Members have expressed on that score. We have therefore provided for a scheme of transitional relief to give protection to any household which would otherwise face an excessive increase in its local tax bill. I estimate that the scheme will cost about £340 million in the coming year.

Our grant scheme is designed to ensure that different authorities, however different their circumstances, are able to deliver the same standard of service for broadly the same level of council tax. The function of standard spending assessments is to measure the differences between authorities, so that those differences can be properly reflected in the grant that they receive.

With that system, it is inevitable that many authorities will feel that their particular circumstances are not being properly reflected. In other words, they want a larger share of the cake, and they are not short of good arguments why they deserve more. But there are more than 400 local authorities in England—excluding parishes—from Cornwall to Northumberland, taking in London, the metropolitan boroughs, the districts, the joint police and fire authorities, each with their own individual characteristics and their own, often very divergent, views. When I came to make my proposals for standard spending assessments, last November, I knew in advance that I could not satisfy everyone.

But the world does not stand still. In the coming year, there will be changes in authorities' functions and a change in the method of local taxation. New sources of data, such as the 1991 census, have become available, and other sources of data have also changed. My proposals for the coming year will ensure that all these changes are properly reflected in standing spending assessments.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I am very glad to hear that my right hon. and learned Friend will take a flexible view in the forthcoming year. While I support entirely his tight control of local government expenditure, I have to say that the area cost adjustment factor is very unfair. This militates very much against certain counties, to the benefit of others. It is quite ridiculous that Cambridgeshire does not benefit, whereas Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire do. This creates great ill feeling. I do not believe that it can be

rectified by the Association of County Councils, as all councils have vested interests; the Government themselves will have to do something. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will look at this grievance in the forthcoming year.

Mr. Howard: I understand very well the concern that my hon. Friend expresses. Indeed, it has been expressed to me very often by several of my hon. Friends. I understand the strength of feeling on this issue, and I can give my hon. Friend the undertaking for which he has asked. We shall certainly look very carefully indeed at this matter.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): It appears that, over the past three years, the amount of grant allocated to the area cost adjustment has increased from £837 million to £1,314 million, despite the fact that the differential in cost increases—for instance, between Greater London, where the area cost adjustment has meant the standard spending assessment's having gone up most, and the west midlands, where the increase has been far smaller—has lessened continuously. The spending authority in Hereford and Worcester is very frugal. Indeed, its spending used to be under the standard spending assessment. It is wrong that its assessment should increase by only 2·5 per cent., whereas the figure for East Sussex is 7 per cent., and the one for Hampshire 5 per cent.

Mr. Howard: The point that my hon. Friend has made reinforces one that was made a few moments ago. I shall certainly look at those factors, amongst others, when I come to consider the way in which the standard spending assessments for next year are to be constructed.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I do not want to labour this point, but I have to say that there are other data of particular local significance, which my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and I, as well as local authority representatives, have sought to bring to the Secretary of State's attention. I refer to the data concerning the inflow of refugee children to Heathrow airport, which is in our borough. It has been costing the borough about £1 million a year to look after these children, and the cost will probably be greater in the future. What help can my right hon. and learned Friend give us towards carrying this burden?

Mr. Howard: If my hon. Friend restrains himself for a few minutes, he will find that I have some comfort for him.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has just come into the House, so he will have to wait a while.

Many councils have come to me and my colleagues with arguments for further changes. I have considered everything they have said—often, I am bound to say, in direct opposition to one another—but, on balance, I have not been convinced that I should make any further changes for the coming year. Accordingly, the SSA methodology as set out in the local government finance report is unchanged from the proposals I made for consultation.

However, as a result of more recent data becoming available, there have been some changes since the start of consultation on the SSAs for individual authorities. I have placed copies of a set of tables, listing the SSAs for all authorities, in the Library and the Vote Office, alongside the settlement reports, and my Department has written to councils individually with full details of all the calculations in each case.

I know—it has been made clear by some of today's interventions—that many hon. Members still regard the standard spending assessments with the deepest suspicion. Of course the formula is complicated—local government is complicated. It performs a wide range of functions against widely differing backgrounds and circumstances. We have to have a system which reflects those differences in the distribution of grant. I hope that all hon. Members will at least agree that some sort of formula-based distribution is inevitable. However, I know that many hon. Members feel keenly on behalf of their local authorities. I know that they will be keenly disappointed that I have decided not to make the changes which they have pressed me to make.

I am acutely aware of their concerns. Over the next year, my Department will be working on the findings of the 1991 census and how best to incorporate them into the SSA formula. I intend to take that opportunity to look again at some of the more fundamental issues that have been raised with us this year, including the area cost adjustment, which was mentioned by some of my hon. Friends. Hon. Members and local authorities who have not been able to persuade me to their point of view this year will, I am sure, want to take advantage of the opportunity which this will give them to exercise their powers of persuasion again next year.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): Does not the Secretary of State realise that, despite what he has said, the fact that he plans to revisit the formulas next year fills local authorities up and down the land with trepidation? The Government introduced the area cost adjustment in order to doctor the figures. What scheme will the Secretary of State come up with next to doctor the figures again? Does he realise that he has brought the entire system and Government into total disrepute?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. If he does not want me to revisit those matters next year, it can only be because he is entirely satisfied with the money that Coventry has received this year. If he is prepared to say how thankful he is for the amount of money that we have been able to make available to Coventry this year, I shall be happy to give way to him again. If he is complaining about the amount of money that Coventry has received this year, I should have thought that he would be delighted that I intend to revisit those matters next year.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, in respect of the SSA and the relative poverty and deprivation of local authority districts, the Government still intend to use the all-ages social index? That index shows Cheltenham as poorer than Rotherham, Tunbridge Wells as poorer than Doncaster, Gloucester as poorer than North Tyneside, and Basildon as poorer than Bolsover. How can there be any confidence in a system of local government finance that is so fundamentally flawed?

Mr. Howard: I shall certainly not go into detail on the sort of settlement that we may see next year. The hon. Gentleman knows, from the reports, the basis on which we have reached our conclusions this year.

[Mr. Howard]

I have sought this year to be as helpful as I can to local authorities on another matter. As in previous years, councils may be designated for capping if they increase their budgets by more than certain amounts and in doing so set budgets which exceed their SSAs. However, in a year when local authority functions are changing, and when a new system of local taxation is being introduced, it is not appropriate to use councils' actual budgets for 1992-93 as the starting-point for capping. Those budgets need to be adjusted so that the changes in functions, and in the local government finance system, can be allowed for in the capping calculations. The relevant notional amounts, which are set out in the report, are in effect adjusted budgets for individual councils.

These notional amounts relate directly to the real budgets set by authorities for the current year. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the authorities are fully involved in the process. When I announced my proposals for notional amounts last November, I also made it clear that we would listen carefully to the views of individual authorities on the figures that we had calculated for them, and on the methodology in general.

We have had many representations on both counts. I could not say that we have done exactly what every council wanted us to do. In particular, we have had to remain true to our original purpose, which was to adjust the budgets made by authorities when they set their community charges for the current year, and not to reflect changes that they may have made in the course of the year. But, as a result of our consultations, we have made changes both in the methodology and in the calculation of notional amounts for many individual councils.

As a result, the aggregate of notional amounts is now £250 million higher than we originally proposed, and for many councils the effect will be directly to permit a higher budget in 1993-94 without the fear of capping. I know that councils have welcomed our willingness to listen to them, and I hope that the House will today endorse that welcome.

Notional amounts are a demonstration of my commitment to use my capping powers in a way which is fair both to local authorities and to their local taxpayers. It was for that reason that, in my statement to the House last November, I set out the capping criteria that I had in mind to apply for the coming year.

I reaffirm that those are the criteria which I intend to apply. I shall not detain the House by reading them out in full, but I shall remind hon. Members of the broad principles: first, that budget increases—increases over the notional amount—may be subject to capping if the resulting budget exceeds the authority's standard spending assessment; secondly, that a budget is excessive in absolute terms if it is more than 12·5 per cent. above the SSA; and thirdly, that, notwithstanding the 12·5 per cent. criterion, an authority may not be designated if it sets a budget which represents a cash freeze or, in certain circumstances, a minimum cash reduction on the notional amount.

The significance of my announcement last November was that it gave authorities advance warning of what they had to do in order to avoid being designated for capping. I am pleased to say that the great majority of those who have written to us, or come to meet us, during the consultation process have accepted that discipline. I hope that, when they come to set their budgets in the next few weeks, they carry through their intention.

I do not want there to be any doubts on the issue. We want to be fair to councils, so we have listened to their views on notional amounts, but we must also hold faith with the local taxpayers, for whom capping is an important protection. I hope that all councils will act responsibly, and that I will not need to use my capping powers, but I will not hesitate to do so if necessary, in order to restrain excessive spending and hold down council tax levels.

The third of the reports for which I am today seeking the approval of the House is the special grant report. In particular, I wish to draw the attention of the House to two of the items contained in the report: the special grants for population loss, and in respect of displaced persons from the former republic of Yugoslavia.

A few minutes ago, I explained that SSAs this year need to reflect the availability of new data. In particular, we are now able to use population data from the 1991 census. That is a change from previous years, for which we have used 1981 census data, updated, each year by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We are bound to use the more recent data, but for a few authorities, that means a significantly lower SSA—which means less grant—than would have been the case if we had continued on the old basis.

It would be unreasonable to expect them to accommodate this reduction in a single year. I have therefore decided that, for those authorities whose SSA is more than 5 per cent. lower than it would have been if the old basis of estimating had continued, we should provide a special grant to compensate them in full for the excess over 5 per cent. Sixteen authorities will benefit, and a total of £3·5 million will be paid out under that scheme.

The special grant in respect of displaced persons from the former republic of Yugoslavia was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 16 November. The intention is to compensate authorities which face sudden unexpected additional expenditure as a result of the arrival in their area of the displaced persons. We have modelled the scheme on the more familiar Bellwin scheme, which applies to emergency expenditure following severe storms.

The principles are the same. Authorities can reasonably be expected to hold contingency reserves against minor emergencies, but in exceptional circumstances those reserves will simply not be enough to meet the case. Therefore, under the scheme, expenditure above a threshold qualifies for grant at a high rate—85 per cent. My Department invited authorities to submit estimates of expenditure on displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia. Three authorities have qualified, and will receive a total of £80,000 under the scheme.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Personally, I welcome the principle and practice of allocating a special grant to those authorities with a substantial number of displaced persons—as, I am sure, do most hon. Members. We certainly have people from the former Yugoslavia very much in mind. However, has the Secretary of State thought about the case of displaced Somalis, a substantial number of whom have come to the United Kingdom during the past 12 months and more—and people from other communities? Is he prepared to

consider the extension of the principle to other displaced communities that impose substantial costs, particularly on London?

Mr. Howard: I think that the problems that arose as a result of the entry into this country of displaced persons from the former republic of Yugoslavia related to this year's settlement; but I can certainly give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance for which I think he was asking —that, in the context of our thorough examination next year, in the light of the new information available from the census, we will consider the point that he has raised, among many others.

Mr. Wilkinson: The displaced persons in London are certainly not Yugoslavs: they come from countries such as Eritrea, Somalia, Zaire and other African states. Hillingdon, which contains Heathrow, has had to deal with the problem of displaced African children. Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Bellwin formula applies to them?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend need wait only a matter of seconds before he has the answer to his question.

The scheme in the special grant report to which I have referred relates to expenditure incurred in the current year —1992-93. I am pleased to be able to announce today that we intend to operate a similar scheme for 1993-94. My Department will shortly be writing to local authorities, and I shall be seeking the House's approval for next year's scheme in due course.

I am pleased pleased to announce today—this will be of particular interest to my hon. Friends the Members for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and other hon. Members—a related scheme to apply for the coming year in respect of another small group who place a disproportionate burden of costs on a small number of authorities. That may also be of interest to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I refer to the unaccompanied refugee children who arrive from time to time at the major ports of entry into this country and who become an immediate burden, usually on the authority in whose area they arrive.

Over time, the presence of these children in an area is reflected in the SSAs, but those assessments rely on data collected nationally and are therefore subject to inevitable time lags, whereas the costs imposed by these children are at their highest immediately after their arrival.

We therefore think it right to introduce a special grant scheme, also along the lines of the Bellwin scheme, to assist authorities in these circumstances. My Department will be writing to authorities shortly to obtain the information that we need as the basis for the scheme, and I shall bring a special grant report to the House in due course.

These special grants are one more token of the Government's commitment to ensuring that local government is properly—not extravagantly or disproportionately—financed for the coming year. We have provided for overall levels of spending and grant which reflect the constraints on public spending overall, but which should be sufficient to ensure that efficient authorities can continue to provide a good standard of service for their local people. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that the distribution of revenue support grant will be fair. We have listened hard to authorities' views on their notional amounts, and have taken them into account whenever we could. We have also borne in mind the impact of the overall settlement on council tax payers. I commend the settlement to the House.

4.52 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The speech that we have just heard was remarkable for one extraordinary omission: at no stage during the course of a half-hour speech did the Secretary of State refer to the serious loss of public services which will occur across the country or to the thousands of jobs that will unquestionably be lost as a result of this settlement—a matter to which I shall return in a moment.

Central Government in Britain now have more complete control over local government than at any time this century—more than is exercised in almost any other western parliamentary democracy. As other nations seek to draw strength from the diversity of their local communities and go down the path of greater devolution of power, in Britain since 1979 the process has inexorably worked the other way. In thirteen and a half years, 152 Acts of Parliament affecting local government have been introduced by the Conservative Administration. Not only has power over levels of spending been transferred to Whitehall; so, too, have many functions. We are moving, by means of this process, from the elected to the unelected state.

The Conservative party, once committed to cutting down on non-elected quangos, has made them stronger than ever before. Elected councillors have been removed from any role in health authorities, water authorities, further and higher education, most of training and probably soon the police. Instead, we have boards of cronies, appointed by Ministers and usually unaccountable either to Parliament or to local people. A recent survey by the *Financial Times* showed that

"unelected members of quango boards"

are now responsible for a fifth of all public expenditure —at £42,000 million, more than the total spending of local government, and a figure which has increased three times since 1979.

Ministers themselves know that this process has led to a considerable loss of local democracy. That is why, at each stage of the process, they have tried to play down the full impact of the powers that they have sought. Thus, the Secretary of State when he was a Minister of State had this to say on the capping powers taken in the 1988 Act:

> "We have made it clear on more than one occasion that we see the capping power introduced in the clause as a reserve measure".

He added that there was a need for a reserve power, rarely if ever to be used, to protect charge payers in an area against extreme cases of extravagant or irresponsible local authorities, but went on, for good measure:

> "The people of an area certainly will be able to vote for a relatively high-spending authority if they so choose."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

Five years on, the capping regime now affects not just a handful of allegedly reckless, extravagant or irresponsible local councils but virtually every council in the land —Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or Independent—the vast majority of whom are responsible, diligent and careful.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the light of the hon. Gentleman's concern, will he, as a resident of Lambeth, take this opportunity to condemn Labour

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

councillors who are content to take their attendance allowances but do not get around to paying their community charge?

Mr. Straw: Yes, I condemn any councillor who does not pay the community charge, as I always have done and always will do.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the greatest benefit that a local authority can give its constituents is value for money? That is the best possible service. Will he therefore condemn local authorities under Labour control which appear to regard providing value for money as bottom of their list of priorities?

Mr. Straw: The desire for value for money is shared across the political spectrum. As they learned to their cost last Wednesday, Conservative Members should stop trying to remove the mote from other people's eyes and examine the beam in their own. When it comes to inefficiency, lack of services and many other less acceptable practices, the Conservative party in local government—and, above all, in national government—knows no peer.

The Secretary of State quite reasonably asked me what the Opposition would do in the circumstances. I shall set out our case against the position that he has outlined. The consequence of the universal capping regime is a loss of local democracy and discretion, and this year the loss of key services to the public and of the jobs which underpin those services. I shall deal with the effects of the cuts in a moment, but I wish first to ask whether the loss of local democracy and discretion and the high degree of central control are justified in terms of the good management of public spending and the overall conduct of economic policy. The contention that they are so justified, after all, lies at the heart of the Government's case.

What central Government provide to local authorities by way of revenue support plainly has to be cash limited, and should be distributed fairly under a formula which takes proper account of local needs and resources. That is not at issue here. In our view, however, the local tax base should be wider and should include the non-domestic rate, as it did before 1990. Secondly, what each council raises from its local tax base should be a matter between it and its electors, but with greatly improved mechanisms, such as those that we have proposed, for annual elections and for holding councils properly to account before their final budgetary decisions are made.

Three arguments are used against this proposition. The first is one of definition. It is said that what local government spends from its own resources is part of overall public spending. Central Government have a responsibility to control all public spending. Ergo—so the argument goes—central Government must control local authorities' total spending. That is a circular, tautologous argument in which the definition determines the policy. I wish to consider the underlying policy. Is there any need, even in narrow national accounting terms, for local authority self-financed spending to be part of total public spending for control purposes? The answer—not just from the Opposition but from none other than the Prime Minister when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury just a few years ago—is no.

In 1988, as part of a reform of public spending, the Prime Minister, then Chief Secretary, published a White Paper quaintly titled, "A New Public Expenditure Planning Total". In that, as a matter of policy, he said that self-financed local authority expenditure was to be excluded from the planning total. The arguments in the White Paper were extremely cogent. The document said that mixing central Government spending with local government self-financed expenditure

"blurs the status of the various aggregates . . . and leads to insufficient attention being paid to central Government grants."

Paragraph 9 said that the purpose of this and other changes proposed in the White Paper was to increase local responsibility and accountability.

Paragraph 20 of the White Paper dealt with the issue of what might happen if central Government felt that overall local government expenditure was growing too rapidly. It stated:

"the Government would need to consider whether to take action to moderate the growth of spending within the planning total, whether its own spending or grants to local authorities".

There was no suggestion in the scheme set out in the White Paper that capping would have any role to play.

The White Paper also gave the lie to the second and more substantial argument in favour of control—that a failure by central Government to exercise control could lead to excessively high local taxes which in turn, to echo the Secretary of State a few years ago, would drive away businesses and jobs through higher rates. That was a familiar argument in the last decade and it led to the fiasco of the poll tax and to the Conservative party almost falling on its sword. There was never any evidence to support it, nor is there such evidence from any of our competitors.

Much of the disparity in the level of rates and council tax has reflected not differential levels of spending, but bias and distortion within the grants system which magnify those differences out of all proportion. Even where higher tax rates accurately reflect higher spending, it does not follow that the higher spending and higher tax rates will have a detrimental effect on the local private economy.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is engaging in a completely misinformed tirade against capping. Why was it his party's policy at the last general election that the expenditure voted by the assembly which Labour proposed for Scotland should be capped while spending for local government would not?

Mr. Straw: The answeer is simple. It relates to judgments and the degree of discretion—*[Interruption.]* We are arguing about the discretion that particular institutions should be allowed. There is no point in the Secretary of State trying to avoid the issue. His Prime Minister put his name to the White Paper from which I have quoted. It objected to any capping and said not only that the amounts should not be collected, but that local authorities' self-financed expenditure should not be subject to central control.

The evidence against the Secretary of State's case includes a major study conducted by the Department of the Environment in the mid-1980s. The Department objected to our claim that there was no necessary connection between higher rates and jobs, as Conservatives claimed, and spent £50,000 on a major study by the university of Cambridge. It then tried to suppress the study's conclusion that there was no

connection between the level of rates and job losses and that in manufacturing there was some evidence the other way.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Gentleman spoke of value for money, but I recognise that he may not want to answer questions about that. Did he see the article in Saturday's issue of *The Times*, which reported that Hackney council had rejected a bid from Costain plc which would have saved the council £2 million over three years in favour of a bid from its own direct labour organisation? Can the hon. Gentleman possibly justify that?

Mr. Straw: I did not see that issue of *The Times* or that report. Has the hon. Gentleman seen the well-publicised report about Conservative-controlled Brent, which shows that the district auditor has roundly criticised Brent council for awarding, without proper explanation, a tender for refuse collection which was £1 million above the lowest tender?

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

A large part of local council spending, either directly or indirectly, underpins the local private economy. If one is reduced, the other is reduced—especially at times such as this when there is enormous spare capacity in the economy and when no "crowding-out" arguments can possibly be made.

Contrary to what the Secretary of State thinks, I asked the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury what judgments the Chancellor of the Exchequer made about the effects on employment, prices and the balance of payments of an additional £2 billion of local authority revenue expenditure financed by local taxation or, for example, by additional revenue support grant. If the Treasury's view is the same as that of the Secretary of State —that any increase in spending is bound to undermine the local economy—the Chief Secretary would reflect that view.

However, from the Chief Secretary on 11 of January came a piece of classic gobbledygook. The Treasury has no view on this. He stated:

"The effects on levels of employment, prices and on the balance of payments of the measures mentioned would depend on a number of assumptions about economic behaviour at both national and local level as well as the precise effect of these measures."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 547.]

There was no suggestion whatever that higher spending by local authorities would somehow undermine the local private economy. The Secretary of State and the Treasury know that, in general, higher spending by local authorities, particularly during a recession, supports the private economy and does not undermine it.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend talks about expenditure by local authorities. On 22 November in replying to an Adjournment debate, the Minister did not deny my charge that a £10 million fraud was perpetrated on the London borough of Newham due to the statutory arrangements for SSAs. The borough has to pay about £30 million in loan charges and the SSA is about £18 million, leaving a deficit of more than £10 million. As education is roughly half the cost of local authority services, we are having to cut the education budget by about £5 million below the standard level of service SSA that even this mingy Government think necessary. That £5 million is just money, because the greater part of the capital expenditure was given the okay by the Government, so the £5 million cut is to the detriment of the children and the people of Newham.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend makes a cogent case. His example in Newham is one more example of the way in which the SSA system has been stacked against inner-urban and Labour authorities. I shall return to that.

It does not remotely follow that cutting local authority expenditure in the midst of recession will save the Exchequer any money. The Secretary of State was studious in his refusal to mention jobs during his half-hour speech, but we know that thousands of jobs will go as a result of the settlement. For every 10,000 job cuts in local government, which will lead to an equivalent rise in unemployment, the Exchequer cost—not the saving—will be £900 million in benefits and lost taxes, to which must be added additional cost to local government as demand-led services such as free school meals and housing benefit come under further pressure from families whose breadwinners no longer have jobs.

Overseas evidence overwhelmingly supports our case and not the Government's. That was confirmed by the White Paper about which the Secretary of State looks so puzzled. As I have said, the White Paper was issued five years ago, was signed by the present Prime Minister and argues against the Secretary of State's case. Paragraph 8 states:

"Very few other industrial countries plan public spending in this way"—

that is, by including local authority self-financed spending.

"For federal states, such as Germany, the United States or Canada, this would conflict with their federal constitutions. But even in other unitary states such as France or the Netherlands the Government generally makes budgetary plans only for central government expenditure."

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No, I will not give way. I think that I have given way enough for the moment. If they catch my eye later, I will give way to both hon. Gentlemen.

Although the local authority spend of the other countries that I have mentioned is not controlled, there is no evidence that they have done less well in terms of output, growth, exports or employment. How could there be such evidence when, since 1979, virtually every other OECD country has performed better than the United Kingdom according to every indicator that matters?

The third argument against the Secretary of State's policy of centralisation is that it has not worked in its own terms. In any one year—as in this year—an unrealistic settlement can and will produce severe cuts in jobs and services, and considerable local dislocation. There is little evidence, however, that over time the panoply of controls has kept spending below its trend line—very much the reverse.

In July, the *Local Government Chronicle*—a paper whose views the Secretary of State is keen to quote when it suits him—published a detailed research study carried out by the London school of economics research unit, which showed that budget capping had

"led to higher spending by councils, the opposite result to that intended".

It went on to give a number of cogent reasons for that apparently perverse consequence.

[Mr. Straw]

For instance, had the Government left well alone, there would have been a normal, broad distribution of spending patterns, with some councils spending above the norm and others spending well below it. The removal of local discretion has now put pressure on all authorities to spend at least at SSA levels in each service; when they do not, other Ministers—such as the Secretary of State for Education—are often the first to complain, thus adding to the incentives for councils to spend up to the norm even if they do not wish to do so.

I will quote the views of two Conservative councils. In *The Independent* of 28 January, Ernest Mallett, leader of Elmbridge district council, described the capping system as a "joke" which encourages councils to "spend up." He added:

"If there was no capping our spending would probably be about £1 million lower".

A curious position exists in Conservative-controlled Northamptonshire. Some county councils have done extremely well out of the SSA system: they are all Conservative-controlled. Northamptonshire is providing for 200 extra jobs and growth of £4 million as it seeks to spend up to SSA level. Central controls have undermined local accountability in two ways: power over budgets has been removed and, with that removal, the responsibility of local councillors to their electors has become "seriously blurred", in the words of the White Paper.

A third Conservative authority, Woking, says:

"Capping has removed the ability of elected councillors to pay for services that local residents want and have voted for."

We want local accountability to be increased. The amount of grant should be transparent; more important, the budget process should amount to the striking of a bargain with the local electorate in each and every year. For that reason, we want annual elections to be held in every council, on a three-year cycle, with a much-extended budget period. Such a system would restore local democracy, and would be unlikely to lead over time to larger increases in total spending than would otherwise result.

Mr. Bowis: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that local government is there not as a job creation scheme but as a provision of service scheme and that the efficient provision of services comes from efficient spending of resources? Lambeth, the borough in which he lives, receives 50 per cent. more central Government grant than neighbouring boroughs, including my own borough of Wandsworth. Does he accept that he receives lower levels of service in Lambeth because some £10 million has been wasted in fraud, because £185 million has been wasted in the non-collection of rents, rates and charges, and because 40,000 community charge bills have not even been sent out? Does he accept that the rest of us are not prepared to subsidise Lambeth and that that is why Lambeth needs to be capped—so that the charges can be kept down for everyone's benefit?

Mr. Straw: I want to see efficient councils everywhere, whether they are Conservative, Labour, Liberal or independent. We defer to no one in our pursuit of efficiency, and in our endeavours to root out corruption and fraud.

The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. However, we have argued for years—indeed, about four years ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and I introduced a Bill to this effect—that capping is not the way to increase accountability. Nor can it be increased by the use of SSAs which, even in a perfect world, are bound to involve a large arbitrary element. I am thinking particularly of London boroughs, which hold all-out elections only every four years, without the intervening elections which used to be held under the old Greater London council. The answer is to hold annual elections on a three-year cycle, which would enable the electors of Lambeth to vote their council out of office if they felt that they were not receiving appropriate services.

I should point out to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) that in 1990, when Lambeth last held elections, the electors—contrary to all his predictions—voted in favour of Labour's retaining control.

Mr. Pickles: The hon. Gentleman said that we must consider the number of redundancies in local authorities, and talked specifically of tens of thousands. Will he give us his estimate of the number of redundancies that local government will face?

Mr. Straw: I am coming to that.

Mr. Illsley: Recently, we have heard comments about London boroughs subsidising other London boroughs. Why should local authorities such as mine subsidise the Wandsworths and Westminsters, which charge practically no community charge? Never mind Lambeth—what about the Wandsworths and Westminsters that my local authority is subsidising to a far higher tune?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. No one who believed in a fair system of grant distribution could possibly justify the outrageous position that has arisen in Wandsworth and Westminster. Wandsworth charges no poll tax at all, and Westminster only a tiny one.

The fact that the current system of centralised control serves no economic utility makes the consequences of the Secretary of State's policy all the more gratuitous, and all the less acceptable. Make no mistake: there will be cuts in services, and many jobs will be lost. Local economies will suffer, and unemployment will rise in the areas affected. This afternoon, the Secretary of State tried to make light of the coming cuts: he referred to ritual protests, in words similar to those that he used on 26 November. I see Secretary of State nodding in agreement.

Fifteen months ago, as Labour's education spokesperson, I said that cuts already taking place in local government resources would lead to larger classes in schools. At the time, Ministers—including the present Home Secretary, who was then Secretary of State for Education—derided my claims. Who was correct? An article in Monday's *Financial Times* reported that secondary school class sizes had "increased sharply", and that

"in 48 metropolitan local education authorities . . . the pupil-to-teacher ratio . . . worsened by 0·5 or more pupils per teacher between January 1989 and January 1992. In only seven metropolitan LEAs has the ratio remained steady. In not one has it improved by more than 0·5. In some inner-city areas"—

in Knowsley, for example—

"the deterioration in the three years completely wiped out the gains of the previous 15 years."

In Newham, north Tyneside, Rochdale and Walsall, class sizes have worsened as a direct result of the Government's policy.

Mr. Howard: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that the dates covered by that article are not those covered by his prediction?

Mr. Straw: No. My predictions were based on what was already happening in 1990, as the Secretary of State well knows. *[Laughter.]* I do not know why the Secretary of State is laughing; it is not a laughing matter. The situation is becoming worse and worse.

There is a similar picture in the shires, with 14 shire counties showing large increases in class sizes, the largest being in Derbyshire. The author of the research report on which the official figures are based commented:

"Restrictions on local authority spending seem to be the main cause of the sharp deterioration."

One of the Secretary of State's great weaknesses is his capacity for self-delusion. It has been one of the few consistent characteristics of his political career. When he trumpeted his settlement to the House last November, he may even have believed what he was urging on the rest of us. His message then was that there would be no job losses, and he repeated it in a letter to me dated 17 December. He stated categorically:

"There is certainly no need, as you suggest, for authorities to cut their staff as a result of my proposals for the 1993/94 settlement."

Nothing could be more categorical. He said that there was no need for cuts, but there will be cuts. They will be worse in Labour areas, but they will also be bad in many Tory areas. The list is endless.

This morning I published a list covering 80 authorities. One thousand redundancies were announced in Birmingham yesterday. Many thousands of jobs are bound to go. So will the Secretary of State retract what he said? Is he now saying that the levels of employment in local authorities will be the same next year, as he said in the letter? In the light of the overwhelming evidence, is it not time for him to admit that what he told me in December was wrong?

Mr. Howard: Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the statement that he made a moment ago, that 1,000 redundancies were declared in Birmingham yesterday? That is not what happened. It was a prediction by Birmingham city council of what was likely to happen as a result—it said—of the budget that it had set. It made it clear that it was not expecting compulsory redundancies. The prediction falls into exactly the same category as, for example, the county of Avon which began by predicting that the settlement would cost 4,000 council employees their jobs but now says that there might be 170 voluntary redundancies.

Mr. Straw: I notice that the one point that the Secretary of State did not answer was whether he now stands by the declaration that he made in December that there would be no job cuts.

Mr. Pickles: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No. I have already given way.

The Secretary of State's argument is as absurd as if the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had told the House that the 31,000 job losses in the mining industry did not matter because most could be implemented through voluntary rather than compulsory redundancy. A job lost is a job lost: it represents one more person on the dole, and the Secretary of State should know that.

It is no good the Secretary of State trying to pretend that the settlement is sufficient, doing his usual three-card trick with the numbers and telling us that if one compares last year's settlement with this year's there is obviously enough money. It is no good because the base figures have no reality. To decide whether authorities will have to make cuts, one must compare what authorities are spending this year with what they are to be allowed to spend next year. On that basis, authorities are £200 million short in cash compared with this year.

Many are worse off than the figures imply. It is time that the Secretary of State understood that. If he does not want to listen to the Opposition and to Labour authorities, he should at least listen to other Conservatives. For example, he should listen to John Vereker, the Conservative leader of Warwickshire county council, who, when asked on Radio 4 on Monday night whether local authorities should not consider their bureaucracy, said that it was fine for the Government to lecture but that it was

"just a pity that the government itself couldn't do the same. For example in the Department of Education and Science their figures have gone up and up"—

for central Government spend—

"far higher than the rate of inflation. They've been able to move into three huge gold plated office blocks in the most expensive parts of London, at the same time as putting quite unrealistic pressure on the classroom and in schools where money was really intended by the taxpayer or the ratepayer to be spent."

In complete contradiction of what the Secretary of State has been trying to tell the House, the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association said in the opening paragraph of its commentary on the settlement:

"As a result of the government's proposals for the 1993-94 revenue support grant . . . most Londoners will face the prospect of reduced services and/or higher bills for those services."

That is the truth of the settlement.

I deal now with the distribution of the standard spending assessment. Labour controls virtually every large city and town in the country, including all the areas of greatest social need. In view of that, we might have expected some even-handedness in the grant distribution but that was not to be.

On average, the 120 Labour-controlled authorities are to receive an increase of only 2·5 per cent. in their SSA while the 115 Conservative-controlled authorities will receive 3·3 per cent. Surprise, surprise—with the county council elections coming up in May, what do we find? Of all the categories of authorities, the disparity between Labour and Conservative county councils is greatest. The eight Labour councils receive only 2·2 per cent. extra. The 19 Conservative-controlled shire councils receive 3·7 per cent. There is not one Labour county council with an SSA increase above the average in the first 18 in the list.

Staffordshire, Northumberland, Derbyshire, Humberside, Lancashire, Cleveland and Durham are all Labour-controlled and all face acute budget difficulties because of discrimination. In none of those areas are the difficulties of their own making. The Secretary of the State has the cheek to suggest that it is those councils' responsibility that the council tax there will be higher. He is the man responsible for the fact that council tax there will be higher, because of the way he has gerrymandered the SSA system.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman must know that by far the biggest factor in those changes is population change. Is he seriously suggesting that we should not have used the latest population figures from the 1991 census?

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State was the master of the poll tax, and he was the one who went around the country——

Mr. Howard: Answer.

Mr. Straw: I am, I am. The Secretary of State should know that one of the consequences of the poll tax—the tax that he said would be the fairest and the best—is that the number of people registering for the electoral register and for the census is down. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that. There has been massive under-registration for the census. That evidence is known to his Department, but he refused to take it into account. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State says that that is so in counties controlled by the Labour party; it is a matter of record that the problem of under-registration is most acute in larger cities and towns—and we control the larger cities and towns and the counties with the largest urban populations.

Mr. Howard: Will the hon. Gentleman calm down and consider the facts? We are talking about counties, not inner-city areas. Is he seriously suggesting that people have removed themselves from the register in Labour-controlled shire counties but not in other counties? That is an absurd proposition.

Mr. Straw: It is not absurd at all. If the Secretary of State had any knowledge of the geography of this country, he would know that Labour-controlled shire counties are more urban than the Conservative-controlled shire counties. They contain major cities such as Bristol, Hull, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Preston. There is a much higher propensity not to register, especially among young people, in those areas than in areas with more stable populations. That is a fact.

The Secretary of State mentioned population loss. There has been an element of population loss but—surprise, surprise—Richmond and Wokingham, which are both Conservative controlled, receive a population loss grant while Islington and Camden which are Labour, do not.

The all ages social index rates Bournemouth as more deprived than Barnsley, Watford as more deprived than Wigan, and suggests that the Prime Minister's Huntingdonshire has poorer social conditions than Chester-le-Street. Is the Secretary of State going to say, on that evidence, that it is a fair system in which there has been no political gerrymandering? Dudley is told that it has £1,722 to spend on each primary age pupil, but Bedfordshire is allowed £250 more. Barnsley is allowed only £1,793 per pupil, but the Secretary of State's Kent —on no basis more deprived or in greater need than Barnsley—is given almost £100 more. I could go on and on. There is scarcely a service area where the data and methodology used are sufficiently robust to run a grant distribution system simply.

What makes matters so much worse is that the convoluted, contrived and politically distorted system is then used as a control on total spending, as the base line for capping and, through gearing, becomes one of the principal factors in the level of the council tax. We do not yet know what the level of the council tax will be in each authority, but we can be certain of one thing—it will be far in excess of what the Government pretended that it would be during and before the general election campaign.

In 1991, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) predicted the council tax levels for each council area. He said that the average for the country would be £400 for band D. That was the basis of the Government's claims for the council tax before the election. Uprated for inflation, that £400 will be £428 in April of this year. However, as the Secretary of State is aware, since he quoted the *Local Government Chronicle* survey with great approval, the band D figure will not be £428 or anything like it. According to the *Local Government Chronicle*, the band D figure will be £550. That is £122 more—nearly a quarter more—than the figure that the right hon. Member for Henley and his right hon. Friends were peddling around the country before the election.

Higher council tax bills will be a consequence of the settlement. A second consequence will be further centralisation of power and a loss of democracy. Thirdly, many thousands of jobs will be lost. Fourthly, and most seriously, there will be a reduction in the public service that councils provide to individuals and communities across the land. That will mean shorter hours of libraries, the closure of residential homes for the elderly, higher charges for meals on wheels and home helps, larger classes and fewer policemen on the beat than what is necessary.

That is a policy without purpose—a policy so wrong-headed that it will increase unemployment and the borrowing requirement, worsen the recession and harm the very services on which the victims of the recession most rely. The policy is partisan and prejudiced, and we oppose it: it will not do.

5.31 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I do not pretend for a moment to be a great expert on local government. In fact, I last made a speech on the subject 10 years ago—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down, then."] Hon. Members may say, "Sit down," but I know injustice and unfairness when I see it. I know when my town faces a total catastrophe because of the complete and utter incompetence of Labour-controlled Harlow council.

For years, I, the district auditor and my colleagues on the Government Front Bench have been warning the local authority members that, unless they gained control of their spending and put it on a gradual downward path, there would be job losses, capping and a disaster for the services in my town. Just before the general election, they capitalised £17 million-worth of receipts. Their standard spending assessment is approximately £7 million, but they have been spending a budget of £26 million. Because, for some amazing reason, they believed that the Labour party was going to win the general election, they blew their reserves and spent all the money.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: No, the hon. Gentleman must be patient. I have some very important points to make, which involve jobs and services that may be lost. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, it is my job to try to support the people in

my town. I do not want to make general party political points. I want to deal specifically with Harlow and how it is being affected by the Labour party there.

It was particularly interesting that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) spoke about value for money. He and I were born and bred just a few miles from each other. From his knowledge of the history of the area, he knows that Harlow council has been spending year after year.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Just like Lancashire.

Mr. Hayes: As my hon. Friend has said, just like Lancashire.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: In the first eight years of Labour control, Lancashire increased its spending by 176 per cent., and it is still rising.

Mr. Hayes: As usual, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has made her point eloquently. She always looks after her constituents with great aplomb.

I would like to consider what is actually happening in Harlow. The truth of the matter is that the sky is black with Labour chickens coming home to roost. It might be helpful if I were to paraphrase some of the points made in a report by the Conservative group on 15 December 1992. The report stated:

"The Labour run council have built up a reputation for its quasi welfare state, in that it has to provide everything in the town . . . The result is that virtually every service in the town has a Council influence. All primary health facilities are provided in designated health centres, now owned by a Council funded trust. Apart from a bingo hall, a night club and the sports centre, all leisure facilities are council owned and run. A high profile Harlow Council for Voluntary Services . . . has almost nationalised the voluntary sector."

I wholeheartedly support that splendid organisation. I do not want to see it go to the wall because of the incompetence of the Labour party in Harlow. The report continues:

"Most voluntary organisation are Council-funded and have councillors involved in their running, to the extent that many voluntary bodies are reliant on district council funding to pay their salary bills."

I will now deal with the recent financial position. The report continues:

"For the past three years, since the introduction of the Community Charge, the council has funded approximately half of its General Rate Fund expenditure of around £24 million (against an SSA of approximately £7 million) through the use of capital receipts, interests and reserves. By 1993-94, the available reserves will be all but exhausted. The majority party do not have a strategy for dealing with this situation, apart from a very strong belief that Labour were going to win the general election."

Never mind what I and the Tory party say; what did the district auditor say in his most recent report? He said:

"The financial health of the Council continues to be a cause for concern."

If ever there was an understatement, that is one. The district auditor continues:

"In recent years, revenue expenditure has been supported by the use of reserves with the result that the general reserve balance has been reduced to some £12·2 million at 31 March 1992. Use of reserves at the current rate will exhaust the general reserve by 31 March 1993."

That spells total and utter disaster. It means the possibility of hundreds of decent people losing their jobs.

In the face of that, what does the Labour group in Harlow want me to do? The members of that group want me to go to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and say, "Let's have some more money." They want me to ask for more money, after so much has been squandered over the years. If any money is forthcoming, it will not be money from my right hon. and learned Friend or from the Treasury: it will be money from people in Harlow. The whole point of the cap is to protect the people in Harlow. They will have to pay.

I would love to be able to go to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State——

Mr. Ilsley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient. Although Barnsley may be very close to Harlow, I want to raise some important points that directly affect my constituency.

If the people in Harlow Labour party, who are entrusted with controlling the finances for the people in the area, had not spent their reserves in keeping the community charge down, it would have been £543 per person as opposed to £301. If my right hon. and learned Friend said, "Right: we won't have a cap—I've changed my mind, because of the disaster that might happen," the community charge this year would be much more than that figure. The council tax for a band D household would be more than £1,300 this year. That would completely crucify people who are on the breadline.

I do not mind going to my right hon. and learned Friend and his Front-Bench colleagues and saying, "Look, the cap will have a tremendous effect on many of my constituents—on those who have worked hard for the community, on the voluntary and front-line services, and on the playhouse. Many important organisations are at risk. We need some breathing space." I cannot ask my right hon. and learned Friend for that breathing space unless I have radical proposals from the Labour members who are in control.

Let us bring in the consultants. I asked councillors to do that years ago, but they refused. They said, "We are one of the finest-run councils in the country. We don't need to bring in consultants." I said, "Let us listen to what the district auditor said and let us bring value for money," but, no, none of that was to happen.

There have been damning reports from the district auditor, and there have been damaging reports from the treasurer who was mysteriously sacked. There were damning reports from the general manager, who said that no one has a grip on management in Harlow town hall. There have been restrictive practices after restrictive practices, and the trade unions have had far greater sway outside than they should have had.

I have been trying to urge Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats groups to put aside their party politics and sit round the table. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members laugh, but, heavens, I have been trying to do that without much help. Let us have some radical solutions—but, no, all Harlow councillors want is more and more money. If I were a compulsive gambler who had just lost all my winnings on the last horse, it would be like going to my bank manager and asking for an overdraft so that I could put the rest of my money on a horse. How can my right hon. and learned Friend do that? We must get round the table and put forward radical solutions. "Impossible, absolutely impossible," they say. It is not impossible.

I shall make one or two suggestions. Of course they are pooh-poohed in the local newspapers every time I make

[Mr. Hayes]

them, but the councillors have something called democracy and—what is it called?—decentralisation, which means mini-town hall. Of course that saves lots of money, so we are told, but what does the district auditor say? He says:

"The Council is currently undergoing a period of reorganisation with the proposed creation of the Neighbourhood Committees and Offices. Although the General Manager has assured us that the reorganisation will generate savings, costings have not been produced to show how this will be achieved. Any additional costs will place extra pressure on revenue budgets."

You bet, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has cost £1·2 million.

We hear that the Labour group is to set a budget which will be well above the cap. We know, although we cannot prejudge anything that happens in court, that there is a very good chance that the cap will remain as it is. It means that people in Harlow will have to be re-billed. It will cost £200,000 to re-bill people because of a hopeless political exercise.

Mr. Illsley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman has been most patient. Of course I give way to him.

Mr. Illsley: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, when the Chancellor reduced community charge bills by £140, every local authority in the country had to re-bill at a similar cost? It seems rather silly the hon. Gentleman complaining about re-billing, when the Government brought about re-billing in every local authority throughout the country.

Mr. Hayes: I knew that I should not have given way to the hon. Gentleman. He is a great expert on local government; he could have done much better than that. The hon. Gentleman knows that there was a great shout of relief in respect of that £140. People did not begrudge it. They were very pleased indeed, and they were certainly very pleased in Harlow.

What makes me so angry is that we have emotive campaigns about Kingsmoor house, a magnificent institution which looks after children who have been abused. It gives excellent support to people who are most in need. We are told that, because of the wicked Tory Government, it will be closed. Do you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, how much it costs to keep Kingsmoor house open? It costs £200,000 a year—precisely the same amount of money that is to be squandered on a silly party political exercise by the Labour party in Harlow. That is the depth that those councillors are sinking to.

Let me deal briefly with the report to which I alluded on the recent financial position. It goes on to state:

"by 1993-94, the available reserves will be all but exhausted."

We have heard that from the district auditor. It goes on:

"The majority party do not have a strategy for dealing with this situation, apart from a very strong belief that Labour were going to win the general election. Financial reviews by the Council have occurred over the past two years in order to contain spending at £24M, which has only served to prevent inflation from increasing its actual expenditure. Efforts at saving £1·5M (90-91) and £2·0M (91-92) were only partly successful, as a result of additional monies becoming available during the year. There has been no sustained effort to reduce or moderate expenditure."

The local Labour party is saying that, because my right hon. and learned Friend has quite sensibly introduced the unified business rate, money is being stolen by the Government. Of course, business men remember the days when Harlow council used to fleece them. Until the introduction of the community charge UBR, Harlow had the highest poundage rate in the country—91p. That is what it meant to businesses in my constituency.

Let us deal briefly with the capital position. The auditor's report—it is not disputed by the district auditor—states:

"In 1988-89 and 1989-90 housing maintenance costs were capitalised to the extent of £17M."

We are talking about a political authority with an SSA of approximately £7 million. The report goes on:

"The overall effect of this was to transfer Right To Buy proceeds from housing capital to revenue reserves, to support revenue spending in future years. With the current financial regulations, this was resulted in £4·2M of debt charges falling to the"

general rate fund

"instead of £0·771M."

That is the amount of money that we should be paying.

The hon. Member for Blackburn has sensibly left the Chamber and is doing other things. He said that he believed in value for money in local authorities, and that local authorities under Labour control did exactly the same thing. We should hear about what Harlow Labour party has been doing for compulsory competitive tendering. The report states:

"Although a number of Council services have gone out to tender, the Labour Group have ensured that the contracts are unattractive to external bidders. Many bids received have been inflated to cover the cost of monitoring the work carried out, an excess which was not applied to the in-house bid. The use of Council facilities and vehicles have been denied to prospective bidders. Leisure facilities have been block booked to community groups at prime times when they could attract premium rates."

That is what is going on in Harlow at the moment. The hon. Member for Blackburn talks about value for money. The Labour party in Harlow would not know value for money and decent management if they ran into it and bit it on the leg with a large gin and tonic.

I have suggested time and again that consultants should be brought in, and that there are ways in which savings could be made. We know that the Labour group will have to set up another bidding operation which will cost £200,000. We hear about what is happening with front-line services, we hear about Kingsmoor house and all the great things that the Conservative group and I believe in, but we do not hear about what will happen to the policy unit. Of course the policy unit is party political; it costs only £1 million a year, and the council does not intend to scrap it. That is what is happening.

We must remember the spending that should be going on in Harlow. How much do you, Madam Deputy Speaker, think that Labour councillors spend on information technology? It is £3·5 million a year in Harlow council, with an SSA of about £7 million—just on information technology. *[Laughter.]* I am sorry that Opposition Members think that that is funny. I suppose that it would be funny if hundreds of people were not going to lose their jobs as a result of that incompetence. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) is new to the Chamber, but the squandering that he used to get up to on his local council is well documented. I said that just in case the camera above my head zooms in on the hon. Gentleman laughing—as we can now have reaction

shots—at the misery that is being caused by members of his party who purport to look after the interests of ordinary people. Well, they do not.

Having dealt with the policy unit, let me briefly deal with the other excesses. For example, Harlow Labour party gives property rent-free to its pet causes, and council members have all sorts of facilities. I cannot complain too much about that, but I object to the trade union resource centre getting free property at the expense of the poor old charge payer. I resent organisations such as the workers' rights project getting £80,000 a year out of the hard-pressed people of Harlow.

We spend £400,000 a year on the Harlow playhouse, a wonderful institution where I take my children regularly. It is under threat of closure. The board of management has proposed very sensibly, saving nearly £300,000 a year by putting it out to private tender and creating a joint relationship between private and public enterprise, but the council will not consider it. That is the sorry state of Harlow council.

I support the front-line services, the playhouse, Kingsmoor house and the tremendous work that ordinary people are doing to help those who are frail and vulnerable. Of course it is the frail and the vulnerable who will suffer. We do not hear about the old people's homes that are to close, about Kingsmoor house having to close and about those most in need who will suffer, but they will suffer simply because of the complete incompetence of the Labour-controlled council—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Member for Attercliffe please contain himself? He may think that it is all tremendously funny, but many of my constituents will suffer because of some of the policies of his party that he supports.

I hope that members of the Labour party in Harlow will listen to some of the things that I have been saying and to some of the things that the general manager and the district auditor have been saying. If they do not, they will cause widespread misery to ordinary, decent folk in Harlow who are hard pressed enough.

5.53 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) asked Opposition Members to contain themselves, but the House will understand their amusement. I was sympathetic with only one point he raised: his suggestion that there should be less party political point scoring at the expense of local government. The fact that he continued at great length with a tirade against his own local authority gave the lie to that remark, but I shall return to that point later.

This year's revenue support grant settlement once again exposes the partisan nature of the Government's local government finance regime. Indeed, it goes further; it exposes the whole nature of the Government's approach to local democracy and the sinister way in which our traditional system of government is being undermined. One instrument which is used for those purposes is the standard spending assessment or SSA, a system which owes more to the prejudices of the Tory party than to any honest attempt properly to assess the needs of individual localities. It is a system which allows the Secretary of State to pick off individual councils and reward others.

Most casual observers would surely conclude that the needs of the people of Tyne and Wear in terms of local government services are likely to be at least as high as those living in the heart of the capital. In fact, given the level of unemployment, the decline of industry and the continuing work to remove the scars of our industrial past, most would conclude that our needs are somewhat greater; yet, according to the Government, Tory-controlled Westminster's needs amount to £1,200 per head of population, while the needs of Labour-controlled Tyne and Wear authorities range from just £661 to £750.

A good example of the partisan nature of the system is the fact that, if Labour-controlled Gateshead were allocated the same level of SSA as Tory-controlled Westminster for just one year, Gateshead's council tax could be set at zero for the next three years. It is not a matter of more and more money, as the hon. Member for Harlow suggested earlier. All we want in Gateshead are the same resources that are being applied to Westminster.

The SSA system provides increased help to areas of higher pay and prices, which would appear to conflict with the Government's policy to restrain public sector pay, yet no recognition is made of the need for better public services in areas such as Tyne and Wear, where low incomes and high unemployment are much more prevalent than in Westminster.

If car ownership is low, there is a need for better public transport, and if people cannot afford golf club fees and private health clubs, there is a greater need for public recreation facilities. However, the system turns that logic on its head, so that the Tory party can direct resources to areas in the south to try to prevent the haemorrhage in its support. The comparison with Westminster demonstrates political manipulation of the system; my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr.Straw) drew attention to other examples.

There are other anomalies in the system. For instance, how can a Government who have acknowledged the similarity of the problems faced by Newcastle and Gateshead by creating a partnership area covering both, calculate that Gateshead needs £44 per a head, or £9 million less than Newcastle, to deal with the same problems? When one takes into account the fact that the great city of Newcastle is being forced to cut expenditure by £8 million this year and £12 million between 1994-96, the full scale of the effects of the settlement and the system is realised.

That is due to the inadequacy of the SSA and the fact that it has been reduced by £9 million following the removal of further education responsibilities from the city of Newcastle, although expenditure on those facilities last year was only £6 million. All that will mean reductions in services and increases in unemployment as yet more jobs are lost. The settlement means that more job losses are inevitable.

The magnitude of cuts when male unemployment runs at 40 per cent. in the city challenge area makes the so-called additional funds provided by such special measures woefully inadequate. What is the sense in recognising the special needs of an area by awarding city challenge and then forcing huge cuts in expenditure? The Government are about to correct that illogical scenario by scrapping the urban programme, a measure that will force the closure of thousands of voluntary projects throughout the country and reverse any progress which has been made in the attempts to improve the standard and quality of life in our inner cities over the past 20 years.

Mr. Illsley: Is my hon. Friend's authority in the same situation as mine, as a city challenge authority now having to spend money on implementing city challenge, which is a charge against its rate support grant and its budget, and finding it difficult to maintain now that the urban programme money is being withdrawn?

Mr. Clelland: My hon. Friend draws attention to yet more inconsistencies in the system.

A system which gives with one hand and takes with the other is not helping our localities, and the people who live in the inner-city areas recognise that. People who are active in the inner-city challenge areas recognise that the money that is being given to them is being taken away from others who may be just as needy. It is not a fair or just system.

One of the overriding concerns of people in the city challenge area, on Tyneside and in Britain in general, is the high and increasing level of crime, yet the SSA and capping limits placed upon the Northumbrian police authority in this settlement, will put at risk the effect of combating crime in the area.

The 4·5 per cent. increase in SSA, which itself understates the spending needs of Northumbria, is expected to absorb the full effect of the 1992 police pay award approved by the Home Secretary at 6·5 per cent. It is expected to absorb the increase in the cost of police pensions, which is 10 per cent. of the authority's budget, the increase in insurance premiums, and the increases in national insurance from 1 April.

In a letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment, the police authority has said:

"The implications for policing levels in Northumbria of the provisional RSG settlement are dire. It is no understatement that the progress achieved in recent years is at risk."

Add to this the ending of the urban crime fund and the full scale of the very serious situation now facing our communities is frighteningly obvious.

All this has been pointed out to the Secretary of State, but little or nothing has changed. All the warnings and arguments have fallen on the deaf ears of the right hon. Gentleman, whose Cheshire cat smile perhaps arises from the amusement that he derives from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's claim in the autumn statement that the RSG settlement should be totally adequate for local government.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asks where the money would come from to meet the improvements we call for. For a start, he could correct the anomalies to which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn and I have drawn attention. Also, he might look at the millions of pounds currently being spent on unelected quangos appointed by him and his right hon. Friends throughout the country.

The inadequacies of the SSA system are now compounded by the anomalies of the council tax system, incidentally. How can it be right that a disabled person living in a property valued at over a quarter of a million pounds can benefit from a reduction in council tax, yet someone else with perhaps even more severe disabilities living in a property valued at only £30,000 gets no reduction? This has serious implications for people living in my constituency, where 65 per cent. of properties are in band A. It would be the economics of the madhouse if it were just about economics, but of course that is not what it is about, is it?

The overall effect is staggering, with an estimated 33,000 job losses in local government as a result—equal to those which caused such a public outcry, and justifiably so, when the closure of 31 pits was announced last year. Like the threatened job losses in the mining industry, these 33,000 redundancies will have a knock-on effect, so that the overall impact on localities and the national economy will be severe.

All this is part of the Government's strategy to run down local government replace locally accountable elected councils by quangos accountable only to the Government; the octopus method of government, whereby Whitehall extends its tentacles into every corner of the country, eliminating political opposition and strangling local needs and priorities. It is entirely ideological. There is no case for the kind of strict control of locally raised finances which this Government imposed, other than unbridled dogma.

The attacks on local government finances are accompanied by appeals and incentives to opt out of the local government structure, and by restrictions on the eligibility to stand for election by the introduction of the concept of politically restricted posts, compulsory competitive tendering, and so on. The result is that local authorities can no longer respond to the wishes of the people they are elected to serve, but serve instead central Government and the priorities and prejudices of central office. It is a system more at home in pre-war Russia than in 1990s Britain. No wonder all political parties are finding it difficult to attract candidates in local elections.

There is a deliberate campaign by Tory Members to discredit and denigrate local government at every turn. We saw it again last week, when they leaped so eagerly and gleefully on the news of maladministration in Lambeth, and the Secretary of State has been at it again today.

Never in the history of culinary metaphors have so many frying pans called the kettle black. Tory Members could fake virtue for Europe, but if it is their objective to damage Labour local government, it does not work. All that happens is that some of my hon. Friends are provoked into responding with examples of Tory malpractice. These tit-for-tat exchanges, which rarely rise above the debating level of the school playground, result only in damaging all local democracy by grossly exaggerating the extent of malpractice in local authorities, which is no worse than in any other sector of society, especially the Tory party.

It all suits the purpose of those who would further diminish the role of democracy in this country—the real enemies within, who have done more to undermine the faith of the British people in their system of government than could any sinister, well thought out KGB or CIA plot.

New and unaccountable power bases have been encouraged and asssisted to develop over the past 14 years. They can be seen throughout our towns and cities, planning the lives and futures of millions of our people, without any mandate to do so. I remember well the occasion of the Northumberland Plate at Gosforth park racecourse a few years ago. I asked what the small groups of local gentry were gathered together to discuss, and was told that they were deciding who should be the chairman of the training and enterprise council. And so they did, in between the Brown Ale handicap and the Federation cup. How about that for open government?

That is but one minor example of the goings on throughout the country, as the only question that needs to be answered satisfactorily for certain people to be appointed to often well-paid sinecures is: "Is he one of us?"

The RSG settlement continues this centralist trend and the opportunities for real corruption are extended yet again as democratic scrutiny is further watered down. It will do nothing to improve and extend the services on which so many of my constituents rely. On the contrary, the further attack on local government which this package represents will further weaken its ability to tackle the problems faced by communities, businesses and individuals on Tyneside and elsewhere.

The system of local government finance now in place in this country is unfair, unjust and deliberately tailored to shackle, rather than free, local priorities and local enterprise. It is discriminatory and prejudiced, and brings no credit to this Government or its architects.

6.6 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): On two issues I agree with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who opened the debate for the Opposition. The first is his support for Blackburn Rovers, which is highly commendable. The second is that for many years he has said that the solution to the problem of some of the lunatic councils in London is annual elections. I believe that we will have problems in London until we have annual elections. In the gap of four years between elections, those councils can get carried away and the response to the electorate is weakened. I commend to my right hon. and hon. Friends the introduction, at some stage, of annual elections in London. It would be good for all the party systems and for the response to the electorate.

Reference has been made to the £140 that was taken off the community charge and put on VAT. I would have liked the community charge to remain once that £140 had been taken off, because the objection to the community charge was basically its size, not the principle. I realise that that is water under the bridge, but I put it on record.

I am concerned particularly about London and the south-east—the area which includes the constituency that I now represent. The Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association and other bodies in London considered, when the council tax was brought in, that it would be unfair to London and the south-east. That is because it is a modified property tax and houses in London and the south-east are very expensive, not because they are bigger than houses elsewhere or because people in the area are earning more, but simply because of land shortage. One does not buy a house; one buys a plot of land on which the house is built.

The LBA thinks that London loses about £200 million and the rest of the south-east about £175 million because of this change to a property system. Similarly, it has been calculated that for people in London and the south-east to live at the same standard as people in other parts of the country, they must earn about £6,000 a year more because of travel and housing costs in the area. This is something that I have to remind my right hon. and hon. Friends about in connection with the difficult issue of sharing out the money that is available. That is why the London Boroughs Association—I and other London Members went along with it—pressed for a separate set of bands for London and the south-east, because the house price gap between London and the rest of the country was wider than it was between Wales and England and between England and Scotland, where separate bands were inserted.

The recession in London is really a slump. I grew up in Lancashire during the depression when, at one stage, unemployment in the cotton industry in my own town was higher than unemployment in Jarrow. But although Lancashire was in a terrible state in the 1930s, London was prosperous. That is when all the houses were being built. One would have to go back more than a hundred years to encounter anything like the situation that we have now. It means that the depression is greater. Those of us who were born in the north knew that the good times would not last. We invested in the local Co-op, we bought saving certificates, and we put the rent money on one side. We hid our nuts against the bad times that were coming. But in London it had been assumed that the prosperity would continue.

Unemployment is now 10 to 12 per cent. in my constituency and the figure is rising faster than in practically any other constituency in the country. I am not against capping and I recognise the difficulty of sharing the money out, but a high council tax in London will increase the number of repossessions when people who are struggling to pay mortgages find that they have to pay more because of the introduction of council tax.

The greatest losers under the council tax are single people in three or four-bedroomed properties with limited resources, not the rich or those with no resources, but those in between who have saved. People say that they should sell their houses, but a widow who has lived in the house all her life and who wants her children and grandchildren to visit her at Christmas and other times will find her present life style disappearing if she has to sell the house.

I know that there is transitional relief, but it is less overall, from what I have worked out, than it was with the community charge, and one wonders how long it will last. When the Minister replies to the debate, I would welcome a statement that it will be reconsidered each year according to the circumstances prevailing.

There are advantages with the council tax, I know. It is easier to collect. That is the great advantage of any form of property tax: one cannot hide a house when someone comes up the road. The history of window tax and similar taxes shows that people return to a property tax time and again because of ease of identification. Three million people on low incomes will get a rebate, 6 million will get a 25 per cent. discount, and I am glad that 600,000 students will also be exempt. It all helps.

One of the things that sank the community charge was the great increase in expenditure that went with it. On my statistics—and the Department will know them better than I do these days—it went up by about 31 per cent. in one year. But the new tax has been introduced in a way that will not break the bank, and I commend the Department on the way in which it has handled it.

Brent last year had £254 million. This year it had £258 million. Last week it got about £750,000 more, an increase which is still less than 2 per cent. The problem in Brent —and it is not the only London borough which has it—is the accuracy of its registers and of the census on which they are based. People just disappeared. Interestingly enough, there have been so many objections to the registers in Brent that people are now knocking on doors

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

to find out who is there, which seems to me the right way to do it rather than sending questions out with junk mail which just disappears. In the past three or four weeks they have discovered many thousands more people. As far as I know, they have not come from outer space; they must have been there for a long time and they have been identified. We know that people came off the registers because of the community charge: they feared a cross-check. There is something of a mystery as to how big a population some London boroughs have.

Reference has been made by Conservative Members to the refugee problem, which is intense in London. I have large numbers of Somali refugees in my constituency, and the numbers increase all the time. It is not a question of small numbers; they arrive in their hundreds.

The Secretary of State has worked hard to get the council tax right, and I pay tribute to him and the Minister of State for that, but it would be very good if Brent could bring them evidence to show that the real population is higher than the number which has been accepted in the past. I believe that there may be as many as 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 people who live there but who have still not been identified. If we could also get accurate numbers of refugees, and if I could bring my council leader to the Minister to see what can be done——

Mr. Illsley *rose——*

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Let me finish this point and then I will give way.

I am warned by my council leader in Brent that, as things stand, the cuts will have to be made in education. It means that about 90 teachers will lose their jobs. That is why I am concerned to bridge the gap. I have always worried about education, and the one thing that will upset all families is a threat to their children's education through what they see as a change of system. So I would like to bring my council leader to the Secretary of State or to the Minister of State with more information. The more accurate we get the registers, the better it will be, for possible boundary changes and everything else. All the information is suspect at present.

Mr. Illsley: The point that the right hon. Gentleman makes about registers strikes a chord among Opposition Members. I have read of the work done by Brent to increase the numbers on the register, but will the right hon. Gentleman agree that more resources ought to be given to improve the electoral registers, in view of the shortfall identified not only by the right hon. Gentleman but also by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who is sponsoring a Bill on that point? Surely it would be better for all local authorities to have adequate resources to improve the registers.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I agree with the hon. Member Registration in Britain is supposed to be compulsory. In the United States it is still voluntary, but in certain parts of Brent registration has become voluntary. I do not know whether they go into the loft when one goes round, whether they have cellars or whether they go on to their allotments. I go out every second Sunday with people on the knocker to see what is happening. I take the registers with me and I find that the discrepancy is about 15 or 16 per cent. A house is supposed to have only two inhabitants, but when the door is opened I find a veritable feast going on inside—to which, of course, I am invited, as hon. Members would expect. But I cannot then ask who has registered or who has paid the poll tax. Far be it from me to do so. A little Christian charity is required on such occasions.

Once upon a time registers were reliable, but I do not believe that they are reliable now. Despite my support for the community charge, I believe that if it had one disadvantage it was the fact that it put an end to the accuracy of the registers and encouraged people to stray into error, something that legislation ought not to do, as I am sure all hon. Members would agree. That temptation has now gone, and people are coming back on to the registers. The greater the pressure that the Department can bring to bear to put the registers right, the better, so that we know how many people there are in this country. It might be interesting to know how many people are living here and whether the whole country is sinking or coming up according to the total population.

Whatever anyone's views might have been at the beginning about the council tax, the council tax must now work. The battle between national Government and local government has done no good to either national Government or local government. I have always believed in the dispersal of power. The centre of power should not be in one area. There is a risk of centralising power, regardless of which party is in Government. Because the Government has the numbers, the Departments and so on, there is always a permanent risk to corrupt Ministers, to put it that way, to the idea that they can run local government better than anyone else.

The battle has run for the past 15 to 20 years. There has been a strong tendency for local government elections to go the other way, whatever the Government's colour. When the Labour party was in Government between 1966 and 1970, it almost disappeared in local town halls. I remember that Islington became Conservative controlled. Hackney came under Conservative control, although it had not had one Conservative councillor before.

As soon as we get a certain party in government—my hon. Friend the Minister of State has good experience of local government—local government goes the other way which tempts the Government to battle with local government. We must get the council tax right because the battle must not be allowed to continue. We must have a spread of power, otherwise it will be dangerous for everybody.

I shall vote with the Government tonight. I have had to wrestle with my conscience on the matter. I admit that I should have the habit of voting with the Government from time to time. After the Maastricht debate and so on, it will be exciting to go into the Aye Lobby. I told my wife that today will be a strange day.

I shall vote with the Government because they have done their best to clear up a difficult matter. At the same time, I remind the Minister that I should like him to help me to force my council to get it right and get the 60 councillors to knock on doors nightly to see who is there. He should then know that there are problems in Brent with under-registration and an increased number of refugees so that I can help the people in my constituency at the same time. The last thing I want is any cut in schools which would damage education in Brent.

6.23 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): We have had some vintage performances today. I especially enjoyed the performance of the hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) who raised the important matter of the Government's tendency to centralise everything. I always complain that the Government's policy on local government control is based on the three Cs—centralise, centralise and centralise. That has certainly happened recently.

We had a vintage performance from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). Madam Deputy Speaker, I am grateful that you did not call me immediately after his speech, because I was laughing so much internally that I got the hiccups, but I have recovered now. We also had a vintage performance from the Secretary of State. Like the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), I was astonished that the Secretary of State did not mention jobs.

What is the settlement all about? It is about jobs and cuts. We have all seen the *Local Government Chronicle* of 15 January, which reported that the number of non-teaching jobs to be lost is estimated at more than 32,000. I hope that that projection is wrong. I hope that 32,000 non-teaching jobs will not be lost. To get anywhere near the promise made by the Secretary of State in the debate on 26 November, local authorities will need to go through economic contortions to set budgets which are somewhere near the capping level. When the revenue support grant figures were originally announced in the debate on 26 November, the Secretary of State said:

"I am confident that this settlement will provide local authorities with the resources that they need to deliver the wide range of local services of the quality which people expect and deserve".

When I pressed him about jobs, he replied:

"If local authorities manage their resources sensibly and adhere to the public sector pay policy guidelines . . . there will be no need for job losses."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1011, 1015.]

I must declare an interest as an elected councillor in Gloucestershire. We will be setting our budget next week. One of the guidelines that we will be examining is our ability to set a budget without job losses. At this stage, it is unlikely that we will be able to come anywhere near the capping level if we adhere to the Secretary of State's advice.

What are the cuts which we are examining? Four out of five social services directors in England expect a reduction in their budget, despite having new community care responsibilities. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimates that the Government are underfunding the new community care responsibilities of local authorities by £135 million.

Much of the problem stems from inaccuracies in SSAs. Standard spending assessments are to accuracy what Evil Knievel is to road safety—not relevant. Standard spending assessments are not a mechanism to calculate the spending requirement or needs of an area; they are a mechanism to divide a predetermined amount among authorities. That means that local councils are assumed to spend a certain amount on a certain service, when the reality is much different.

Standard spending assessments are the consequence of Whitehall bureaucrats pondering inadequate data, bogus statistical analyses and subjective judgments to devise a system which bears little relation to reality. How can the system be justified when, according to SSAs, children in Richmond upon Thames are classed as more in need than those in Barnsley? I am pleased that the Secretary of State will review the workings of SSAs. Pending that review, he might like to relieve councils of their caps, so that they can set the budgets which they would like to set this year.

I shall give three examples of cases in which SSAs are causing difficulty. In Warwickshire, the fire and rescue budget for 1992-93 was £2·4 million over SSA. The Department of the Environment said that the amount was excessive, yet the Home Office said that it was insufficient to meet minimum standards.

On the Isle of Wight, the fire service budget for 1993-94 is £1 million over SSA. To get the SSA, the island would have to close stations or reduce staffing. Such factors are controlled by the Home Office, which sets SSAs, but it is saying that the island should spend £1·5 million more on fire.

In my own county of Gloucestershire, the chief constable has been asked what spending at SSA will mean to him. It will mean keeping 40 officer posts and 73 civilian posts vacant. I went out with the Gloucestershire police one Saturday evening a few weeks ago. They have a difficult job to do. They are undermanned and do not have enough facilities. There is a growing crime rate in the county. It is wrong that two Government Departments are saying different things. The Home Office is saying that the chief constable needs so many men and the Department of the Environment is saying that the SSA is the amount which can be spent.

According to the Association of County Councils, 69 out of 108 local education authorities spend above SSA. That is important, because education is a large proportion of the spending of local authorities. It is not merely local education authority schools that want standard spending assessments for education, but also grant-maintained schools. A joint delegation from Gloucestershire met the Minister to press the case for SSAs to be funded at a realistic level.

Even if the SSAs were accurate—I contend that they are not—they would not take into account the problems that the recession is causing local authorities. For instance, Harrogate, where Liberal Democrats recently took majority control, is facing an additional bill of £452,000 for housing benefit. Sutton is facing a loss of £547,000 in reduced income from car parking and increased spending on free school meals, due to the recession.

Bournemouth, like other seaside resorts, has suffered a drastic reduction in income, and has lost £1 million out of a total £19 million budget because of reduced trading income. Cornwall has had to add £750,000 to its free schools meals budget, which is at an all-time high. Richmond is facing a bill of £2·5 million extra because of the costs of homelessness due to repossessions and arrears. None of those costs has been reflected in the settlement, and they will all cause cuts in services and job losses.

The Secretary of State has said that, as long as local councils stick to the 1·5 per cent. pay policy, they will not have to make cuts. However, police and fire service pay are not subject to that limit.

I shall compare central and local government spending. The former is set to rise by 6·6 per cent. during the next financial year. The Secretary of State said today that local government spending is rising by only 3·1 per cent., which is less than half the amount that central Government are allowing themselves. With the latest cuts in interest rates

[Mr. Nigel Jones]

and the devaluation of the pound—let alone the knock-on effect in the 1993-94 budget of the 1992-93 pay round—there is every chance that inflation may well be higher than 3·1 per cent.

In a letter to parents dated January 1993, Mr. Gardiner, the head teacher of a school attended by many children in my constituency, said:

"The amount of money that the County Council is allowed to spend is controlled by central government. This year the money that will be available to schools is well below what is required to run schools effectively.

I estimate that since 1991 our budget has been cut by about 10 per cent. in real terms. For the coming financial year the school budget is to be reduced by approximately 6 per cent. and the prediction for 1994-95 is equally gloomy . . . A cut in our budget of 6 per cent. next year will mean that, in common with other schools in the County, class size, resources and staffing will all be affected."

He urges parents to write

"to County Councillors, local Members of Parliament and the Secretary of State".

I know that many of them are doing so.

I do not get letters in my post bag asking me to keep the council tax low, but I receive bucketloads of letters asking me to protect services, education and social services, and to improve policing, in the face of the current crime wave.

Local authority spending should be based on need, and standard spending assessments do not reflect that. The settlements mean that local authorities are bearing the brunt of public spending cuts. Services are set to be hammered, and thousands of jobs will go. The responsibility for that will lie not with local councillors, who are jumping through hoops trying to find savings, but with the Secretary of State and the Government.

Capping is undemocratic. Even the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association has opposed universal capping. I repeat what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said when he quoted the Secretary of State as saying of capping, in 1988:

"It is not a measure to be used as a matter of course."

It is important to remember that, as it is being used as such.

"The people of an area will be able to vote for a relatively high-spending authority if they so choose."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

Many local authorities feel hard done by, including many that do not receive area cost adjustments. I asked the Secretary of State for Education for some figures on average teacher salaries in councils that have area cost adjustments compared with areas that do not. I was surprised to find that Dorset, which does not benefit, has a higher average teacher salary than Hampshire, which does benefit. My county has a higher teacher salary average than Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, West Sussex or the Isles of Scilly, which all receive area cost adjustments. I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that he would reconsider area cost adjustments, because they seem unjust.

I am in a difficult position over my local authority's budget. Hon. Members will know that in many cases the notional amount has been adjusted since the original estimate at the end of last year. The notional amount for Gloucestershire has increased by almost £5 million—I am grateful for that—because the Government have admitted that they made a few errors in their original calculations. It therefore came as some surprise last Friday to discover that, instead of being increased by £5 million, the Gloucestershire SSA has been reduced by £0·4 million, which will cause severe problems when we set our budget.

Many councils will feel hard done by, and many will wish to appeal against their cap. Will the Secretary of State consider carefully before designating authorities for capping, and be open to persuasion by councils that decide to appeal against their cap?

Liberal Democrats believe that local people have the right to choose whatever local administration they see fit. If they choose an incompetent administration, they have the right to throw them out, and I support the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and others who have suggested that annual elections are one way to achieve that.

Fortunately, given the way the Government are going, there is every chance that the Conservatives will be thrown out of county halls throughout the country on 6 May, and that they will be thrown out of government in 1996, or perhaps even earlier. Frankly, when that happens, local government will breathe a huge sigh of relief.

6.37 pm

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). He and I served on the Committee on the Housing and Urban Development Bill, and as he was not a frequent attender it is nice to remind ourselves of exactly what he looks like.

There can be no doubt that the settlement is tight and will challenge some authorities; nor can there be any doubt that some authorities will be in difficulties. But the settlement certainly is not a surprise as it was well flagged in the local government press and is within the area of expectation. The level of settlement is considerably higher than was predicted in many quarters.

Prudent councils which care about their local communities would and should have been taking the necessary reforms already, and starting to reduce their expenditure gradually, to minimise the effects on services and to plan sensibly. After all, reductions in growth taken out over a long time minimise the effects on services.

Over the past few weeks we have seen a number of Labour councillors and Labour councils shroud-waving to the press, predicting thousands upon thousands of redundancies. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) talked in terms of tens of thousands. The hon. Gentleman kindly allowed me to intervene, and I asked him to give me his estimate, as he said that this was central to the Labour party's programme. Sadly, he failed to give me any figures. I tried again to intervene, but without success. As the hon. Gentleman is a courteous person, he apologised to me outside the Chamber.

I have no doubt that this matter is central to the Labour party's strategy. I see on the Opposition Front Bench the amicable and urbane frame of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). If either of them cares to tell us what redundancies they anticipate, I shall be happy to give way. After all, these figures are central to the case that they make. I am not surprised that neither hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene. We have already seen the considerable fall-out that Labour authorities have suffered from estimates.

This morning we heard the figures from Birmingham city council, which has reduced the level of expected redundancies by about 70 per cent., to 1,000, all of which the council says can be taken care of without any compulsion. One does not expect estimates to be precise, but an error of 70 per cent. suggests to me that the council was trying to frighten the trade unions—a practice that I obviously deplore.

Mr. Ainsworth: Does the hon. Gentleman know that between the November statement and the previous one there was a considerable increase in the spending allowance for Birmingham? Did not that increase give rise to the revised estimate?

Mr. Pickles: I am very pleased about the increase. It shows that the Government listen to sensible points put forward by political parties. Perhaps it gives the lie to the suggestion that the Government are conducting a vendetta against Labour councils. One cannot in one breath complain about a vendetta against Labour councils and in the next breath talk about an increase in the Government's notional amounts.

Local government takes care of about 25 per cent. of public expenditure. That being the case, it is not unreasonable that councils should play a part in ensuring that settlements are in line with what the public can afford. Central Government support has increased by about 3·7 per cent., and I am very pleased to say that the notional amounts have been increased by about £150 million.

We are starting to move into a different kind of debate on the revenue support grant. I believe that the quality and spending options will be matters of the greatest concern in future debates, as they are in this one.

I come to what the hon. Member for Blackburn called a question of judgment. Because of the decisions on value added tax and on capping powers, but particularly because of the effects of gearing, the irresponsible rate and community charge increases of the latter part of the 1980s will no longer be possible. The differential will continue to exist.

I am grateful for figures produced recently by Tony Travers, which show that Tory propaganda was right all along: "Conservative councils cost you less"—nearly £100 less. However, because of the trends in the Audit Commission and the introduction of the citizens charter, councils will increasingly look to performance indicators, and electors will increasingly know the cost of refuse collection in one borough as against another and will start to ask difficult questions. Councillors will no longer be able to hide behind the mystique of local government finance; they will be brought to account and will have to justify their spending arrangements.

Let me give an example. There is no doubt that the good people of Hackney will want to know why their council decided to forgo savings of £2 million. I refer to a recent decision of the council to award its own direct labour organisation £2 million more in expenses. I expect that, right at this moment, the whole borough of Hackney is shaking its head in wonder. The awarding of this maintenance contract to the council's own workers goes against all ideas of normality in local government. This is a lot of money to be slushing around. There is no suggestion that Hackney pays its work force competitive rates; I think that there is some suggestion that it pays slightly more.

I should like to deal with a matter that has arisen in this debate and about which the House has heard before. I refer to corruption in local government. It must be said loudly that the majority of councillors in this country are honest, decent people who work hard for their local communities. That applies right across the political spectrum. Councillors put in long hours for virtually no pay. They put something back into their communities, and I believe that local government service is honourable service. But corruption allegations touch every councillor. They obviously touch the dishonest, but they also hurt and damage the honest. It is not good enough to produce tatty pieces of paper or to make suggestions about meetings at racecourses when, as the hon. Member for Blackburn said, there are people who have their hands in the till and their snouts in the trough.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The hon. Gentleman is talking about the Government.

Mr. Pickles: Cheap remarks from a sedentary position are not good enough. Such comments let down Labour councillors, as well as councillors of all other political parties, throughout the land. We need to stand together to ensure that corruption is wiped out.

Mr. Betts: Will the hon. Gentleman condemn his colleagues who, in this Chamber last week, asked for investigations by the police and the Audit Commission into Labour local authorities in general? Was not that a slur on all the honest Labour members of those authorities who are doing an excellent job on behalf of their constituents?

Mr. Pickles: I understand the hon. Gentleman's remark. I know that he was bruised by the revelations about his office accommodation. However, it seems to me legitimate to have discussions about options—whether it is more desirable to provide offices for Members of Parliament or to provide lollipop ladies. In any case, any allegations of corruption must be investigated with the utmost rigour.

I should like to make a suggestion about how all this might be put behind us. A common thread runs through the incidents and allegations of corruption and maladministration, both of which are equally damaging to local authorities. That thread involves a blurring of the responsibilities of councillors and officers; councillors start to take on responsibilities that properly belong to council officers. That problem has not suddenly occurred. The House was unwise not to heed the warning in the Redcliffe-Maud report many years ago, which referred to the role of the officer and the member.

The report stated that if we were to attract a higher calibre of officer and a better quality of member, there should be a clear demarcation of responsibility between the two. The member should concentrate on devising and monitoring the policy; the officer should concentrate on implementing the policy and on general managerial issues. When one considers all the problems lately, one sees that the councillor has started to assume the role of the officer.

There is currently a working party in the Department of the Environment studying good practice. I hope that the Minister will be able to advise us on how that working party is progressing. It seems sensible that it should look specifically at the role of the officer and the role of the member.

[Mr. Pickles]

This country certainly deserves good local government which can respond to, and meet the needs of, the people. The role of the officer and the role of the member deserve serious consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): A practice seems to be developing in the Chamber whereby hon. Members from both sides of the House are bringing in communication devices. On two occasions this week when I have been in the Chair, an hon. Member's speech has been disrupted by such a gadget. It would help our debates if people did not bring such gadgets into the Chamber.

6.52 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I agree with the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), particularly about under-registration, which is a problem that affects every local authority district, and I am pleased that he has been able to tackle the problem of under-registration in Brent. However, I repeat the call that the Government should consider a nationwide system to improve registration for elections. All three constituencies in my region are well under-represented in the current electoral register.

Having said that, I intend to speak about the standard spending assessments used to formulate revenue support grant, in particular as those assessments apply to my local authority, Barnsley metropolitan borough council. Barnsley's standing spending assessment has been set at a level well below the amount that the authority needs to spend to maintain its services. This is not the first time that I have complained about SSAs and the Government's ridiculous treatment of mining areas, particularly with regard to SSAs and determining grants. Three years ago I complained that Barnsley had been poll-capped—it was one of the 21 authorities to have been capped, one third of which were coal mining districts. That shows where the Government have targeted their cuts in local government expenditure.

When we complained about the cuts that would have to be made in local government expenditure the predecessor of the present Secretary of State spoke of a parade of bleeding stumps. I have listened to the latest version, in which the Secretary of State spoke of ritual protests from the Opposition. The Government simply do not believe that the cuts are being made. I have no reason to believe that the present Secretary of State understands the position any better than his predecessors.

Three years ago the music centre in Barnsley, which taught music to a very high standard, was closed as a result of cuts. Such a high standard of music teaching has never returned to my district. Unfortunately, there are further cuts to come this year. However, it appears that some of the Opposition's arguments are perhaps beginning to register. Recent meetings with the Minister have achieved some results and there are signs that the SSAs will be reorganised in future. Perhaps we can look forward to a new regime. I hope that when the Minister winds up the debate he will say that the new regime will encompass not only new data from the 1991 census returns, but a new formula for SSAs.

I have complained about SSAs on a number of occasions, and before rehearsing the arguments again I shall make a few general remarks. In the 1994-95 financial year, a new system using up-to-date data may be introduced, but that still means that my authority will have three to four years on a low revenue support grant. I should hate to think that my authority will have to start from that position when the new regime is implemented. I hope that we shall look at the matter afresh and consider Barnsley's needs as a whole, rather than using the current financial year's budget as the starting point for any new system of calculation.

We need a more accurate assessment of need. The Minister said that unemployment could be taken into account as a sign of need in a district. Perhaps he will confirm that in his winding-up speech. In my region, that factor is most apparent as Barnsley has a higher than average level of unemployment. It has been affected by the decision of the President of the Board of Trade to close more collieries. If those closures take place, my district will be badly affected. The Minister has heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the number of redundancies throughout the nation which could result from the cuts in local government finance.

This year, my authority will still be capped at an artificially low level. The standard spending assessment does not take account of my district's needs. Future restructuring will repeat the errors of the past as the lion's share of the funding will go to large conurbations such as Manchester, Liverpool and Merseyside, once again leaving the metropolitan districts at the bottom of the pile when funds are allocated. Future restrictions will also continue artificially to inflate the Conservative-controlled London areas, such as Wandsworth and Westminster.

For the past three years that I have spoken in these debates, I have asked why Barnsley—my authority—always figures at the bottom of the list for metropolitan districts. I have never received an adequate response. The last time I asked the President of the Board of Trade, who was then the Secretary of State for the Environment, he said that someone had to come bottom of the list. I appreciate that, but why is it my authority rather than anyone else's? The right hon. Gentleman could not see the problem with the formula for calculating SSAs, which counts against medium-sized and mining authorities, classing them as low-need authorities when they should be assessed as authorities with moderate needs, especially after the recent decisions affecting coal mining districts.

Every time I have spoken in these debates I have mentioned the research undertaken into the calculation of SSAs. Initially we commissioned research from Coopers and Lybrand; then we commissioned more from Newcastle university. The latest research comes from Salford university. Each time, the research has been presented to the Department with a request that the Department consider it and its implications for the SSAs. The research shows clearly that the formula discriminates against some authorities. I refer particularly on this occasion to the so-called Webber-Craig authorities—seven authorities of similar size and make-up. I believe that Ministers are well aware of them.

Time and again the Government have ignored this research and have carried on using the same formula for the SSAs. One can only conclude that they are quite happy to discriminate against Labour-controlled mining authorities and quite happy that we should continue to receive levels of grant lower than those to which we feel that we are entitled.

One of the problems is that the formula uses proxies as indicators of need. Ethnicity, for example, is one such proxy. The incidence of one-parent families is another. These are looked at instead of looking at actual need—at poor health, unemployment and economic need. The ethnicity factor used in the calculation appears in eight different blocks. That means that if a local authority has only a small number of ethnic inhabitants in its area—mine has only a small number—that fact is taken into account eight times over, and the SSA will register correspondingly low—despite the fact that this is a proxy indicator which bears no relation to the real need of an authority.

I believe that the Secretary of State acknowledged my next point following my intervention earlier. I refer to the wide gap between the top authorities and the lower ones. The Secretary of State asked where we would find the extra money. I say that we do not need "extra" money. Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham gain far more grant than metropolitan areas such as mine. On average, Manchester receives 70 per cent. more grant than Barnsley, as I have pointed out year after year. The gap is far too wide. Why are Manchester, Birmingham and Merseyside allowed 70 per cent. more money to provide a standard level of service? It is crazy.

Birmingham does not even spend up to its SSA. I understand that it spends £35 million per year on its publicity budget alone. That is equal to a quarter of Barnsley's entire budget. Something must be wrong with the calculations. SSAs should be based on indicators of need, to provide a standard level of service. I remind the Government what the then Secretary of State for Health said on 20 February 1990, when he pointed out that the standard spending assessment is not a target at which local authorities should aim, nor is it a level to which they are obliged to reduce if they want to spend above it: it is for local government to determine what it will spend on its services, and it will be answerable to the electorate for the resulting charges.

Fine words, but they have now been proved rubbish, as the Government will not allow local authorities to be answerable to their electorates for their charges. SSAs have become the method by which the Government cap local authority expenditure. So the Government determine what local authorities spend.

The Salford university research was the latest piece of research that my authority submitted to the Government. I confess that I do not understand it—its statistical language is beyond me—but I am assured by those who do understand it that it is cogent, logical and correct.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should be shy or reticent about admitting that he does not understand all the figures. I am sure that many of our colleagues in the House feel exactly the same. I am sure, too, that the sentiment that he has just expressed will be echoed throughout the length and breadth of this country. We must therefore work to make the figures comprehensible. I hope that I may have the chance to say a few words on that subject later in the debate.

Mr. Illsley: If the hon. Gentleman would like a copy of the research from Salford, I should be happy to give him it. If he can find his way through it and understand it, perhaps he will drop me a line to explain it. I agree with him that the information is complicated, and the research submitted by Salford university to the Government is even more complicated than the SSA calculations. It is a highly detailed mathematical document which I do not confess to understand, any more than I understand everything about local government finance. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that some of the jargon in these reports should be clarified.

I should like to offer one or two examples of how these calculations are arrived at. The additional needs calculation runs as follows:

"The sum of:

(i) 1·5 *multiplied by* CHILDREN OF LONE PARENTS (as defined below); and

(ii) 1·5 *multiplied by* CHILDREN OF CLAIMANTS (as defined below); and

(iii) The proportion of children aged under 18 in private households who were born outside the United Kingdom, Ireland, the USA or the Old Commonwealth, or whose head of household was born outside these areas, calculated using information from the 1981 Census.

CHILDREN OF LONE PARENTS

The proportion of children aged under 18 in private households containing a lone parent family, calculated using information from the 1981 Census.

The children's social index is calculated thus:

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL INDEX

The sum of the following factors (each of which is calculated to 4 decimal places):

(i) CHILDREN OF LONE PARENTS (as defined above for the Education block); *minus* 0·1305, and then *divided by* 0·0358; and"——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): I am enjoying the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I ask him to bear in mind that these SSAs are less complex than their predecessors. That much, I think, is conceded all round. Secondly, most of an SSA is backed up by independent research which will sometimes produce some fairly complex calculations.

Mr. Illsley: Is that why the Government are thinking of altering the SSAs in 1994-95? Perhaps all the research has not been wasted in that case, and we may look forward to a better system.

Mr. Betts: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the main findings of the Salford study was that, in changing from the grant-related expenditure assessment system to the standard spending assessment system, the Government sacrificed accuracy for the extra simplicity to which the Minister referred?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend is an expert in local government finance and I defer to his greater knowledge. I am sure that what he says is true. In simplifying the GREAs we have perhaps lost out somewhere along the way. In any case, perhaps the Government will now realise that the indicators used are wrong. They must be more closely targeted on the needs of particular areas.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures are ridiculous, based as they are on information 12 years out of date? That information does not relate to the needs of the present day. Things have moved on a great deal since the 1981 census—one thinks of care for the elderly and care for children. I am sure my hon. Friend agrees that the assessments are nonsense.

Mr. Illsley: I do entirely. I hope that when the Government examine the 1991 census data they will also consider different economic indicators for the SSAs—and that they will not accept 1992-93 as the starting point for

[Mr. Illsley]

authorities which have been badly affected by their SSAs in the past three years. My hon. Friend's constituency of Doncaster, North contains one of the authorities which has been the subject of initial capping. We have been pegged low over the past three years because we started low. I hope that when the new formula is introduced we shall not be left at the bottom of the pile.

According to Salford university research, the SSAs are based on information which is narrow, unrealiable and of questionable relevance. They fail to recognise the problems facing coalfield areas: relatively high unemployment and relatively low educational attainment. I do not know why the university uses the word "relatively". Educational attainment in my area is low and I make no apology for saying that. I disagree with the Government's figures because I think that they are poor indicators of educational attainment, but school examination tables and results on the testing of seven-year-olds show that my authority is at the bottom. More help in education should be used as an indicator of need.

My area suffers from industrial dereliction and needs economic regeneration. The problem will be made worse if the collieries close this year. It is a low-income area with relatively high mortality and a high incidence of chronic illness. The Salford university study states:

"A degree of error . . . consistently disadvantages a number of authorities. The indicators used to characterise need come from a narrow and highly intercorrelated range. There is a strong case for the replacement, removal or downgrading of several indicators."

I shall give some examples of how variation affects my authority. I stress that there is an enormous variation between the top and bottom ranked authorities in terms of SSA, especially in metropolitan areas. For the first time this year, my local authority has moved from bottom place. I repeat that I am asking not for increased total funding for local government but for a reorganisation of funding.

Surely Manchester does not need 70 per cent. more funding than my area to provide the same services. I will give a concrete example. The implied spending on a 300-pupil primary school in my constituency is £534,000 but in Manchester it is £662,000. The implied cost for an 800-pupil secondary school in my area is £2,082,000 but for Manchester it is £2·5 million. Those are large differences. Does Manchester really need 24 per cent. more than my authority does to fund a 300-pupil primary school? The difference would pay about seven additional teachers.

I have spoken about the Tory-controlled boroughs of Westminster and Wandsworth. The SSA for a primary school pupil in Westminster is £2,741 while in Barnsley it is £1,793. The implied spending on a 300-pupil primary school in Westminster is £822,000 but in Barnsley it is £534,000. For a secondary school in Westminster the amount is £3,193,000, while in Barnsley it is £2,082,000. That shows that the school in Westminster costs £1,111,000 more than the one in Barnsley. Why does Westminster need that much more to fund a similar school? I have been asked for three years why London boroughs have far more funding than mine.

The same disadvantages apply in social services. I shall use as a basis the social services SSA per child at risk. The figure for Manchester is £2,168,000 per annum and for Barnsley it is £1,202,000. Why does Manchester need £1 million, or 80 per cent., more than my authority to provide a standard service? The first two pages of the RSG report states that the SSAs are designed to show the funding for a standard level of service.

We have complained time and again about these enormous differences. I spoke about ethnicity being used as an indicator in eight sub-blocks. If a borough is low in one block, it is deemed to be low in all eight. We are at the bottom of the table. Proxies are also used. There has been a fall in employment in my constituency since 1981. We witnessed the 1984-85 miners strike and the run-down in employment has been mainly in mining. Some 20,000 to 25,000 jobs have gone. Data from 1981 are no longer relevant, but we are receiving grant based on the 1981 census.

Research shows that Barnsley is not a low-need authority as the Government tend to believe. It has at least moderate needs. We rank low on ethnicity and on people over the age of 85. Barnsley has a history of mining, which means that the number of people who live to the age of 85 is lower than in other comparable areas. In addition, because of mining, there is a high incidence of respiratory diseases among people between the ages of 50 and 65. However, the SSA takes no account of that. We rank high on standardised mortality rates because there is a high proportion of ill health in the age groups that I have mentioned. In my area, long-term illness and unemployment are well above the national average.

Ethnicity is a component of a number of indicators. The additional educational needs indicator shows that ethnic minorities do better than local people. I mentioned that in the corresponding debate last year. Research has shown that there is no longer a need to overcompensate for ethnic minorities. The all-ages social index leads to a classic finding. That index, which is a measure of social deprivation, gives a lower score to Barnsley than to Hampshire and Oxfordshire, and the children's social index scores Barnsley's needs lower, for example, than Hampshire, Oxfordshire and West Sussex. Who are we kidding? How could anyone be convinced that my authority has less social deprivation than Hampshire, Oxfordshire and West Sussex? That is a classic example of SSAs being completely wrong.

I shall skip the health indicators because many hon. Members are waiting to speak and simply mention standardised mortality rates, limiting long-term illness, and low birth-rate indicators. Much research has been carried out in my constituency and the results are there if the Government wish to consider them. Audit Commission studies have shown that my authority is not a high but a moderate spender, but its needs are simply not covered by the SSA.

I shall now deal with the budget for the fire and civil defence authorities. The Minister nods. I know that he is aware of my concern, because I have made representations to him. He knows that the fire service in my area—and, indeed, throughout South Yorkshire—has again been given an SSA lower than that of any other fire and civil defence authority. It is lower than those of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear.

I know that you have an interest in this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire fire authorities have the lowest SSA per head, and that is proving detrimental. We have met the Minister, and representatives from the Home Office; only last week,

South Yorkshire's chief fire officer visited the Minister to try to convince him of our needs. We are now approaching the levels recommended by the Home Office: we do not want to fall below those levels, and we hope that the Government will take fire authorities into account when setting SSAs.

I am reluctant to talk about cuts. I well remember the Secretary of State's reference to a parade of bleeding stumps in 1990; I shall never forgive him for that comment, which has remained in my mind ever since. We had to make severe cuts in Barnsley. Now we shall have to cut £11 million from our budget, which will be rather difficult. I have a document listing the authority's own suggestions for cuts; I will give just two examples.

Every local authority residential home in Barnsley is to close in April, and a complete ending of the school meals service is being considered. In an area of high unemployment such as mine, that is a desperate measure. I am not pleading, or parading bleeding stumps; I am past that stage—I have been here for three years, pleading for better funding for my authority.

These will be serious cuts, which will affect my constituency greatly. I hope that there will be a different SSA calculation for 1994-95; I also hope that we shall receive additional help for 1993-94.

7.22 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Thank you for allowing me to catch your eye at a comparatively early hour, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), and to take part in the same debate as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), who is a neighbour of mine: I completely surround his constituency. With respect, I am glad that I do, because I hope to contain the spread of the Liberal tendency in the area.

There is no doubt that this is a tight settlement. It needs to be, if we are to contain the alarming rise in PSBR. The settlement, which amounts to £33·45 billion of central Government support, will enable local government to spend some £40 billion this year; that is the largest amount that local government has ever spent in this country. It is roughly a quarter of our total gross domestic product. Any talk of cuts from Opposition Members simply does not ring true.

A week or two ago, in answer to a question, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State told me that the total local authority debt now stood at £54·4 billion. That is a fantastic figure, which has risen at an alarming rate since the 1980s. We shall have to do something about it.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned the way in which SSAs affect various authorities. A number of my constituents have written to me about the problem, which has also been raised by the hon. Member for Cheltenham. As I shall demonstrate, one of the main reasons for it is the indebtedness of those authorities.

I am aware that local authority treasurers can do clever things with debt swaps and swapping money from one account to another and back again, and lending money in one account to another account at a higher rate of interest. Nevertheless, that £54·4 billion must be serviced each year, by each local authority that is in debt. My authority, Gloucestershire county council—which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Cheltenham—is complaining that this year's SSA is roughly £10 million short of what it thinks it needs to spend. Having obtained some statistics from my hon. Friend the Minister, I have discovered that Gloucestershire's debt is £124·4 million. Gloucestershire is a comparatively small shire council.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): It is all very well to talk about local authorities' debt, and Gloucestershire may be a good case in point. However, the hon. Gentleman really ought to take into account the considerable assets of local authorities. When we draw up a balance sheet on the assets and liabilities of an organisation, we look at the net result—and I opine that the ratio of local authority assets to local authority debt is probably 10 or 20 times the amount that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. That puts local authorities in a very strong position. The hon. Gentleman must remember that the debt to which he refers was incurred to accumulate capital assets for the benefit of local communities.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I was coming to that. The £124·4 billion of debt must be serviced. The hon. Gentleman is right: Gloucestershire county council has considerable assets. It has some 7,000 acres of valuable agricultural land.

As the hon. Member for Cheltenham has told us, he was part of a joint delegation that complained to my hon. Friend the Minister about the SSA. I was not there, but I was given a report of what took place. One of the questions that my hon. Friend asked the delegation was what would be the expected savings from capital sales of assets this year. The authority was not able to give a figure, although it had prepared its proposed budget. In his autumn statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer allowed local authorities great flexibility for this financial year in the way in which they spend their capital receipts; yet that authority had not calculated the amount that it would save this year. Debts are an on-cost, which local authorities must service.

From another parliamentary answer that I received the other day, I discovered that some 14 local authorities were debt-free. There was a slight contretemps over the figures: another source said that eight of those authorities were indebted to some extent. However, 14 are listed in the answer. I looked up the authorities, to establish their political complexion. It so happens that 11 are Conservative; the City of London is non-political—*[Laughter.]* It is non-political as listed. The others are hung councils. The only one that is not Conservative-controlled—even in the overall sense, as a hung council—is Ryedale, which is controlled by members of the SDP, whoever they are. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are all in the Lords."] I think that they have disappeared to another place.

In an effort to enlighten the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, Nort-East (Mr. Purchase)— I am glad to see that he is enjoying my speech; he may not enjoy it quite so much in a moment—I decided to try to find out which party was most effective at running local government. I came up with some interesting statistics, which I have not pulled out of mid-air. I discovered that 16 of the 20 authorities with the highest community charge were Labour controlled. I then discovered which were the top 20 worst collectors of the community charge. Not surprisingly, 15 of them——

Mr. Purchase: I bet they will be Labour.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The hon. Gentleman is very good at anticipating. There is a good long list that he can anticipate. When I give him a category, he can tell me how many of them are Labour.

I decided to discover which were the bottom 20 authorities for rent arrears, and 16 out of the 20 were——

Mr. Purchase: Labour.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Thank you. I also discovered which of the bottom 20 had the most vacant dwellings.

Mr. Purchase: If I were you, I would take the money and not open the box.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: If I was a betting man, it would be a certainty. I would not have to open the box; there would be no point. Seventeen out of the 20 were—oh, the hon. Gentleman has gone quiet all of a sudden.

I also considered manpower. The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) is very keen on employing more people. I wanted to see how effectively local authorities are run, and whether that depends on the level of manpower. I discovered that the six authorities employing the most manpower per 1,000 of the population were, needless to say, Labour. Manchester is at the top of the list, employing 52 full-time workers per 1,000 head of the population compared to Wandsworth's mere 17. The message is that Labour is inefficient.

The indebtedness of local authorities is an important factor, so I also looked up the 20 most indebted local authorities; needless to say, I discovered that 18 out of the top 20 were Labour. That includes the city of Birmingham, which was originally going to announce 3,000 redundancies, then 1,000, and now I do not know how many. The Labour city council has a staggering debt of £1·8 billion.

Mr. Purchase: I told you.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: You did, you were very clever at anticipating.

It shows that large city authorities have to spend more than they need to because of years and years of mismanagement. Conservative councils, especially if they are debt-free, are superbly run and offer a high level of efficient local services. However, Labour councils cost you more—they are very liberal with your money.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). I hope that I shall not misquote him, but I am sure that he will tell me if I do. He said that he would be very reluctant to set a budget which would involve job cuts. Surely, no local authority will set the same budget every year, allow a bit for inflation, add a little and then say that it must implement huge cuts when it cannot get that amount. It must consider the services that it has to provide, decide what it needs to spend and see whether it can provide the services more efficiently.

I use Gloucestershire county council's figures as an example. The Conservatives lost control of the council in 1985, when it had a debt of £26 million, but, when the Liberals took control in 1985, the debt almost doubled, to £46·5 million in one year.

Mr. Nigel Jones: May I correct the hon. Gentleman who entirely surrounds me? Gloucestershire county council has never been under Liberal Democrat control. It has been a hung council since 1985 and currently operates the rather curious arrangement of a Conservative-Labour alliance.

I have two questions. First, there is an outstanding school capital programme of £65 million in Gloucestershire. It increases every year, as we are not building the schools and school extensions. What projects in the hon. Gentleman's constituency does he think we should delete from that capital programme? The quotation that I read to the House was from the headmaster of a school in his division.

Secondly——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Interventions are getting rather lengthy. Bearing in mind the fact that many hon. Members want to catch my eye, it is not fair for hon. Members who have already spoken to take up the time with long interventions.

Mr. Jones: I shall ask a brief second question. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say to the Conservative chairman of the education committee, who says that Gloucestershire's SSA for education is entirely inadequate?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for correcting me. Gloucestershire county council is hung, but the Liberals had control between 1985 and 1991, so the increase in the debt occurred entirely under their control. We chucked out the Liberal controlling group in 1991. We now have the absurd situation in which the Conservatives and Labour alternate every six months, but we have been able to start to tackle —*[Interruption.]* It is absurd, because no one party has control without the other party's agreement.

In view of what I have said about Gloucestershire county council's indebtedness, I have no doubt that, come May and the next local elections, we shall regain control. It would be much more sensible to have Conservative control of Gloucestershire county council to tackle the problem of indebtedness and offer a realistic level of service to the people of Gloucester, which is what we all want.

Before the hon. Member for Cheltenham intervened, I was saying that he spoke about setting a budget for his authority. I have the indebtedness figures for his authority, which we both represent. It is a very small local authority, but has a debt of a staggering £40 billion—*[Interruption.]* —£40 million. Even so, it is £40 million on a comparatively small budget. It is no wonder that the hon. Gentleman could not set a budget that would provide the local level of services that he wants.

I suggest that the first thing that the Liberal controlling group on that authority should do is reduce that level of debt, so that it does not have to pay the servicing costs on it and will be able to provide a true level of service to the people of Cheltenham.

Despite what the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) said, indebtedness is a serious problem which must be tackled. If authorities such as Gloucestershire had the capital receipts that they should have, they would be able to provide a perfectly good—indeed, a superb—level of service within their SSA limit, and there would be no need for the fuss that they are currently generating. Local authority debt is huge, and it means a continuing on-cost to service that level of debt.

7.38 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): This has been a curious debate because, although most of us have been rightly concerned to study the figures and the damage being done to our local authorities by the settlement, hints of a wider debate on the nature of local government have emerged from time to time.

The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), the former leader of Bradford council, raised the issue of councillors and officers and the difficulty of maintaining a distinction between them. He suggested that councillors were for ever trying to take over the role of officers. I am sure that other hon. Members with experience of local government will, on occasion, have found exactly the opposite to be the case. Many officers will feel highly insulted by the hon. Gentleman's remarks. However, the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar made an important point in that regard.

The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar also made an important point about not allowing the debate to become a slanging match about who has the worst councillors. As he said, all councillors would be tarred in such a debate.

I agreed with about 50 per cent. of the speech made by the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). He made some important wider points about the nature of local government which, at some point, we will have to debate at greater length. I hope that members of the Government Front Bench noted his remarks about centralisation and the great damage that the Government's centralising tendency is causing in what to many people appears to be a systematic attack on the very nature of local government. The right hon. Member for Brent, North also made important points about registration; I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) will wish to take them further.

I want to refer particularly to Lancashire to illustrate what I believe is happening to local government. I accept that some of my colleagues and some Conservative Members have made similar points about their authorities. Fortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) has already made half my speech for me.

Many authorities in the north and west of the country —indeed, all authorities other than London, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire and Surrey, which benefit from the area cost adjustments—are suffering badly. That issue has already been referred to several times in the debate.

In a reply to a question of mine, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), told me that if the area cost adjustment was redistributed to all authorities in the country, it would amount to £15 per adult. In my case, that would be £15 for every adult in Lancashire. That is a not inconsiderable subsidy from the provinces—if I can call them that—to the south-east. The key point to bear in mind is that that subsidy has continued year after year and has increased each year.

Referring to shire counties for the moment, and trying to compare like with like, if we consider the counties of Essex, Kent, Hampshire and Lancashire, which are more or less the same size—I noted the Secretary of State's comment from a sedentary position that it is all about population—in 1989-90, Essex received £3·5 million from the ACA; in 1992-93, it received £64·2 million. In 1989-90, Kent received £3·5 million from the ACA; in 1992-93, it received £64·1 million—not bad going. In 1989-90, Hampshire received nothing from the ACA; in 1992-93, it received £62·6 million. Obviously, at some point it was discovered that Hampshire was being deprived and that was corrected: good for Hampshire.

In 1989-90, Lancashire received nothing from the ACA. In 1992-93 it received nothing from the ACA, and the same will apply in the coming year. The same applies to Nottinghamshire, Cumbria, Durham, Northumberland, Staffordshire and many others.

In 1986-87, the area cost adjustment was 1·5 per cent. of standard spending assessment. By 1992-93, it had grown to 3·5 per cent. We are talking about tremendously large sums of money. Between 1989-90 and 1992-93, the SSA of Essex has increased by 36 per cent., Kent's by 37 per cent. and Hampshire's by 31 per cent. Lancashire's has increased by 24 per cent. The disparity is even greater for other authorities.

That enormous difference has a ratchet effect. It consistently renders shire counties like Lancashire worse off. I noted with some pleasure the Secretary of State's comments about considering the matter again this year and I hope that that happens. However, concomitantly, councils in the south and east will become better off relatively speaking.

In 1988-89, Essex, Kent, Hampshire and Lancashire received, within about £10 million, the same SSA. Since 1990-91, the gap between the three southern counties and Lancashire has been growing to the point that at the moment Lancashire's SSA is £100 million below Kent's SSA; £80 million below that of Essex and £25 million below Hampshire's. I suppose that that could be called the politics of envy. If it is, I plead guilty: I am envious of those levels.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): The point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State about population is that this year and next year population change has a big influence. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) must consider SSAs per head. He must explain why Lancashire will receive £615 per head next year while Hampshire's figure is £568. The story is not quite the one that the hon. Gentleman is telling.

Mr. Pickthall: My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central has already examined the nature of the authorities to which the Minister has referred. He referred to the large urban area in a county like Lancashire which must be considered alongside the ethnicity problem.

In the settlement for shire counties this year, Lancashire's SSA is increased by 2·1 per cent. In the league table of shire counties, in that respect Lancashire comes 35th of 39. Kent has received a 4·8 per cent. increase and that makes Kent third in the league of 39. Essex has received a 3·9 per cent. increase and is ninth in the league. Hampshire has received a 5·1 per cent. increase and is second in the league.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has made it clear in figures that he has published in recent

[Mr. Pickthall]

weeks that, in all shire authorities, Conservative-controlled authorities have received increases averaging 3·7 per cent.; Liberal Democrat-controlled authorities have received increases averaging 3·7 per cent.; authorities with no overall control have received increases averaging 3 per cent. Labour-controlled authorities have received increases averaging 2·2 per cent.

The area cost adjustment is not the whole problem, but it is a substantial part of it. The figures, which are always difficult to extract from the documentation that is being worried over, show a deliberate discrepancy in funding which it is hard not to see as deliberately designed to penalise Labour-controlled authorities and to reward the Tory heartlands. That is corrupt in the same way that pork barrel politics is corrupt in the United States, although the latter is rather better hidden.

The practice signals a Government who are so consumed by vanity and arrogance that they believe that they can shift large amounts of public money away from Labour or non-Tory authorities to Conservative authorities and consistently get away with it. They may be right, because they have got away with it so far.

That practice also signals a fundamental dismemberment of local democracy which is as offensive to many local Conservatives as it is to local and national Labour politicians.

I do not suggest that funding for counties in the south and east should be cut. I believe, as Conservative Members believe—in theory, at least—in levelling up. Obviously, special measures must be taken to take into account the special problems of London. That part of the ACA could be justified, but it should surely come from outside the total SSA settlement. In so far as the ACA allows for supposed extra costs to the south-east shires for items such as police wages, fire service wages and so on, the figure is bogus, as was revealed earlier. In fact, it is a subsidy that is paid by the rest of us to half a dozen Tory shires.

Yesterday, in relation to DAF, the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made it clear what Conservative Members think about subsidies. He said that if we give DAF money to save that firm, we will have to take money from other firms and destroy them. That is precisely what is going on in local government. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not here to make the same case tonight.

The ACA is in the front line in the system of bad distribution of public funds, and that system needs to be corrected. Within that system there are many other anomalies. In my county of Lancashire, year after year SSAs for personal social services have been systematically below the average for the country and they become slightly worse each year.

One matter that has niggled me for a considerable time is the funding element in SSAs for under-fives education. It is calculated—I have mentioned this matter in every possible forum—on the basis of the population of under-fives in an authority, not the educational provision for those children. Wild anomalies are apparent. Some of the same counties are involved—is not that strange?

In Lancashire, in 1992-93 21,172 under-fives were provided for in terms of nursery education. Its SSA allowance for that is £22·9 million. In Hampshire, 13,207 under-fives are provided for, and the SSA is £22·7 million, almost the same amount as for Lancashire. In Kent, about half as many—11,100—under-fives are provided for. The SSA for Kent is £22·1 million—very little less than Lancashire's. In Essex, 12,900 under-fives are provided for, and the SSA is £21·63 million. If we take Lancashire's SSA per pupil as £100, we see that Hampshire has £159, Kent £184, and Essex £155. Incidentally, West Sussex would have £230 on the same basis.

The problem is that that is active discouragement for local authorities to provide nursery education, which might be part of the plot—I remember what the previous Secretary of State for Education thought of nursery education. It is a disincentive for a bad provider to provide more, and it is a disincentive for a good provider to continue being a good provider if it is to receive the same amount of money anyway, depending on the number of under-fives in its area. If the under-fives element of SSA were funded equally, Lancashire would get £5·6 million more than it presently does. That would go a long way to solving some of the county's problems. In every authority in Lancashire, education accounts for more than half its expenditure.

On 16 January, my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) received an answer from the hon. Member for Hornchurch, comparing expenditure per school pupil in those four counties. Boiled down to its essence, the answer showed that, on the basis of expenditure per pupil aged five to 16 inclusive, Essex receives £110 per pupil more than Lancashire does. If funding were level, that would be £20·97 million more for Lancashire. Hampshire receives £33 per pupil, and Kent receives £119 per pupil. If Lancashire were funded on the same basis as Kent, we would be £22·7 million better off —and yes, we would like it, please.

Wherever one looks in the miasma, one finds such anomalies. Before I became a Member of the House, I used to believe in the cock-up theory of politics. I no longer believe it. The SSA calculation, which gives off an air of technical neutrality—a system that was invented by robotic accountants, remorseless but pure—is in fact subject to arbitrary judgments and adjustments which all too clearly reflect the Government's attitude to people who have the temerity to elect Labour authorities.

A delegation from Lancashire secured a meeting with the Minister at which we debated the problems and raised several anomalies. To save time, I shall not refer to them, but the anomalies have already been mentioned—for example, in relation to the further education adjustment, nursery provision and other elements of ACA. We were able to lift the capping limit by £6 million. It would have made a difference, had our case been upheld, of £47·3 million for Lancashire, given that we would have had to have made virtually no cuts this year. Unfortunately, at the same time, as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) pointed out happened to his authority, our SSA was reduced. The capping limit went up and the SSA went down.

The state of affairs that I have been trying to sketch is not a one-off punishment; it is one stage of a progressive process that is forcing Lancashire to its knees. Cheered on by the hon. Members for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), through capping, the Government forced through £40 million-worth of cuts last year and they are forcing close to

another £60 million-worth of cuts this year. That means many redundancies—of course it does—and cuts in discretionary grants which we had to make last year.

I took part in that decision as a county councillor, and I hated it—we all did. It means cuts in home helps, schools, lollipop ladies—you name it. In particular, it means a cut in essential school build in my constituency, and that causes me great agony.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Lancaster called Lancashire bureaucratic. I remind her that the central administration costs for Lancashire are much less than they are in most private industry. However efficient, no local authority can withstand for long the steady cutting of its income and of its allowable spend. The Government know that better than anyone. The nub of their strategy is to make local government impossible.

The bureaucracy we fear is not that of counties and town halls but that of Whitehall, and Marsham street in particular, steadily drowning the country in a sea of red tape and formulae in order to centre all power in the Government. The country will wake up in the not-too-distant future, if it is not careful, and find itself in a centralised tyranny—although perhaps a smiling one—worthy of somebody such as Erich Honecker.

7.58 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I thank you most sincerely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at such a late hour. I know that you have squeezed me in against all the odds because you recognise the peculiar circumstances that the Isle of Wight faces. I should be remiss in my duty if I did not place on record the undying thanks of all my constituents on the biggest of England's offshore islands for the opportunity that you have afforded me this evening.

I wonder whether I might call upon the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) to do me the great favour of standing up for a moment and looking at the Liberal Democrats Benches to see whether one of the Liberal Democrats is lying on the floor. I should not like to accuse the Liberal Democrats of being absent. Perhaps the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will confirm that no Liberal Democrat Members are here this evening.

Mr. Straw: I am saddened to have to confirm that news, which will bring tears to the eyes of Conservative and Labour supporters alike in the Isle of Wight and across the country.

Mr. Field: I shall develop that theme in due course.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) mentioned the Isle of Wight more times than anyone else has this evening. It is the only county council controlled by the Liberal Democrats—and where are they? They are nowhere to be seen. The Labour Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn, has confirmed that there is no one on the floor hiding behind the Benches, so they are not present here this evening. That is an extraordinary state of affairs, particularly as the Liberal Democrats are forever telling us that they are the guardians of local government and how they always champion the cause. It is deplorable that none of them is here this evening.

You have heard me say on many occasions in the past, Mr. Lofthouse, that the Isle of Wight is renowned for its dinosaurs and fossils. You may think that I am going back in time, but I have heard a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House make various points about local government finance and the way in which SSAs work. My claim is well established that we on the Isle of Wight have probably been longer at this than any other constituency in the United Kingdom. In 1965, the Edwards committee reported to the equivalent of the Department of the Environment in those days—I think that it was the Ministry of Local Government. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), a former chairman of the Association of District Councils is here this evening and I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong.

The Edwards committee concluded that there was a need for an adjustment in local government finance for the Isle of Wight. I have been here for six years and I have mentioned it on every opportunity. I do not apologise to the House for keeping up this tirade because, as we hear so often—and we have heard it again, Mr. Lofthouse——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech and I recognise that the House has spent a lot of time in Committee recently, but on this occasion I am not addressed as Mr. Lofthouse.

Mr. Field: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in future I shall not refer to you by the name by which your dear lady normally refers to you. I apologise for that apparent discourtesy to the Chair. You know me well enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to know precisely how contrite I am.

This is a long-running saga that I have mentioned at every possible opportunity. I make no apology for that, because I disagree with some Opposition Members who say that we are not dealing with a listening Government. The Isle of Wight has been recommended for unitary authority status by the Local Government Commission. It is something that we have been after for many years. It is necessary to reform the structure of local government on the island, particularly when one considers that it is conservatively estimated that it would result in a saving of £1 million to £1·5 million per annum.

Mr. Straw: We are as interested as the hon. Gentleman is in the proposal for a unitary authority for the Isle of Wight. Does he share my concern that the Local Government Commission has proposed that there should be all-out elections once every four years and does he agree with me, with the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and with many other Conservative Members that accountability on the Isle of Wight and elsewhere will be strengthened if there were a cycle of elections each year with a third of the councillors retiring?

Mr. Field: During the beef scare I was pictured eating the last plate of English roast beef in the House of Commons. When there were particularly poor political comments about the quality of water in the Solent, I took part in a swim and was seen by the BBC drinking the sea water from the Solent. Following those events, there appeared in my local press a short letter which said, "He eats the beef, he drinks the sea water, now we know what is wrong with him." Local government needs elections every year like it needs a hole in the head. Controlling parties need a four-year term in order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are talking about local government finance this evening and not elections. Will the hon. Gentleman get back to finance?

Mr. Field: I have got the message, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wanted to answer that point, and I am sure that you would not want me to neglect to point out who started it.

We are dealing with a listening Government. We have had the interim results from our Local Government Commission suggesting that the Isle of Wight should have a unitary authority. Of course, we do not yet know what is in the Secretary of State's mind or whether he will accept the recommendation, but if it does not happen there will be disappointment in all parts of the political spectrum. It will lead to more user-friendly and efficient local government on the island.

The great bedevilment of local government—I know that hon. Members representing metropolitan authorities do not suffer from it as they are already unitary authorities —is that district councils or borough councils get the money and county councils spend it all. The chap who puts the little cross on the little piece of paper with the little pencil, as Winston Churchill said, cannot understand that. The connection between raising income and expenditure has for too long been disjointed in local government and I hope that a unitary authority will resolve that and produce better accountability.

It is easy in such a debate to make political points. I am as tempted as anyone to give a long list of the misdemeanours, as I see them, of the Liberal-controlled county council on the island and the opportunities that would be afforded by a change of administration. However, I do not intend to do that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] My hon. Friends may say, "Shame," but I have built my reputation on representing the whole of the island and all its views.

I note that the standard spending assessment has been changed as a result of a change in pupil numbers. We often see the Opposition opposing grant-maintained status and then leaning on the education budget to try to balance the books. I find that quite unacceptable.

We have suffered as a result of the 1991 census. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was tremendous population growth on the island. That was interpolated and carried forward, but the 1991 census revealed that the rate of growth had not continued. That caused us some concern. It will come as no surprise whatever that some of my political opponents have tried to blame that on the Government.

I should like to place on record my gratitude and that of the councils on the island for the way in which my hon. Friend the Local Government Minister saw us so promptly just before Christmas, a difficult time of the year for us all. He saw two deputations from the island and we had an extremely good meeting. As a result, I received a letter from my noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who wrote on 27 January confirming that

"Ministers are prepared to consider proposals for changing the distributional arrangements of the SSA, and I know that fire distributional arrangements are on the programme of work for the 1994-95 SSA Working Group. I would urge you to voice your concerns through the Association of County Councils which is represented on the Working Group."

I have told my hon. Friend in private as well as in public that the Association of County Councils has never supported the Isle of Wight's case and I do not believe that it ever will. Of course the island is something of an anomaly in county council terms, and if the Association of County Councils supports one special case it will set a precedent and have to support many special cases. We understand that, but we had hoped that we were quite exceptional and that we might get the association's support.

Today, Sir John Banham, the Chairman of the Local Government Commission, has journeyed to the Isle of Wight, where he wished to meet His Excellency the Governor of the island, the chairman of the county council, the local borough council representatives, the chief executives and me. I was unable to be there because I wanted to take part in this debate this evening.

I shall not take up the time of the House by going through a long list of anomalies and their peculiar effect in our unique constituency. However, I invite my hon. Friend the Minister, in winding up, to confirm to the House that he and I have had conversations about this, that I have written to him and that in due course he will be writing to me. It is a subject to which I, like many hon. Members in all parts of the House, will be returning on a number of occasions—I hope, ere long, with a unitary authority on the island. I believe that there is a fundamental mismatch in the way that the formula works, as was highlighted as long ago as 1965.

Thank you so much for squeezing me in, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

8.11 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): There are thousands of local councils all over the country which are determined to provide good quality services that meet local needs. They are committed to that task, and it is important that we stick with them and that there is a partnership between local and national government to make that happen. I do not think that talk of corruption within the councils, of whatever type, helps that relationship. We ought to be looking at the positive areas and rewarding and praising the efforts of so many local councillors.

However, there is a bizarre situation in which many of those councillors feel that the Government hold all the cards. It is the Government who decide the SSA, set the cap, decide and define the business rate and decide the amount of revenue support grant.

I was very interested in the Secretary of State's comment about the SSA, that it was a mechanism for distributing grant. I hope that in winding up the Minister will make it clear that that is the Government's view of the SSA—a way to distribute grant, not a yardstick, not a seal of approval, to define and defend the amount of Government money to be allocated to councils.

Given the Government's range of powers, it is not surprising that local councils have very little power to raise their own revenue. In my own county, Nottinghamshire, in the current financial year, only 24 per cent. of revenue is raised locally. Of the remaining 76 per cent., 33 per cent. comes from the business rate and 43 per cent. through the revenue support grant. Given the element available for local discretion, it is not surprising that, if a council wants to provide good quality services or to do something extra, the cost falls on the local taxpayers. The problem is that, given the current small tax base, the smallest tax base of any local council in Europe, the gearing effect, the effect on people who have had to pay the charges, is extremely high.

I have looked with interest at what the Secretary of State has said in the past about capping. He has been keen

to talk about local accountability. At one time he talked about capping as a mere reserve power, and he went on to say that it was important that we used rarely, and only "to protect charge payers of an area against extreme cases of extravagant and irresponsible local authorities."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

What has happened to the Secretary of State's views over the past five years, because it is quite clear from the announcement that he has made that, in effect, virtually every council in England is now cappéd? There is not even a very limited element of local discretion.

Given this, it is not surprising that it is very difficult to find people who will become local councillors. The capping powers announced this time are the most stringent powers that have ever been taken. It is quite clear to me that, given the severity of the cap, there will be cuts in services and expenditure by the majority of councils this year.

Those cuts spring directly from the Government. They hold all the strings and they pull all the levers. The revenue support grant is extremely tough. The Secretary of State told us that it was £41·1 billion and that it would be adequate. He told us that it represented 3·1 per cent. growth. We have to compare figures properly. It is quite clear to me and to people working in local councils and local authority associations that there is no growth in this year's spending as against next year's planned spending by the Government. In fact, local authorities face a cash squeeze this year—a cash freeze.

We should contrast that with the Government's plans for themselves. Again, it is absolutely clear that, while councils are having a cash freeze—or, in the Government's eyes, mere growth of 3·1 per cent.—the Government's own expenditure is rising by 6·5 per cent. Why are local authorities being singled out for differential treatment? It is interesting that in every Government Department except Defence the rate of growth next year will be greater than that for local authorities.

I am pleased that the Government have done some work on notional figures. There is a feeling, however, that the notional figures proposed for taking money out of further education and out of highway maintenance are overstated. We are pleased that the Minister has listened to representations from Nottinghamshire and has increased its notional amount for FE spending. This is not extra money; it just raises the cap and allows us more flexibility. I draw attention, too, to highway maintenance, where £170 million is being taken out of the settlement and, according to local authority estimates, only £50 million is being spent. Clearly, if their figures are correct, £67 million has been taken away from local authorities.

There are other problems too. The withdrawal of section 11 is another burden for local authorities. The urban programme has been frozen and local authorities have been picking that up. In the last few weeks cuts have been announced on emergency planning. If local authorities, local councils, want to do that they have to pick up such things. Then there are insurance problems and, perhaps most particularly, the decision to raise superannuation funds back to 100 per cent. funding, albeit over a period of years. It is important to remember that that was cut to 75 per cent. only a few years ago to lessen the impact of the poll tax, but now local authorities are being told to make up those potential deficits, and it is at the cost of the poll tax payers.

Let me now consider the years beginning 1994-95 and thereafter. In the next financial year, new census information will be pushed into the settlement. I welcome that. All the new census material will be used in a more basic way in 1994-95. In particular—this point has been made by a number of my hon. Friends—I hope that the area cost adjustment will not just be looked at, but be acted upon. According to my figures, the area cost adjustment has increased from £418 million in 1989-90 to £1·3 billion in 1992-93. That is a rise of 214 per cent.

The work that the Association of County Councils and others have done has highlighted a problem concerning the area cost adjustment. It is clear to me that it overstates the position in London and some south-east counties, and I hope that the Government will listen carefully to representations and try to put it on a better footing next year. I estimate that Nottinghamshire county council is paying £24 million for area cost adjustment. They are keeping down the council tax in London and the south-east; they are raising revenue from their own people to keep council tax bills down elsewhere. That cannot be right, particularly if the basis for the area cost adjustment is so badly wrong. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will not only endeavour to look at this matter but will be prepared to act on it.

Standard spending assessments are to a large extent the root of the problem. I hope that when we get the new census information we will set it against the SSAs so that we can compare, for example, why the SSA per head in Wandsworth is £1,112, in Westminster is £1,200 and in Ashfield—in Hucknall, for example, a mining village which is experiencing real difficulties at present—is only £675. I defy the Minister to tell us that it is because deprivation and real need are greater in Westminster and Wandsworth than in mining communities in Nottinghamshire. Such an analysis will not stand up.

I issue a challenge. We will look closely at the census data, when they are on a small area statistics basis, and we will compare them with SSAs. I hope very much that there will be a move to give authorities in the north and the midlands a fairer chance.

But, given all the levers and all the strings that the Government push and pull, it is not surprising that sometimes things go wrong. They made a prediction some years ago of a council tax of £400 for a band D property. The prediction now is for £494. Given the settlement that has been made, I believe that the figures in Nottinghamshire will be much higher. For a band D property I do not believe that the figure will be £494. It is entirely a matter for councils themselves, but in Nottinghamshire I believe that the figure at the bottom will be about £590 and that it could go up to £660.

That is because we have a system in which the mechanics and the levers are all in the hands of the Government. It is a system that we must change, and we must change it now, because all over the country people will next year face higher bills than were predicted with lower services than were promised. They face a double whammy: paying more and getting less. Nobody will put up with that system. A similar system killed the poll tax, and, if the Government are not careful, this son of poll tax will run into similar problems.

8.23 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am grateful to be called at this juncture in the debate. While I enjoy the reputation of not being entirely uncritical of Government

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

policy, may I tell my hon. Friends on the Front Bench that as regards tonight's debate I make no criticism whatever. Unfortunately, for reasons which I hope will become apparent in the course of my speech, I am unable to offer any praise, much as I would like to do so.

I am pleased to see in his place this evening my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), a fellow Salopian. I am sure that he will forgive me if I say that we make no special pleas from Shropshire. Shropshire is not a county noted for being narrow-minded or mean-spirited. I remind the House that Shropshire, being the cradle of the industrial revolution, is the county which gave the nation its ability to generate wealth and power previously undreamed of. Right hon. and hon. Members may care to ponder whether the House should spend a little more of its time considering matters of wealth generation, rather than, as tonight, always considering matters of spending.

I support very much the drive for restraint in public spending. As a nation we need to control what we spend publicly. All that we in Shropshire look for is a fair share of whatever is going, and we have arguments about the methodology which creates the revenue support grants that we are discussing today.

One of our two complaints is centred on the sparsity factor. Our county has a relatively small population, albeit a growing one, and it is spread over a very large area. This creates problems for us, particularly in respect of education. We have made the point consistently to Ministers for a number of years that Shropshire's sparsity factor is not adequately recognised.

The other factor to which we take exception is the area cost adjustment which equally prejudices the settlement for Shropshire. I shall not argue with other hon. Members about whose constituency is at the bottom of the league, but because of the methodology, and principally because of the sparsity factor calculation and the area cost adjustment calculation, Shropshire consistently comes very close to the bottom.

When it comes to the philosophy behind the revenue support grant calculations, I question the belief that absolute fairness can be achieved in these calculations. The realisation is beginning to dawn that in an endeavour to be absolutely fair to everybody we are ultimately fair to nobody. There are books full of equations and calculations, all designed to ensure that every county, every constituency, is treated with equity. I know—the Minister must also know from what has been said in the debate—that that view is not generally shared by hon. Members.

What we are trying to do today is to achieve a modicum of thrift in local government expenditure. I make no apology for using that old-fashioned word. It is perhaps not so well understood today as it used to be, and it is perhaps practised less than it was. We also want to see in local government expenditure not just thrift but accountability; and if we are to achieve accountability we must have intelligibility. Whatever we do must be intelligible to the people who elect councillors and, to an extent, to the same people who elect us to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), in a humorous and thoughtful speech, commented that people are a little confused, because of the structure of local government. When they put their little cross in their little box, they are not quite sure where the boundaries of responsibility begin and end. I contend that if the system—both the organisation of local government and, in particular, its financing—is not intelligible, it will not be accountable. If it is not accountable, there will be no thrift. That is the point that I hope that the Government Front Bench will register. If we are to obtain thrift in local government, we must make the system intelligible so that people can, from a position of understanding, take an honest and genuine interest in what is done in their name.

When I was a county borough councillor I felt that perhaps I was the last of a dying breed. At the time, I was a young business man and was prepared to serve my community. I suspect that people with such a background now are less prepared to give of their time to local government. Perhaps they do not have the inclination to cope with what I refer to as the gobbledegook which is included in so many publications to determine the workings of local government and local government finance.

I cannot equal the humour of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight, but I venture to suggest, at the risk of seeming somewhat facetious, that whoever wrote the equation on page 28 of HC422 could match the sense of humour of my hon. Friend. I crave the indulgence of the House to quote the equation, because I should like to see it in *Hansard*:

"$[Q-R+[0{\cdot}75(S-T)]+[0{\cdot}5(U-V)]+[0{\cdot}75(W-Q-S-U)]] \times \frac{X}{Y}$"

That is wonderful. It is clear as mud.

Mr. Redwood *rose*——

Mr. Gill: Does the Minister want to intervene and explain the formula to me?

Mr. Redwood: I was about to encourage my hon. Friend to read on because it becomes extremely clear. The only problem is that the debate is somwhat limited in time.

Mr. Gill: If I read the following two or three pages, I would find what G, R and so on mean.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North) *rose*——

Mr. Gill: Is my right hon. Friend seeking to intervene?

Mr. Biffen: Would my hon. Friend reflect on the disposition of the Government constantly to suspend the 10 o'clock rule? One would have thought that the Government would have suspended the 10 o'clock rule on this occasion so that the debate could continue.

Mr. Gill: That is one of the ironies of life. I point out to my right hon. Friend that in the past few weeks I have spent a lot of time trying to ensure that the Government do not suspend the 10 o'clock rule when they have different intentions. Tonight, we are once again on opposite sides of that consideration.

Mr. Redwood: The Government were not planning to move the suspension of the 10 o'clock rule because they thought that all other hon. Members had read the formula and found it straightforward. I am sure that that is true.

Mr. Gill: As I said in an intervention to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), I am not shy, and I encouraged him not to be shy in saying that we do

not understand the matter. I shall tell the House about a lesson I learned in life which perhaps took me longer to learn than it should have done. I was often at the back of the class not understanding anything that had happened. When I picked up courage and asked the simple question —I am, after all, a simple man—the rest of the class erupted because it was the question that they also wanted to ask but were too shy to do so.

Let us ask the simple questions because, at the end of the day, a lot of people are much less intelligent than my hon. Friend the Minister but would like to understand the matter. Such people are deterred by the gobbledegook in the publications. I want to speak a little more about the question of incomprehensibility because such incomprehensibility acts as a deterrent to accountability.

I remind the House of the sensible words of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), who instanced the cases of corruption in local government. There is bound to be corruption if those who are supposed to control finances do not understand and find things incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility acts as a deterrent not just to accountability but to attracting talented councillors, and it acts as a deterrent to members of councils in controlling their officers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar also referred to maladministration. One has great sympathy with members of councils who, in controlling the officers of the council, are absolutely dependent on the advice and professional opinion of officers before they make decisions. Hundreds of councillors—I might also add Members of Parliament—will be dependent on the interpretation that borough treasurers and district council treasurers put on the publications that we are debating today. In other words, because of the complexity of the calculations, the initiative is very much with the officers and not with the councillors.

As a Member of Parliament, I feel less informed and authoritative on such subjects than I should like to be. In such circumstances, it follows that I am less helpful to the cause that the Government are propounding because of that lack of understanding of the finer points in these papers.

Mr. Redwood: To answer my hon. Friend seriously, the purpose of the formula is to work out the taxable capacity in each different part of the country. The reason why the formula must include halves and three quarters as some of the variables detailed in the document is that some people get discounts and exemptions. Those discounts and exemptions are reflected in the formula. We cannot simply take all the houses and say that that is the tax base. We must adjust the formula to show whether people are chargeable. As a result, we get a fair method of measurement around the country of the taxable capacity in each place.

Mr. Gill: I am grateful to the Minister for his contribution. I hope that Ministers will not be too defensive or over-protective of the status quo because there are other ways of doing this. I suggest that those other ways would be better understood by councillors and those who elected them. If we are to have accountability, it is important that people thoroughly understand what councils are doing. They must not depend on paid officials of the council to tell them what they think the councils are doing.

I will labour the point about incomprehensibility because at the end of the day it is a deterrent to good local government and, obliquely, it brings national government and national politicians into disrepute. I take the view that one should not criticise anything unless one has something positive to put in its place. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise that. In the past, I have often made submissions to the Government in an honest endeavour to make a system more comprehensible, simpler, more straightforward and, above all, understood by all of us, not just in this place but in council chambers and the electorate.

I suggest to the Minister that we should pay more than lip service to the principle of subsidiarity. It would be an enormous boost to the Government's credibility, especially in the context of the Maastricht debate, if we implemented the principle of subsidiarity in the United Kingdom. It would be a boost to the morale of councillors if they felt that they had not just the responsibility for discharging the various functions with which they are charged but total authority to do those things.

My hon. Friend the Minister has been involved in the commercial sector and he knows as well as I that the cardinal rule of good management is to place authority in the same pair of hands in which responsibility is placed. If there is one theme running through all this, it is that we should apply the principle of subsidiarity and ensure that councillors are given not merely the responsibility for functions but the authority to discharge them.

I suggest that the Minister should look hard at the scope for taking district councils out of the revenue support grant equation entirely and making them raise, through the council tax, 100 pennies for every pound that they spend—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) laughs, and I understand why—it is because it is the first time that he has heard that radical proposal and he has not had time to think it through. When he has —hopefully he will read what I have said in tomorrow's *Hansard*—he may conclude that the Member for Ludlow had a point. I hope that he will give it further consideration. We are all open-minded people in this House and we like to consider new ideas.

In proposing that to the Minister, I must also warn him that there may be some mismatch if district councils are charged with that responsibility; he must try to ensure that the functions that councils are charged with are capable of being sustained by the local tax base.

The present review of local government should put the horse in front of the cart and not vice versa. First, it should decide what it wishes the functions of local authorities to be. Only when that has been decided can the organisational pattern of local government be decided, and thus its financing.

I remind the House of the three important words: let us make finance intelligible, for if it is intelligible we can make it accountable, and if it is accountable it will be thrifty.

8.42 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to follow the speech by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). I shall not take long, as I am conscious that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak in this debate.

The hon. Member for Ludlow spent a great deal of time regaling the House with his difficulties in understanding

[Mr. Gordon Prentice]

the documents before us. I hope that I shall be able to shed some light on them and to explain the motives and the politics behind the formula on page 28 that he misquoted.

The hon. Member for Ludlow spoke about fairness, as did the Secretary of State, who said in his opening speech: "You have got to be fair to local tax payers." That is from the right hon. and learned Member who was responsible for introducing the poll tax—the man responsible for introducing the council tax. He wanted to get rid of the rates because, as he told *The Financial Times*:

"A property tax is not fair."

That was the justification for introducing the poll tax. The very same man is getting rid of the poll tax and introducing another council tax.

The hon. Member for Ludlow went on at great length about thrift, but it sticks in my throat to hear anyone from the Conservative Benches talking about thrift after the Government squandered £14 billion on the poll tax. How can they possibly talk about thrift with a straight face?

Fairness is not a characteristic of the new council tax. How can a tax be fair when single people get an automatic 25 per cent. discount on their council tax bills simply because they live alone? They could be millionaires or be living in band G houses, but they get a 25 per cent. discount, while a struggling family which is trying to get by just above income support level has to pay the full whack. That is not fair.

The politics behind the formula is that the Conservatives want to depress public spending. They are open about it. They want to cut public provision, as they do not believe in it—if it can be privatised, then privatise it.

The formula is another ideological attack on local government. Although we hear about efficiency and effectiveness all the time, it is not about efficiency. It is about transferring provision from the public to the private sector wherever possible. It is not merely happening to local government. Post offices and job centres are closing. Public provision is contracting everywhere, because that is the Government's ideological mission.

The tax is also a threat to democracy. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) mentioned the erosion of democracy and the fact that councillors now lack controls because of the functions that have been transferred to what has been dubbed the "new magistracy" —to shadowy characters who have not been elected but now have control of vast amounts of public money.

The revenue support grant settlement will mean major job losses. In my neck of the woods, it is about as welcome as a dose of anthrax. Job losses have spiralled since the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Prime Minister in November 1990. There were 1,708 unemployed people in Pendle then, but the figure has spiralled to more than 3,000, and that was before the 574 job losses announced last week at Smith and Nephew.

On standard spending assessments, I shall not go over the ground that has been adequately covered by my hon. Friends the members for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), who is no longer in the Chamber. The SSAs were supposed to be an objective measurement of need. Because Government grant follows them, they are important.

The present Secretary of State for the Environment told the Association of District Councils conference on 17 September 1987:

"Our plans for the new grant system"——

the SSA——

"will ensure stability, accountability and a great deal more simplicity."

He said the same about the poll tax, and he got that wrong. The new stable system that he was describing a few years ago is now under review by his Department and by the Audit Commission.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West delivered a powerful critique of the flaws of the SSA system, which does not simply reflect need—whether in Lancashire, West, Barnsley or anywhere in the north of England—but tips resources to the south and the south east. The formula makes no allowances for unemployment or structural change. In my area we have lost 20,000 jobs in the textile industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) mentioned the incredible changes in the mining industry in his area, which are also not reflected in the formula, yet it is supposed to be fair.

The SSA methodology is really suspect when it comes to members of our communities who come from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan. We were told that, wherever possible, information from the 1991 census is being used, but in the case of those members of our community they are using information from 1981. The information there is 12 or 13 years out of date.

What does this mean to an area like mine in north-east Lancashire? In Pendle, in 1981, 6·9 per cent. of the population came from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan. By 1991—these figures are not incorporated in the formula—the proportion had gone up to 9·9 per cent. In other words, there was a difference of a full three percentage points, yet this is not built into the figures.

Earlier, there was a discussion about the census. The Secretary of State or one of his friends tried to argue about the accuracy of the census, but we all know from experience that there has been a haemorrhage of voters from the register because of the poll tax. I am not the only person who says so: the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys itself says the same. That office says that the 1991 census is 500,000 people light. I suspect that many of those people live in inner-city areas—areas that tend to be represented by Labour politicians.

The Secretary of State has said that the new grant system provides accountability. What a joke. I want to quote from my local paper, the excellent *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*. Many of my hon. Friends know the paper and no doubt agree with me about its excellence. This is what my local paper, on 13 January 1993, said about the accountability that the Secretary of State trumpets:

"This drastic surgery on our local services—police, schools and the rest—has really nothing to do with local government.

The cuts are taking place by government decree—one that insists that, in order to stay below capping levels, the county council has to chop £60 million from its budget.

The only real input our local representives have in this process is to consider the list of horrible options put in front of them—such as fewer police and teachers."

That says it all. All this talk about democracy—handing power back to the people—is a complete distortion of the truth.

The Secretary of State talked also about simplicity. We all know—the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) will

appreciate this, as he believes in simplicity—that, the more simple the system, the more likely it is to contain mistakes. We have got used to rough and ready, back-of-the-envelope stuff from the Government.

My local authority in Pendle had its SSA increased by a miserable £1,000—and that was after my councillor colleagues and I had gone to see the Minister to plead the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) spoke at great length and with great eloquence about Lancashire county council. That council's SSA has gone down from the £866·4 million of November to £865·6 million. As I said earlier, these resources are being tipped from the north to the south of England.

I want to move rapidly to the question of gearing, which was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). A local authority is not a free agent in this respect. Indeed, 85 per cent. of local government spending is determined at the centre, and only 15 per cent. by the local authority itself. If a council wants to spend rather more than central Government think it should spend, it has to make colossal increases in the council tax. We have heard a great deal about capping, but that is another story. The gearing is designed to hold public spending down—that is the whole object of the exercise.

Connected with this matter is the whole question of valuations. The valuations have been absolutely botched. It costs about £1·76 to value a property in Pendle. In Lancashire as a whole, the figure is about £1·90. There has been no proper valuation at all. We are going to see an avalanche—I have heard a figure of 1·5 million—of appeals in April when people get their council tax bills.

For example, a pensioner came to see me who lives in a farm cottage one third of a mile from the nearest metalled road and one third of a mile from the nearest street light. His rubbish is not collected by the local council. Before the introduction of the poll tax, he paid about £114 in rates. The couple are just above income support level, and, as their property has been tipped into band C, they will now pay £577. The man told me that he did not have that sort of money. He did not understand what was happening. He though that the new council tax would be a fair replacement for the poll tax. But it is not fair. It is not fair to him, and it is unfair to many other people.

To iron out some of the unfairness, the Government introduced a transitional relief scheme. But we know that that scheme has been massively underfunded. Ministers wanted £1 billion from the Treasury, but they managed to squeeze out about £300 million. This has had a horrendous impact in areas, such as Pendle, that are traditionally low-rated.

When, about a month ago, my colleagues and I went to see the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, we made it absolutely clear to him that the problem was that, even with increases capped, there were some very big percentage rises. We quoted the example of a two-person household in band A—67 per cent. of the people in my constituency live in houses in that band—with transitional relief. Even after the application of the transitional relief scheme, those people will pay 33·7 per cent. more in council tax than they did under the old system.

As I am conscious of the time, I wish to conclude with a word of warning to Conservative Members. It was the Pendle factor, among others, that sank the poll tax. Latterly, my predecessor, Mr. John Lee, was vocal in his opposition to the poll tax. In a low-rated, low-wage, poverty-stricken area, such as mine, the council tax too will have punitive effects.

There is nothing in this financial settlement—nothing in the transitional relief or in the council tax or in the SSAs—to give me, any of my council colleagues or the residents of Pendle any encouragement at all. It is a bad deal for north-east Lancashire and, more importantly, for local government generally.

9 pm

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me as I had not intended to speak in the debate until I heard the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who is not now present. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) who is, I believe, the gentleman who is alleged to have invented the loan swaps that have caused so much grief and difficulty for many local authorities.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: The member of Hammersmith and Fulham council who introduced it to loan swaps was Mr. Kim Howe, a Conservative leader of the council in 1981-82. If the hon. Gentleman wants to know the history of loan swaps in Hammersmith and Fulham, he should read the independent report, commissioned by the council and written by Mr. Van Veeder QC. It completely exonerates all Labour members of any nefarious dealings.

Mr. Thomason: I am delighted that the answer is given in such a pat manner that it must have been repeated on numerous occasions.

I wish to say a few words in praise of local government, as not enough is said here in support of the men and women who give such valiant service in the councils of England, Wales and Scotland. It is right that we should put down a marker noting what they do. Some 17,000 or 18,000 people serve in that way. It is inevitable that a few of them—whatever their party or political complexion—will prove to be rotten apples in the barrel. However, the country should express gratitude for the way in which the vast majority of them give of their time and service.

Some of those people feel that they have a constitutional role in local government that overrides the views and policies that may be dictated by and originate from the House and the national Government of the country. I say that because I recall the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) attacking me vigorously on that issue not many months ago.

Local government is subservient to national, central Government. That has always been my view. However, again and again in the debate it has been argued that there is some divine right in local government to determine national policies that may run contrary to those of central Government. That has rarely been, and never should be, the case.

We do not live in a federal authority. There are plenty of European precedents of local government or inter-state government shaping the form of national policies, but that is not so in our country. The German länder, the Italians and even the French, to a lesser extent, have a history of small states coming together in relatively recent years to create a nation. They consider that their local government

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—in the sense that it is a federal organisation—has rights to determine national policy. Such a belief is alien to the history and principles of this country.

Local government in this country does not have the right to demand expenditure levels contrary to the determined policy of the Government, supported by the House and the other place. The decisions must be made here. We should resist the temptation to give local government the right to seek to set expenditure levels in excess of the priorities that have been debated and determined in the Chamber. There seems to be some Opposition Members who believe that local government should embark on social engineering of some form. Such issues should be determined here in the Chamber, as they are matters of national, not local, priority.

The standards of probity that we should expect of local government, and that we so often see, have unfortunately fallen short in a number of authorities. That is true not just of individual members about whom accusations have been made or are being processed, but of some local administrations. That ought to worry Opposition Members, since almost all those local authorities are under Labour control.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The hon. Gentleman may recall that, in a previous incarnation, I used to meet him in my capacity as a National and Local Government Officers Association official at the Association of District Councils, over which he presided. We both had to deal with the gross mismanagement of an organisation called the Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee, which cost district councils many thousands of pounds, which is probably still having to be paid over. I still have the files, and I remember that this happened under the stewardship of the hon. Gentleman and other members of the ADC. It is wrong of him to talk about mismanagement by Labour local authorities when there is a whole raft of evidence —he is well aware of it—of wrongdoing in LAMSAC, over which he, Lady Anson and others exercised a considerable degree of control.

Mr. Thomason: Since he has the files, the hon. Gentleman ought to recall the facts a little better. He should remember that LAMSAC, on whose board of management I never served, included among others representatives of an organisation known as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities—those members were prominent in its organisation and they came from the Labour party, as did representatives from other local government organisations. So the body was not stamped with any political mark, contrary to what the hon. Gentleman suggests. I appreciate that he may have lost himself in those files, which he seems to have retained to produce for events like this one, but he really must try to do better next time.

Earlier, I mentioned the high standards of probity in most local government. There has, however, been an appalling lapse of administrative control—not necessarily wrongdoing by individuals—in authorities such as Lambeth, Hackney and Sheffield, not to mention Monklands in Scotland. Those of us who want local government to do well and who want to be able to support it believe it fair to criticise those lapses of administration and sort them out. It concerns me that the Labour party seems slow to put its colleagues in local government right even though they have obviously gone wrong.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) said that Sheffield had won the support of some beauty parade that appeared in the *Local Government Chronicle*, which showed that it was a well managed authority. I seem to recall that the article in question was based on a survey of the views of local government officers, not on external appraisal by a body such as the Audit Commission. Those local government officers were mostly in the employ of local authorities, such as Sheffield city council, controlled by the Labour party.

It follows that Labour Members should check their facts before claiming examples of good management practice. In this case, the hon. Member for Attercliffe cited an authority that had spent £10 million—lost £10 million —on the student games, and which is now spending money on providing offices for Members of this House.

There have been allegations in this debate of rigging the population formulae for assessing revenue support grant. Extraordinarily enough, Opposition Members suggested that the population of certain parts of the country was being under-estimated because their residents were trying to avoid registration for community charge purposes. It is surprising that some hon. Members think that many of their constituents sought to avoid the legitimate processes of community charge registration. Those hon. Members must answer to their electorates for that.

Opposition Members fail to understand the significance of population increases and movements in terms of the estimates and appraisals in the RSG calculations. We all know, and some hon. Members will know to their cost as the parliamentary boundaries are changed, that inner cities are being depopulated, a trend that has continued for many decades. Conversely, some urban fringe and rural areas are seeing a population explosion.

Local government in such areas has to provide a substantial infrastructure to support the increased population. New schools and roads have to be constructed, and even new social services offices have to be built. Therefore, the demands on local government in the expanding parts of the country are very much greater than in areas of declining population.

There is no gerrymandering when revenue support grant properly reflects population changes that are the inevitable product of the movement of people. Such movements have continued throughout this country's history, as jobs change their nature and people seek to follow them. It is wrong to complain about grant following population in that way.

It has been said that there will be substantial job losses. There may be some, and we all regret that, but the Opposition and their colleagues in local government are engaging in much scaremongering. We were told that Birmingham city council would lose 1,000 jobs. Only a few weeks ago, the Labour leaders of that council said that they would lose 3,000 jobs. If that trend continues, they will tell us in a few weeks that they are about to take on employees. A review in the *Municipal Journal* reveals that 22 per cent. of local authorities will take on extra employees. We must avoid histrionics in talking about employment in local government. The truth may be very different overall when the figures are finally known.

Opposition Members spoke about spending. Many tears have been shed over the difficulties that local

government will allegedly suffer next year because of the small increase in total standard spending over this year's budgets. The issue is important, because comparisons are being made between this year's budgets and next year's total standard spending. Local government, sometimes for bad reasons and sometimes for good, has spent substantially over its total standard spending in the current year. Is it suggested that that overspend should now be built into the revenue support grant calculations so that it is ratified?

That appears to be the argument, but it is nonsense, because it would mean that every local government overspend in every year would be automatically and retrospectively approved by the Government. That is not on, and the Opposition ought to know it. No Government, whatever their political colour, could possibly ratify past expenditure levels and simply carry them forward as a base for the next year. We must have a level of stability, which must be based on the total spending of the previous year, according to the formula. From that formula, additions are constructed.

Local government needs stability. I entirely support hon. Members' suggestions that area cost adjustments should be examined next year, and I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he is looking at the SSA mechanism. I trust, however, that, in considering any amendments, he will remember that violent changes in grant distribution from year to year should be avoided, just as violent changes in the demands on the individual community charge payer, or council tax payer, should be avoided from year to year.

The hon. Member for Pendle suggested that his constituents would suffer as a result of the imposition of the council tax. He seems to have completely forgotten about transitional relief. The same rules should apply to changes in SSAs and the grants that follow from them year by year.

Opposition Members have talked a great deal of nonsense. The truth is that the Government's proposals are eminently fair and reasonable. They will not make life difficult for local government; I know that my council colleagues of a year or two ago would make the same point. Of course it will be a tough settlement, but every year brings a tough settlement. Every year requires local government to investigate its expenditure thoroughly, and this year will be no exception. I am glad that the majority of local authorities will look at their expenditure carefully, and will seek to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services. I hope that the few that have not done so in the past will change in the future.

9.16 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): In previous years' debates on the Local Government Finance Report, hon. Members have complained that debate has involved more of the same Tory attacks—more financial restrictions, more cuts in resources, more job cuts and more damage to local authority services.

Today's debate again involves more financial restrictions, more cuts in resources and jobs and more damage to local authority services. However, it differs from the debates of past years. Although such cuts have undoubtedly been made in the past, local authorities in the past have been able to mitigate, at least to some extent, the worst effects of Conservative cuts. They have increased local sources of finance to compensate for central Government cuts; sometimes they have dug deep into their reserves, and—as many of my hon. Friends will know—in numerous cases they have virtually emptied those reserves. They have also attempted to borrow on occasion, in an attempt to defend services and protect the local population.

Few such avenues are now open to authorities, because most borrowing schemes have been decreed to be inoperable. Authorities have lost the potential to tap reserves, and central Government—through severe capping regulations—have taken away their remaining powers to raise additional resources locally.

As the Government well know, the difference between this and previous years lies in the depth and severity of cuts—cuts in services, cuts in jobs on a scale unknown before the current round of local government financial announcements, cuts in virtually every part of the country. I warn Conservative Members to make no mistake—there will be pain in many constituencies, not only in those of my hon. Friends. There will be pain for children whose schools are not properly funded, pain for elderly people when home help services are cut, pain for young people when youth clubs are closed or they have to wait much longer to get a start on housing, and pain for most of us—indeed, all of us—who use roads which will be less well lit and less adequately maintained. There will be pain for almost all sections of the community because, whether hon. Members like it or not, virtually all members of our community are in one way or another dependent on local authority services.

The debate is about that difference in severity compared with previous years. It is about the additional pain that the cuts will inflict, but it is also about the negation of democracy, about denying local communities the right to determine their future and denying people the right to have a say in their community. It is no longer local people who decide what services are provided, what education or social services or what level of road maintenance is required. Essentially, central Government decide those matters.

The 152 Tory Acts relating to local government which have been introduced since 1979 mean that local government can no longer function democratically, and democracy cannot function without local government. It is our democracy which maintains our British way of life and which is infringed by repressive legislation. Ours is the only nation in western Europe and among the industrialised countries which has so much central Government control of local government.

Many other interesting issues have also been raised. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) showed himself capable of making a reasonable contribution, even though he is a Blackburn Rovers supporter—probably a very depressed Blackburn Rovers supporter—by making a plea for the house owners in his constituency who will suffer through being placed in a high band for the council tax. He said that the situation was worse because of the slump that he detected. He was able to distinguish between a slump and a recession because of his northern roots. The House and his constituents will be grateful for his observations. Certainly, his constituents will be grateful that he cares so much about their economic circumstances.

The right hon. Gentleman raised two other useful points on which we can all agree. He spoke about the

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inadequacy of our registration system for voters. I do not believe that we can have a proper democracy unless we know who is able to vote. There should be a debate between the parties to consider how to improve the system.

The right hon. Gentleman also said that the battle—in some ways, the relentless battle—between central and local government did neither party any good. He called for balanced, measured judgment and for local democracy. Unfortunately, he dug a little too deeply into his conscience and did not feel that he would be able to vote with the Opposition today. May I plead that, after hearing the debate, he might not need to dig so deeply as he had thought?

The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) brought out a box of tricks which he had clearly obtained from Conservative central office. He is in danger of being known in future as the hon. Member for Pandora because even with his box he did not get it right in relation to public sector borrowing requirement problems. The blame does not lie with local authorities, which raise perhaps £10 billion a year, or even with central Government finance for local authorities, which is of the order of £32 billion a year. The real problem lies with the level of unemployment because we now spend £20 billion of virtually wasted resources buying ourselves out of unemployment.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) has returned to the Chamber. He emphasised his duty to make representations on behalf of his constituents, and he certainly did that in a humorous way today. He said that he was not confident that the Minister would necessarily respond to all his representations. However, I believe that he revealed some of his real views when he paid tribute to the important work of a child abuse centre in his constituency, but was not prepared to recognise that there is a clear link between the way in which the SSA is calculated and the amount of resources available to a local authority to spend on that essential duty.

The hon. Member for Harlow also gave himself away when he criticised a community group having access to a public building at peak times. I should have thought that the whole purpose of a public building was that community groups should have access to it and, if they needed access to it at peak times, that was an appropriate use for that building.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to the authentic voice of Essex which I believe is vested in me. The Labour-controlled council of Harlow is having to grapple with the effects of inheriting a new town with its large infrastructure as well as the reasonable expectations of its residents, but that situation is not matched by appropriate funding from central Government. There is at least a moral commitment for the Government to fund that infrastructure. Is not the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) caught between a rock and a hard place? His Government are letting him down while his constituents are being failed by the same Government financially.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) for raising that point. The hon. Member for Harlow did not inform the electorate before the general election that there was a need to rein in public expenditure: the electorate found that out to their cost afterwards.

The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) said that he believed that the country deserved good local government, and I certainly endorse that. I was not sure about his point in respect of the redundancies in Birmingham, whether the figure for job losses is 3,000 or 1,000, but even 1,000 job losses is bad for a city such as Birmingham which has suffered some of the worst effects of the recession.

Mr. Riddick: Does the hon. Gentleman approve of the way in which Sheffield council has used poll tax payers' money to subsidise the constituency offices of five Labour Members to the tune of £55,000?

Mr. Henderson: Whatever else I thought about the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), I thought that he intervened in this place sufficiently frequently to have heard the answers to questions. Had he been in the Chamber today, he would already have heard that those facilities are made available to Members of Parliament in Sheffield.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that it was surprising that the Secretary of State did not mention job losses. My hon. Friends the Members for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland), for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) identified the way in which the calculation of the SSA has been extremely damaging to their constituencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge compared the situation in Gateshead with that in Westminster, clearly demonstrating the inequities in the system. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central has repeatedly emphasised the way in which the system discriminates against coal areas such as Barnsley. I pay tribute to his persistence and I hope that the Minister will say more about that than his predecessors have in years gone by.

Mr. Redwood: Is the hon. Gentleman associating those on his Front Bench with the idea that money should be taken away from inner London and given to the north? That would affect Camden, Islington, Hackney and Lambeth, as well as Westminster. Is that the Opposition's policy?

Mr. Henderson: I think that I am running out of time —*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members should wait a moment. I was about to help the Minister by explaining the work that has been done by Dr. Martyn Senior at the university of Salford in examining the criteria in respect of the standard spending assessment. The hon. Gentleman has brought me to that point a little prematurely, but I will answer his question.

At present, the criteria do not allow any significant impact for long-term unemployment, which badly damages certain and specific communities and leads to increased needs in respect of education, social services and economic development. That has nothing to do with comparisons between the north and London boroughs, but everything to do with an equitable system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn highlighted the failure of the capping system. He showed that cuts in

local government expenditure have a deflationary effect on our economy. He said also that, when expenditure has been buoyant, so has the private sector, because it has gained much from healthy local authorities. He pointed out contradictions in the Secretary of State's position on capping, jobs and service cuts.

There are occasions in the House when hon. Members regret something that they have said. The Secretary of State has no great reputation for regretting things that he has done, but hon. Members might wonder whether he has any regrets about what he has said about capping. If he has some regrets, he will be able to take some consolation, for his political acrobatics have no doubt impressed Treasury officials well in advance of any leap that he might want to make in future from his Kremlin at No. 2 Marsham street to the bunker at No. 11 Downing street. If he is to square what he said in his November statement about no jobs being lost with what is evidently happening in local authorities, he will need the acrobatic qualities of the gladiators we see on television on Saturday evenings.

I remind the House that the Secretary of State said that local authorities should be able to maintain the full range of services that they provide if they run them efficiently. How does he square that statement with Tory authorities' response to his announcement? How does he square it with the response of Devon, which has announced £21 million in cuts and 145 job losses? How does he square it with the point made by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant)? Cambridgeshire's SSA is down from £402 million to £380·6 million, and 330 jobs are at risk. How does he square it with Harrow, where 10 per cent. cuts in services will take place and 200 jobs will go? How does he square it with Enfield, which has emphasised that it has a £21 million gap and that up to £10·5 million could go in its education budget?

Some schools have said that they could lose up to 20 teachers. An education officer has said that it is possible that children will be taught part-time at Enfield. The head of a school tells parents that children might be on a four-day week or a four-and-a-half day week by the time the council has finished its budget. How does the Secretary of State square what he has said with the situation in Barnet, where the chief executive has said that the effect of the Government's policy is to take the arms and legs off the local authority? The chief education officer in Barnet talks about the education system being bankrupt.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman should in future co-ordinate his speech rather more closely with that of his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). The thrust of his hon. Friend's speech was that the system was a giant con trick designed to favour Conservative-controlled local authorities at the expense of Labour-controlled local authorities. Now we have from the hon. Gentleman a litany of woe specifically related to Conservative-controlled local authorities. The Opposition cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Henderson: The Secretary of State must acknowledge that the Opposition are not trying to have it both ways. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn emphasised the advantage that he believes that shire counties have had, but he also emphasised that the SSA system was so inequitable that not only Labour authorities but many Conservative authorities were complaining. What is the Secretary of State's response to those authorities?

Sir Anthony Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Henderson: No, I want to make progress.

Is the Secretary of State saying that those authorities are misrepresenting the true position? Is he saying that they are inefficiently run Tory councils? What is his advice to Barnet council? Is he saying that it should make £8·5 million cuts in education to avoid capping, or is he saying that teachers should be made redundant and class sizes increased? Is he suggesting that there should be part-time education in Barnet and that support staff should be sacked? Is he recommending that there should be cuts in equipment? Is he saying that all those cuts should take place? What is the Secretary of State saying to those Tory authorities?

What is the Secretary of State saying to parents in Barnet, who, in Conservative Britain, in state schools in 1993, are now being told that under local management their schools cannot afford to buy services from the local authority such as music, sport, and other facilities? What is his advice to the Tories on Barnet council? After hearing today's debate, is he still prepared to say that his settlement is an eminently reasonable one, as he stated in his opening remarks?

Clearly, great damage has been caused to our local authority services by the Government cuts and the destruction of local democracy. There is also a sense of grievance throughout the country, which is made worse by the feeling that the calculation of the standard spending assessment is distorted and biased. If we are to have a system of local government which is considered fair and which is honoured at local level by people of all political colours, as many Conservative Members have said today, we need a major review of the SSA system. It is not good enough to say that such a review will take place internally. I believe that there should be an independent review of local government finance. That is the view of Tory and Labour local authorities, the academic world and the Audit Commission. We all look forward to the evidence from the Audit Commission in future.

Contrary to their November statement that cuts would be unnecessary, the Government are asking the House to vote for deep cuts in local authority services. Contrary to that commitment, they are asking the House to vote for thousands of job cuts in local government at a time when 3 million people are unemployed. Contrary to the Secretary of State's commitment that capping should be used only as a reserve power, they are asking the House to vote for an unprecedented regime of Soviet-style central control of local government finance which will totally destroy democracy. Contrary to their claims about subsidiarity at the time of the Maastricht summit, they are asking for the right to deny British people the right to decide their own level of local authority provision, a right which any reasonable interpretation of subsidiarity would grant them.

We believe not only that the financial regime which the Government are set to impose on the British people is flawed and incomprehensible, but that its structure shows bias in the setting of SSAs and notional budgets and in the allocation of grant. Cuts will cause severe pain to those in local communities who depend most on local authority

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services, and job losses will have a further deflationary effect on the economy with a consequential increase in the cost of unemployment benefit. We believe that British people can be trusted at local level to decide the contribution that they make to their own services. We believe that democracy does matter nationally and locally, and we ask the House to reject the Government's proposal today.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) certainly gave us a more powerful rant than the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), but his speech was equally wide of the mark. The charge of the Labour party that the grant system is biased and rigged is simply wrong. It is a disgraceful charge to make, and I intend to disprove it.

We have had a good debate, and I would like to add my praise to all those councillors and people who work in local government who were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and several other hon. Members on both sides of the House. Local government does extremely important work. We are often well served by our local councillors, and I add my tribute to them.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham) *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: No, I must press on, because I wish to answer many points from the debate.

The hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) dared to attack the idea that the single person should get a discount from the council tax. This is of great importance to 6 million people and it amazes me that the Labour party wants to take that discount from all those single people. I hope that my hon. Friends will be telling their constituents just what the Labour party wants to do in this respect.

The hon. Gentleman complained that the SSAs needed changing and that they were not stable enough. To add even more extraordinary remarks to his speech, he went on to say that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys had identified that there were people missing from its census, but did not seem to realise that it had adjusted the census and added them back in so that the SSAs would reflect the actual number of people. There are good statistical methods for correcting these things and the work has been done by independent statisticians.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) said that the Liberal party wished to take off all the caps and he did not mind the tax consequences. He told us that he had had no letters from people wishing to keep taxes low and that this did not really matter; we should allow local government in Cheltenham and elsewhere to spend anything it liked. If that were the policy that Parliament had approved, the hon. Gentleman would soon be getting plenty of letters from those living under Liberal councils throughout the country, because they are indeed spendthrift, just like the Labour councils, which spend more and provide less service for the money they are getting. He made no mention of the fact that Cheltenham is getting a 10·9 per cent. increase in its SSA this year—one of the biggest increases in the country.

I should like to praise my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) for his excellent speech on the position of local government next year, drawing on his very wide experience of local government. I can reassure my hon. Friend that the internal management working party will look at the role of the officer and of the member in local government. I have much sympathy for his remarks that for good local government there needs to be a clear distinction between those roles; the councillors should be interested in policy and monitoring and should leave officials to get on with the job of executing and running the policies that they have agreed.

To the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) I can give the assurance that next year, when we review the SSAs, we will look not only at the data that are becoming available, which will be updated and changed, but also at the method. I take his remarks and those of other speakers in the debate as early representations of what they would like to see in those amendments to method. As the House will have heard during the debate today, there are many different views of how they should be changed, and of course different parts of the country want them to be changed in entirely different directions.

I enjoyed the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). His was both an amusing and a hard-hitting speech. I also enjoyed the pantomime double act with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), who played the straight man, or the other end of the pantomime horse, with great aplomb.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury attacked the debt mountain of certain local authorities. I echo his remarks that those local authorities that can get themselves out of debt naturally get more financial freedom. They show that they can manage their affairs extremely well and they are not then spending their money on interest charges; they are spending it on real services for their people.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) attacked the whole idea of the area cost adjustment. He seemed unable to grasp the point that, despite the area cost adjustment, because there are many other factors in the formula that help his part of the country at the expense of places like the home counties and London, his part of the country really does quite well. Lancashire's SSA per head is £615, while, of the counties that he eyed enviously, Hampshire has £568 and Oxfordshire £541. I do not think that his council or constituents would like it if we swapped the one for the other. It shows that the points that he made about Lancashire's needs are clearly picked up in the formula for the SSA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) was rightly disappointed that members of the Liberal party were not present to hear his contribution. It is strange, as the Liberals have always claimed an interest in the Isle of Wight, but now that it is safely under the control and in the good hands of my hon. Friend perhaps the Liberals have learnt that it is not worth discussing the Isle of Wight any more.

Mr. Nigel Jones: I apologise to the Minister and to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) for missing his speech. I had an engagement with the BBC at the time.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman obviously knows where his friends are and where his friends are not.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) was desperate to get to the BBC before I did.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who, I am sure, will have made better use of the invitation than did the hon. Member for Cheltenham.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight is pleased that the Isle of Wight has, at 6·1 per cent., the biggest increase in standard spending assessment per head of any of the counties next year, and that it makes budgeting easier. It has picked up some of the points that he mentioned. I give him the assurance that we will look at the issue of the fire services SSA distribution in the working party and in the discussions ahead of next year's settlement. If he or any other hon. Member wishes to make representations on that, we will be happy to receive their letters.

The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) made no reference to the Newark and Sherwood councils which have increased their budgets by almost 50 per cent., comparing the current year with 1990-91. Despite their having gone up 50 per cent. against inflation of 12 per cent., we were treated to the usual speech about deadly cuts and savage impositions by the Conservative Government. What price, then, the freedom of local government when a council in his own area can increase its budget by almost 50 per cent. if it wishes? It seems to me to show considerable local freedom and autonomy, together with the ability to put the interests of those providing the council services ahead of those of the chargepayer. The SSA is primarily a mechanism to distribute grant—the hon. Member for Sherwood seemed keen that I should say that—but, as he knows, it serves other purposes as well.

The hon. Gentleman also attacked the idea of the area cost adjustment. He seemed unaware that Nottinghamshire and an SSA of £603 per head while Surrey, deep in the area that he covets, has an SSA per head of £513. I hope that he will find that the £90 extra is not only useful but reflects the way in which needs differ between Nottinghamshire and Surrey and are picked up by the formula.

I was delighted to learn that my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) will give the Government his wholehearted support on this issue. I hear that there have been one or two disagreements recently between him and the Government, but I am delighted that he sees fit to support us on this occasion. We will look carefully at the points that he made on sparsity and area cost, but he may like to know that already his council is the second biggest beneficiary from the sparsity factor. That, among other things, will be reviewed. We will also review the weightings, although it would mean putting another fraction into the grant formula, and my hon. Friend, in his amusing speech, was a little critical of the fractions in some of the grant formulae.

I agree with my hon. Friend that we should attempt to make all that we do intelligible and easy to understand. Some of the documents are, by their nature, complicated because they attempt to provide accurate assessments around the country and they form the base for the computer programming and the detailed work of local authorities. There are more accessible ways of learning about the system. My Department has sent out leaflets in plain English on, for example, the council tax, so that people can find out how the system is built up without all the complex detail needed to run the computers and define the SSAs precisely.

Mr. Straw: The Minister will recall that when he was asked on the BBC at lunchtime about whether jobs would be cut, comparing next year with this, he dodged the question. Will he tell the House categorically whether he believes that this time next year there will be fewer, the same or more jobs in local government than there are today?

Mr. Redwood: I will not forecast the number of jobs in local government, because, for example, there may be a good many grant-maintained schools. I do not know how many will decide to become grant-maintained. If that happens, the same number of people will still be employed but they will be employed by the schools, thus reducing the number employed by the local authorities. If a large number of local authorities do more competitive tendering, there could be a transfer of jobs from local authorities to the private sector.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman should let me answer and then he may have another cockshy if he wishes to. He may be disappointed that he is not getting anywhere on this point. One cannot forecast that sort of thing.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, the settlement means that there is no need for compulsory redundancies in any well run authority, given the increases in grant and permitted spending which we are offering. There may be one or two badly run Labour authorities which have budgeted badly, overspent and got into terrible difficulties in the past. Those authorities may have to take awful steps. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) said that the fault lay with Labour Members, not Conservative Members, for the way in which such authorities are run.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State said that there will be no compulsory redundancies. In fact, in his letter to me dated 17 December he said that there would be no need for any job cuts. The question that I put to the Minister again, which is different, is: taking account of any transfers to the grant-maintained sector and privatised commercial undertakings, can he say that this time next year the overall level of jobs in local government will be the same as or lower than this year?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that there will be no need for job losses. I refer the hon. Member for Blackburn to the survey in the *Municipal Journal*, which interviewed the personnel chiefs of all local authorities. Of the local authorities surveyed, 22 per cent. will be making extra jobs in key areas, especially in care in the community; only 10 per cent. are thinking of any job reduction and 68 per cent. are not thinking of making changes. That is one estimate; it is not my estimate. As I told the hon. Member for Blackburn, I will not estimate the number of jobs that there will be in local government in the next 12 to 15 months. Personnel chiefs suggest that more councils will increase staff numbers in key areas rather than make reductions.

[Mr. Redwood]

My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow gave the House a riveting account of what can happen in a Labour-controlled council which deliberately overspends. When such councils overspend, not simply by the odd million pounds but by many millions of pounds which they do not have, they must get the money back from the taxpayers.

Mr. Henderson: Is the Minister aware that Wandsworth council announced this week, as it prepared its budget, that it has overspent by £6 million? How does he compare Wandsworth in those circumstances?

Mr. Redwood: Wandsworth council is well known for its good financial management and low taxation. I do not expect to see Wandsworth as a potential applicant for capping, whereas I fear that one or two Labour-run councils may have to be so.

As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow, the result of council overspending and bad management is damage to taxpayers and services and the sacking of employees. it is a disgrace that local authorities should be so badly run that councils get to the point of damaging taxpayers and services and sacking employees when the overall settlement is perfectly reasonable.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) contrasted Westminster and Gateshead as an example of alleged political bias. That is one of the kernels of the debate. The matter was first taken up by the hon. Member for Blackburn. The issue is whether there is any bias in the system. Let us examine the facts. On the standard spending assessment—it is right to examine the amount of spending and the grant based on it which councils are given for each individual in a local authority—the councils which do well under the current formula are Lambeth, at £1,241 a head, Hackney, at £1,410 a head, and Tower Hamlets, at £1,435 a head.

I can see a bit of political bias in that, but I fear that the criticism will come from Conservative Members, not from Labour Members. When I compare those figures with the shire areas, I see Surrey at £513 plus £80 or £90 for each district and West Sussex at £551 plus £80 or £90 for a typical district. Those figures are under half the level that large Labour and Liberal authorities in inner London receive.

Let us consider the specific argument of the hon. Member for Blackburn, who said that we had singled out the Labour shires for bad treatment. The eight Labour shires have an average SSA per head of £594, and the average for all shires is £585, so they had £10 per head more than the average.

Consider the averages by types of authority. In the shire areas, where there are more Conservatives, taking county and district together, it is £674 per head. In the metropolitan areas, where there are more Labour councils, it is £814. In London—with the considerable weight given to inner London where many Labour councils are—it is £1,055 per head. So I completely reject the idea that there is any political rigging whatsoever. The hon. Member for Blackburn does not want to intervene now because he knows that that is right. He knows that the formula gives more money to Labour-controlled areas.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Minister; he should not make an invitation like that. He failed to deal with the fact that the increase for Labour shire counties, at 2·2 per cent., is well below the increase in SSAs for Conservative shire counties, at 3·7 per cent. The difference in the increases shows the bias of the Conservative Government.

Mr. Redwood: They were getting more before and they will be getting more next year. Their increase is smaller because their populations have been falling, or have not been increasing as much as those in Conservative areas.

In introducing the debate, the hon. Member for Blackburn made a wimp of a speech; a stumble of a speech; a speech that died of intellectual rigor mortis long before he got to the end. I began to wonder whether he was understudying the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, because he certainly lost his hon. Friends and most of mine in his strange arguments about public expenditure. I began to wonder whether he had come to the wrong debate.

The hon. Gentleman went on to make claims about the state of local government based on a survey that had just been conducted—a survey that he thought was independent and rigorous. I see this statement on the inside of that survey:

"The client for the independent budget monitoring project is the Labour party."

What an independent survey. Labour organised the questions, paid for the results and decided whether to publish them. There is open government in practice.! The Opposition are obviously trying to warm up their ideas.

When we look at the first survey resulting from that expensive piece of consultancy, we find not so much a survey but more a loosely linked group of 80 casual press cuttings. Any press cutting with bad news attached is included and any cutting with good news attached is scrupulously avoided and kept out.

It is like the Opposition's policy on local government: give prominence to the announcement that Birmingham will cut 3,000 jobs and let people believe that they will be sacked and that there will be compulsory redundancies; let the families of all those people squirm; let those employees go home at night worrying whether they will have a job in the morning; and then play it down when they are told a few days later that there will be only 1,000 job losses at maximum, and that no one will be sacked or made redundant. As one of my hon. Friends said, who knows how many job losses they will be predicting in a week or two? I hope that it will be none.

Let us consider what happened in Avon. I had to go on the radio and explain why I thought that there would be 4,000 job losses. I said that I did not think that there should or would be. The "Today" programme of the BBC was not interested in the story that followed, when Avon climbed down and said it was not 4,000, 2,000 or 1,000 job losses, but that 170 posts might disappear. I hope that it will be none.

Dr. Berry: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Redwood: No, I shall not give way.

I know that for some local authorities next year will not be easy——

Dr. Berry: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to give inaccurate information to the House and refuse to give way when he is challenged?

Madam Speaker: The Minister is responsible for his own comments and statements.

Mr. Redwood: It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman wanted to stop my peroration. He does not like what I am saying.

Dr. Berry *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Redwood: This is a fair settlement, a good settlement, and I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 308, Noes 251.

Division No. 140] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew McKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon [illegible]an *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Local Government Finance Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 422), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

It being after Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the other motions relating to local government finance, pursuant to Order [29 January].*

Resolved,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 5) (House of Commons Paper No. 423), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Resolved,

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 424), which was laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Resolved,

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) (Amendment) Report (England) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 443), which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Prisons (Contracting Out)

10.15 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted Out Prisons) (No. 2) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

The order extends the powers in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to allow the management of existing prisons to be contracted out to a private operator. The Criminal Justice Bill as originally drafted provided for the contracting out of only new remand prisons but in February 1991 during its passage through the House the Government accepted an amendment by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) which allowed the powers to be extended by powers made by statutory instrument.

In July last year, the House approved an order which extended contracting out to new prisons generally. As a result, and following a successful competitive tendering exercise, the new prison at Blackenhurst is due to open in the spring under the management of UK Detention Services Ltd. Blakenhurst will hold both sentenced and remand prisoners.

Like Wolds, the first contracted-out prison, Blakenhurst will provide a regime incorporating not only the many good practices of the best of existing prison service establishments, but some valuable new ideas. The performance of the prisons will be closely and continually monitored to ensure compliance with the high standards that we have set out in the agreement with the contractor.

In debating the contracting out of prisons such as Wolds and Blakenhurst to private contractors, we should look at the positive programme that we have put in place by setting out specifications that are in line with the Woolf report on prisons. For example, Blakenhurst will provide a positive programme. Prisoners will be locked in their cells only at normal sleeping times or for specific security needs, and that will usually result in prisoners spending 15 hours per day out of their cells.

A mixture of education provision of at least six hours a week will aim to prepare prisoners for the realities of release and will build into the prison day a constructive and rehabilitative regime. Visiting facilities for prisoners' families will be open in the evening to suit the convenience of the visitor and there will be daily visits for unconvicted prisoners. Basic hygiene provision for prisoners will be good, providing daily showers and changes of socks and underpants, as specified in the contract. *[Interruption.]*

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): There is so much noise going on below the Gangway, Madam Speaker, that I cannot hear the Minister. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady makes a good point. The House is very noisy immediately after a Division. I should be most grateful if hon. Members would settle down so that we might hear the Secretary of State.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentlemen sitting below the Gangway are firmly against the introduction of private management to prisons, but none of them has the slightest interest in listening to what would actually occur and has occurred in Blakenhurst, where a private regime has been introduced. I have been describing the extremely enlightened regimes—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentlemen below the Gangway should remain silent, at least until we have heard the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We are being provoked.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am being provoked.

Mr. Clarke: I was describing the extremely enlightened regime that is being provided at Blakenhurst prison. One of the features of the contracts that we have placed so far —apart from specifications relating to the value for money that the taxpayer expects—is our detailed specification for the enlightened regime towards which the Woolf report pointed the way. For example, sex offender therapy treatment will be provided in this positive programme. The whole programme is very much in line not only with the Woolf report, but with suggestions made in a report on prison regimes published only last week by the chief inspector of prisons, Judge Tumim, entitled "Doing Time, Using Time".

The order completes the extension of a section of the Criminal Justice Act to allow existing prisons to be managed by private operators. That will enable us to encourage the spread of similar improvements in prison management and regimes, and to make further progress in the way in which prisoners are looked after.

I am presenting the order now because we are currently carrying out a market testing exercise on Her Majesty's prison Manchester, usually described as Strangeways. We need to pass the order now, because we need to be in a position to enter into a contract should a private operator succeed in winning it. Some half-dozen private-sector companies and an in-house team from the prison service are now working on their bids in competition.

By introducing the order today, I am in no way pre-empting the outcome of the tender evaluation process. I am keeping in touch with it, but we have not begun to evaluate the rival bids from the private bidders and the prison service. It is a case of being prepared for this, and for future market-testing and contracting-out exercises in existing prisons, which we would not be allowed to do without the authority of the House.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): What consultation has there been with the Strangeways prison officers, and what has been the outcome?

Mr. Clarke: There has been a good deal of discussion throughout. I am delighted to say that the prison officers, along with the Prison Officers Association, are co-operating actively with management in putting together a bid, and are trying to demonstrate how they can best match up to the demanding specification. Consultations are proceeding now, in line with the TUPE application, with which I shall deal in due course.

Manchester is one of our oldest and largest local prisons. At the time of the disturbances in April 1990, it held 1,647 prisoners, including unconvicted prisoners on remand and those awaiting sentence as well as prisoners serving their sentences. That included prisoners in the highest security category, category A. The House will recall that, as a result of the 1990 riot, the larger part of the prison was left in a condition that required major refurbishment, amounting almost to rebuilding.

It was against that background of rebuilding that we decided to take the opportunity of market-testing Manchester before it was fully reopened. We had two main reasons, both of which I consider fairly obvious. First, as a result of being emptied and refurbished, Manchester was virtually a new prison, holding a substantially smaller number of prisoners—currently about 500. The move followed logically from our policy of seeking private-sector tenders for the operation of new prisons. That policy was made clear by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the debate on the Blakenhurst order. Secondly, it seemed an excellent way of moving to a further stage in our market-testing programme.

That next stage is very significant, and I hope that Opposition Members welcome it as much as I do. We are seeking in-house bids as well as private-sector bids, and considering the two in competition with each other. Although Manchester prison is not fully operational, the prison service already has a nucleus of staff there, well placed to develop an in-house bid.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On market testing, is it true the Home Office has run into difficulties over a European directive, causing it to have to alter proposed contracts so as not adversely to affect the contracts of employment of people already in Government service?

Mr. Clarke: I was going to deal with that point, and referred to it briefly in response to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I shall cover the problems arising from the directive and the TUPE regulations based on it. However, I should like first to describe the basis on which we are proceeding at Manchester.

As I said, it is technically an existing prison, although most of it is waiting to be reopened after refurbishment. It is also the first time that we have gone to market testing where there has been a prison service bid being tested alongside private sector contractors. When it reopens, Manchester prison will offer a substantially improved environment for prisoners and staff. Bidding for it will provide the prison service with an ideal opportunity to consider how to implement innovative ideas which will allow it to compete effectively with the private sector.

The tendering exercise for Manchester is taking place at a key time for the prison service. In April, the service will become an executive agency under the leadership of Derek Lewis, whom I appointed recently. He has a wide commercial background in the private sector. I announced earlier this week that his remit as head of the prison service will include responsibility for taking forward Government policy on the involvement of the private sector in managing prisons. I want to see the service take full advantage of the opportunities which competition will provide and to see it reap the benefits which are already becoming apparent as a result of our contracting-out programme at Wolds and Blakenhurst and in the market testing of Manchester.

Agency status for the prison service, market testing and competition all have the same objective. The sole objective is to raise standards and secure better value for money throughout the prison system. I want a system that is a mixed economy, including prisons managed by private operators in addition to those under direct management. To achieve those improvements we need the right balance and mix between public and private sector management of individual prisons within the prison service. I have asked

Derek Lewis to provide advice to me later this year on the extent, form and time scale for increasing private sector involvement by later this year.

In the meantime, in about April, and again following our policy on new prisons, we shall invite private operators to bid for the management of the new prison at Doncaster. It is the last of the 21 new prisons constructed as part of our most recent prison building programme completed at a total cost of £1,200 million. It is a local prison, with some 720 places and scheduled to open in the early part of 1994. The House will recall that we committed ourselves in the autumn statement to begin work within the next three years on the first two new prisons in a prison building programme that will follow.

In addition to handling the Doncaster project, the agency will identify further existing establishments for market testing or for contracting out. I have twice been asked about the problem that has arisen during the contracting-out process of existing establishments, including Manchester, which is the subject of TUPE. I am sorry to use the acronym. The TUPE regulations should be given their full name—the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. They are the means by which the European Community acquired rights directive is translated into domestic law. The regulations protect the employment contracts and collective agreements of staff when an undertaking is transferred from one organisation to another.

I think that it is fair to say that, when the EC directive and the TUPE regulations were drawn up, the draftsmen did not have in mind the type of transfer of work from the public to the private sector, which has been one of the achievements of successive Conservative Governments and which we remain committed to continue. The result has been considerable discussion across Whitehall, and outside, about TUPE's effect on a number of contracting-out and market testing exercises, including ours at Manchester. Indeed, when we issued the invitations to tender for Manchester in October last year, our understanding based on our then legal advice was that TUPE would not apply. Shortly before Christmas, we took further legal advice. It is not wholly unusual for legal advice to differ on different occasions.

On the basis of the latest advice, it became apparent that TUPE could apply to Manchester. In any event, to resolve doubt, we have decided that we shall apply the provisions of the regulations, so that the successful tenderer will take over protected employment contracts and collective agreements. We are now carrying out consultations, as that is also a requirement of the regulations. That has resulted in a slight delay to the Manchester tendering exercise while we consider the implications. I hope that we will be able to set a new date for the return of tenders very soon. We have already begun the consultations with the trade unions, and we are providing the further information necessary to allow the bidders to take into account the application of TUPE.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is that a final requirement or simply a contingency requirement? Did not the permanent secretary tell the unions that tendering was taking place on that basis and that there is still legal consideration within the Government as to whether the directive will apply to Government Departments?

Mr. Clarke: For the time being in the prison service, we propose to consider the application of the regulations case by case. With regard to Manchester, we have decided to apply and to follow the regulations. That is the process that we have now embarked upon, and that is why we have extended the date for bids and have issued the further information. As part of that, we are consulting the trade unions as required by the regulations.

I should make it clear that I do not see the application of TUPE to Manchester prison as a barrier to private sector involvement. There are arguably benefits from taking over existing staff as well as difficulties. However, I believe that it is perfectly feasible for new ideas and approaches to be grafted on to the existing expertise and skills, of which there is certainly already a good supply in the prison service.

We are well on the way towards that significant level of private-sector involvement in the prison sector that I want to see. Private-sector involvement is one way forward to a better service for prisoners and the taxpayer. The benefits of bringing private sector management into the prison service alongside the existing public sector prison service are considerable. Competition in striving to achieve the kind of standards that the Government now stipulate based on the recommendations of Lord Justice Woolf and Judge Tumim and others will lead to people finding different ways to speed up the process of raising standards.

It is very important that we have a basis upon which to make a comparison between one approach to managing the regime and another. The background is that I believe that the existing prison service in some places already does a good job often against the odds. Most of the members of the prison service I meet are dedicated officers who joined the service for the right reasons and are struggling to provide fair and humane care in difficult surroundings.

Mrs. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Home Secretary describe the ways in which he sees the contracted-out prisons improving the quality of medical services available to prisoners, and particularly of psychiatric provision—which, given the number of people in our prisons who are suffering from mental illness, is of pressing importance?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that there is considerable scope for improving the quality of the medical service throughout the prison service—in both the public sector and private sector prisons. I am very glad to say that I find myself working with the chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, with whom I have worked in the past. He now heads a team advising me on how to develop the prison medical service further.

I have already given fresh directions on the employment of NHS-trained nurses in the service. We need to improve facilities and the problem of those who require psychiatric care in prisons has always been, and remains, serious. However, we are making progress. The system is far from perfect, but the transfer of people from prison to mental hospital when they really need psychiatric care and are not suitably housed inside a prison is better than it was.

However, that is an area where I am anxious to see progress and I would like private sector prisons and operators to contract for their medical care from outside. That is one way of introducing a variety of approaches to the system so that we can raise the medical regimes inside prisons up to the standards that we would like to see. I have always believed that, in every way, the prison medical

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service should be brought closer to the national health service and more in line with mainstream medical provision. Again, the involvement of people such as Sir Donald Acheson will be very helpful to us in moving in that direction.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am very interested in my right hon. and learned Friend's point. Is he aware of the evidence to Select Committees over the years, in particular the Health Select Committee and its predecessor the Social Services Select Committee? an inquiry into the prison medical service found that rather too many people who had originally been patients in psychiatric hospitals and had been put into the community had ended up in prison because the hospital service would not take them back again.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that that is a difficulty, but I am not going to be taken outside my subject, except that that point is relevant, obviously, to the standards that we specify in the contracts that we put out, but there are countless such difficulties. I recall the debates on care in the community and the need to develop proper facilities for those who are no longer treated in mental hospitals. Certainly, in the past people have gone to prison who should not have been there and should have been in hospital. I recall national health service hospitals that had a policy that they would not take people who had been involved with the criminal justice system, so it became very difficult to find a place for them in NHS hospitals.

It is my genuine belief, as I have said before to my hon. Friend, that the situation is improving, but I am no more complacent than he is about the present state of affairs. We need improvements in the prison service and in the national health service, and we are working upon that.

I have described one of the many ways not only in which the prison service is improving but in which, I believe, can speed up the process and use matters such as market testing, contracting out, and the involvement of new management skills from the private sector in order to speed up the process of improvement. It fits, certainly, with the concept of public service. What the Government mean by public service is the provision of facilities that are giving ever better service to the public, who are the consumers of what we are providing. In the past, some have thought that the notion of public service means that everybody who works for it is on the public payrol. That is the wrong way to approach the matter.

Harnessing new ideas, considering different ways of working, allowing in some welcome fresh air seem to be long overdue, particularly in the prison service. The move to agency status, with greater freedom to manage the prison service, along with the extension of private sector involvement should allow us to develop a better prison system and one of which we as a country can be proud. The order will help to achieve that aim, and I therefore commend it to the House.

10.36 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): This is a short debate, but it is important. There is no doubt at all that many features of our present prison system are a disgrace—inhumane, unjust and deeply destructive of any realistic possibility of rehabilitation for offenders. Overcrowding is a continuing and serious problem. The psychiatric treatment of prisoners has been referred to by hon. Members. There are problems of persistent and widespread drug abuse. Report after report from Judge Tumim expresses concern at prison conditions, most recently in respect of Longlartin and Spring Hill. He said:

"The existing living accommodation is some of the worst we have ever seen."

Last year alone, there were 41 suicides in prison institutions. The issue, therefore, is not whether the prison system should be changed—it should be changed, and changed drastically—but whether change is best achieved by reforming the prison service or by privatising it, by building a better public service, as Opposition Members say, or turning it over to private sector companies for profit, as is the Government's case.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): To be fair, does the hon. Gentleman recognise that Judge Tumim also congratulated the prison service on the dramatic improvements that have taken place at Brixton? Indeed, he has said that Longlartin has improved over the past 12 months as well.

Mr. Blair: Judge Tumim has described improvements. Indeed, he paid special tribute to the staff and the role that they have played in bringing about those improvements, but as the hon. Gentleman will accept, there is a very long way to go.

Faced with those critical issues within the prison service, privatisation is not just a diversion from the agenda of prison reform; it is fundamentally flawed in principle and is now being pursued for reasons which have nothing to do with efficiency or prison reform but are simply an obsession with the idea of privatisation itself. Nothing could illustrate that more clearly than the story in *The Guardian* today. The Home Secretary will deny it if it is wrong, so let us see whether he does. It says that the new contractors for Strangeways in Manchester have already been asked to prepare to load extra costs on to the contract should the prison be filled beyond capacity.

We are debating whether the prison service should be in the public or the private sector when the critical question of overcrowding lies unattended. The Minister says, "Big deal" and it is indeed a big deal—it is the very problem that the Woolf report says we should be acting upon. If the Minister cared about the prison system he would concentrate on it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman invited me to deny it, and I firmly deny the hon. Gentleman's interpretation. In the bad old days, Manchester's maximum capacity was 1,800 inmates. If the Opposition had their way and we carried on running it in the old way, no doubt all the old disadvantages would continue. The present capacity that we are aiming for is much lower, but we have to anticipate that from time to time it might go above its maximum capacity, as other prisons do, and we have to make contingency arrangements within the contract to deal with that—but its maximum occupancy will never return to the old overcrowded conditions.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, the prison population is falling and we are opening new prisons. I do not anticipate overcrowding in the near future.

Mr. Blair: That is somewhat less than convincing when we read the contract being considered for Strangeways. It has a heading, "Overcrowding", and asks the contractor to provide details of additional costs which may be incurred

if overcrowding occurs. The energy, time and man hours of civil servants should be used to attempt to get rid of overcrowding instead of concentrating on privatisation.

No doubt there will be more expense, energy and confusion if difficulties arise out of the transfer of undertakings regulations. Opposition Member see nothing wrong, and indeed a lot right, with the employees' terms and conditions of employment being properly protected if they are transferred.

If substantial parts of the prison service are sold off or contracted out, the multiplicity of contracts with different contractors will make the uniform improvements which lie at the heart of Woolf all the more difficult to achieve.

The urgency of those improvements could not be set out more clearly than in the Woolf report, which calls for better work, education and treatment programmes, enhanced roles for prison officers, a national system of accredited standards, a specific obligation against overcrowding—the very overcrowding now being contemplated for Strangeways—a public commitment from Ministers to improve sanitation facilities, and better prospects for prisoners in relation to prison visits. That is surely the agenda for reform, and at the heart of it lies the recognition that the new and higher standards being demanded for the prison service can be achieved only by a Government commitment to achieve them. They cannot arise through market forces, market testing or private sector initiatives—they have to be imposed by Government.

The Home Secretary lists the benefits of the prison regime at the Wolds and Blakenhurst. He says that prisoners at the Wolds are out of their cells 15 hours a day and have full access to legal assistance, and that at Blakenhurst there are educational assessments with a minimum education entitlement and better medical care. Of course hon. Members on both sides of the House welcome those improvements, but they are not the outcome of privatisation. That is the sham at the heart of it. They are the outcome of the Government specifying the regime at the prison. It has nothing to do with the private sector or the public sector and everything to do with the Government being prepared to implement the very specifications that we have been asking for the whole prison service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's ideology is blinding him to the best means of achieving the Woolf reforms, on which we are both agreed. We set out the Woolf prospectus of the specifications and for the first time we have placed the contract with the undertaking which commits itself to deliver Woolf. At Manchester, the prison service management and the Prison Officers Association are describing how they would meet that specification. Whoever wins it will be bound by contract to deliver it. If we had not had this means of proceeding, it would have taken years to move the old public sector system anywhere near the Woolf reforms to which he and I aspire.

Mr. Blair: With all due respect, what completely blows that argument apart is that in some of the new public sector prisons there are the same specifications; it is nothing to do with the fact that it has been privatised—it is to do with the fact that, for once, the Minister has implemented the Woolf recommendations. The question that any sensible person will ask is surely this: if it is right and possible to impose these higher standards on the private sector, why are the same standards not imposed throughout the public sector? If these are the right things to do in relation to Wolds and Blakenhurst, why is it not right to do them throughout the entire system? Why can we not have 15 hours a day out of cells at Frankland, or minimum education standards at Wormwood Scrubs?

If those are the things that the Minister wants to do, why not put the energy and resources of Government into doing them, rather than wasting time with privatisation? In the end, the only possible argument that he can have is that there is a great cost benefit in this, but that, of course, has been somewhat dampened by the TUPE undertakings regulations.

The costs of the Wolds in its first year, so far as there are any comparable figures, are almost identical for public sector prisons. Therefore, what any sensible person must ask is: why waste the Government's time, energy and resources on going down the route of privatisation rather than ensuring that the Woolf report is properly implemented? Indeed, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman reads an article published in *The Independent* the other day he will see that many of those in the prison system are saying that because of the threat of privatisation they are having to postpone the reform agenda that they want to carry out in order to deal with the problems of contracting out and privatisation.

Then again, with public sector prisons hon. Members do not ask parliamentary questions and get the answer back that the information cannot be given because it is a matter of commercial confidence. It is a scandal that, when hon. Members put down questions asking, for example, how many full-time custody officers are employed at these privatised prisons, we cannot get a proper response. This precisely encapsulates the conflict between privatisation and the public interest.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): As my hon. Friend will know, I have taken the trouble to go and look at the privatised system in America and elsewhere, and I came to a very simple conclusion, to which I ask the Home Secretary to respond. What advantage is there in a private person making a profit from a public incarceration? When we incarcerate somebody, we are trying to reform that person. Why should a private individual make a profit out of that? What can he offer that the state cannot?

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Hon. Members say that they are not making a profit out of it, but of course they are—it is the very thing that they are there for; that is what they do as companies. Of course there are areas of national life where private profit is not suitable. That is what the Conservative party cannot understand. They believe that if something is not run for private profit it is not run properly—that private profit and the public interest are one and the same thing; but they are not.

We say that this is a pointless exercise, because the specifications which are good in respect of privatised prisons or contracted-out management could be applied in the prison service generally. We also say that it is fundamentally wrong in principle that persons sentenced by the state to imprisonment should be deprived of their liberty and kept under lock and key by those who are not accountable solely to the state. Those employed by

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security firms are primarily or solely accountable not to the state but to their shareholders. For the benefit of hon. Gentlemen, I will read a quotation:

"I do not think that there is a case, and I do not believe that the House would accept a case, for auctioning or privatising the prisons or handing over the business of keeping prisoners safe to anyone other than Government servants.—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 1303.]

Those were the words not of an Opposition Member but of the present Foreign Secretary when he was Home Secretary. Nothing has changed, except that the grip of dogma is rather stronger now than it was then.

Of course the Government may say that they retain the right to enforce the prison contract, but I say that it is a travesty to suppose that the remote possibility of an action for breach of contract by the Home Secretary is in any way a substitute for the character of a proper public service where the only duty is owed to that service. Private companies may well supply services to the state system, but to allow a private security company, whose main motivation must be commercial, the coercive powers of detention, punishment, physical restraint and influence on decisions about parole—powers of a real and harsh nature—is wrong in principle and should not be countenanced by the House.

I do not pretend that one or two private prisons or contracted-out managements will destroy the prison system, although I do not believe that they will do it any good. But if, as the right hon. Gentleman wants and as he indicated today, large parts of our prisons and prison service become privatised, run by private companies for profit, it will be not just a profound error of principle but a massive and tragic waste of an opportunity to get on with the real agenda—the reform of an antiquated and outdated prison system from which this country desperately wishes to escape.

10.51 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I wish to intervene only very briefly, but I claim to do so because in 1986 I visited some private sector prisons in the United States of America and, as a result of that visit, a Home Affairs Committee report recommended that we should consider the consequences of private sector involvement in our prison system.

I have heard the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) repeatedly use the term "privatisation". He is fundamentally wrong. We are not discussing privatisation. We are not discussing the sale of prisons and prison department estates. We are talking about market testing and the use of the private sector in accountable management contracts, which is an entirely different concept. We are discussing the possibility of the Home Office remaining firmly in control of what happens in an institution but delegating the service to a private contractor which remains accountable to the Home Office for how it manages the institution.

I believe that the order extends the concept of management contracting——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Sir John Wheeler: No, I shall proceed, if I may, to complete my brief speech.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman may have no current interest to declare, but I have just had a look at the Register of Members' Interests and I notice that he is registered as independent chairman of the board of the National Inspectorate of Security Guard, Patrol and Transport Services from 1982. If there is an interest——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well the procedure for declaring an interest.

Sir John Wheeler: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I had any interest to declare, I should declare it. I have no interest to declare other than my interest in the use of taxpayers' money to benefit the taxpayers' interests, which is quite different from what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is suggesting.

Central to the Government's objectives is the market testing concept which they have successfully introduced into local government; they are now properly extending the principle into central Government. I can see no reason why an accountable contract should not lead to a better standard of service for the public interest, with better conditions for prison inmates and an improvement in the quality of training and facilities. I also believe that it is essential to allow people who work in the prison system the variety of other experiences.

Such ideas are commonplace in the United States. One of the great benefits of them has been that those who work in the prison service are able to find employment which enables them to achieve greater satisfaction than being tied to the bureaucratic restrictions of the state sector. Many of the objectives which those of us believe are essential to the improvement of the prison system can be found in the challenge of the market-testing process. For that reason, I especially welcome the order.

I am glad to learn that prison management in England and Wales, as well as the Prison Officers Association, wish to take part in the process. That in itself is an achievement.

As to the experiment at the Wolds prison, the hon. Member for Sedgefield suggested that there was less accountability. I believe that the reverse is true. Bureaucratic accountability is difficult to test, whereas market-testing contracts are open to challenge. Those institutions which are subject to management contracts welcome the press and media as well as hon. Members who wish to see the achievements.

The all-party penal affairs group and any hon. Member who wishes to participate may visit Wolds prison to see what is going on and judge whether it is being successfully managed. I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about widening the scope not for privatisation but for market testing and accountable management contracts.

10.57 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Repeated references have been made to Strangeways prison, which is sited in my constituency of Manchester, Central. Strangeways prison gained notoriety in 1990 when a riot broke out on 1 April. The riot continued for 25 days. That is a period in the history of Manchester which no one will forget.

I must stress that, long before 1 April 1990, the Prison Officers Association insisted that overcrowding and bad sanitary conditions were the main cause of unrest and that

one day we would pay the penalty. I can remember a prison officer saying to me, "If conditions do not change, these prisoners will be coming through the wall." I was at Strangeways prison on the fateful Sunday. Like human moles, the prisoners were coming out of the roof of the prison.

Then, as now, the experts went unheeded. Instead of listening and learning, the Government have taken the unknown path—the murky market, as it has been described—to privatise the prisons. Once again, dogma reigns supreme with the Government. Experts tell us that privatisation is unhelpful and irrelevant to running today's prison regimes.

In 1989, in a submission to the Government's Green Paper, the Prison Officers Association outlined the crisis and emphasised that the real cause of the ever-increasing prison population had never been addressed, only the symptoms. Regrettably, only the symptoms are still being considered today.

As the House has heard, the Government know best. Market testing of prisons, which is another name for privatisation, is seen as the panacea for all our prison ills, yet the Government know full well that contracting out will not affect the ever-increasing population. That remains the responsibility of the courts, the judges and magistrates. There is little liaison between judges and magistrates.

I have the tender documents with me, if the Home Secretary wants to see them. Given the details of the contract requirements in the documents, it is envisaged that there will be overcrowding. Today's edition of *The Guardian* quotes from the document for the operating contract for Her Majesty's prison, Manchester and comes to the same conclusions. The document informs the contractors that they should assume an overall population of 552 prisoners in the five A to E wings of the prison, but the authority may require all cells with a toilet annexe to be occupied by two prisoners, although they may be designed for single-cell occupation. They are contemplating overcrowding and that would provide an additional 134 places, increasing the population in those wings to 686.

Further accommodation could be provided by requiring that some of the cells without a toilet annexe be occupied by two prisoners. The contractor is invited to specify the additional cost in those five wings.

The other wings—G, H, I and K—were built to hold 261 places, when opened. In the contract—as with A to E wings—overcrowding has to be taken into the reckoning and costed accordingly. Even the health centre is included, to provide for 53 patients, but no assurance could be given that they would not be used for non-medical cases.

Compare the requirements in the tender contract to the Home Office letter of 24 April 1991, replying to my inquiry regarding the single-cell policy in prisons. The then Minister of State informed me:

"The present policy of providing for a majority of single cells offers prisoners a degree of privacy, and encourages them to develop a sense of responsibility for the accommodation they occupy. However, we recognise that a mixture of single and shared accommodation is necessary. . . . At Manchester, in response to local circumstances, management has allowed for a higher proportion of shared accommodation than the standard design in the remand prison. In K wing about 20% of cells are fitted for two prisoners to share, and current plans for G, H and I wings envisage close to 50% of cells being capable of taking two prisoners."

In other words, overcrowding has been built into the contract. Whatever the Home Secretary says, he cannot get away from that.

The contractors will also have to be aware of the special accommodation for category A prisoners required at the Crown court in Manchester, which they will have to man. All other support facilities will be the responsibility of the private contractor. That aspect of prison work will be an untested area, but the closest liaison with the Greater Manchester police will be necessary to ensure the smooth running of the courts.

Accommodation at the courts, liaison with court users, manning requirements and escorting prisoners to courts or to other prisons, hospitals, funerals and so forth will be undertaken without the in-depth experience gained over many years by the Prison Officers Association.

Strangeways, by its very nature, has always been a transit prison with a quicker population turnover and therefore it requires more labour-intensive activities, such as the duties that I have outlined.

Private prisons, whether based on the ideology of Adam Smith or on the American way of life, are not the answer. Out will go the dedication, the responsibility and accountability. The years of practical experience will have been wasted. Many years before the riot, experienced officers warned about what was to be expected. But Governments paid no heed, and we experienced the biggest riots in prison history. Those of us who visited the prison after 25 days saw the mass destruction. But at least there was optimism that there would be a rebuild and new thinking. Above all, it was unanimously agreed that such a thing must never happen again.

After the results of all the interviews had been taken into consideration, the Woolf report recommended a format for the establishment of new procedures. The report said that there should be a 3 per cent. ceiling on overcrowding and that that figure should not be exceeded without reference to Parliament.

In July 1992, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) and other interested Members, I visited Strangeways and witnessed the refurbishment. We saw the gymnasium and the canteen facilities. It was as if things were starting anew. The Government's attitude, of course, was that the prison was ripe for privatisation. Following our visit we were convinced that the Home Office was drawing up plans to that effect.

The Prison Officers Association was unaware of the policy for the future. At that time there had been no discussions with the association. No one was prepared to inform it of what was going on. The officers were working in limbo, and morale was at a new low. The Home Office was non-committal. It told me that it was anticipated that a decision would be taken later in the summer. With every phone call I made to the Home Office, the mystery deepened.

In late summer—on 4 August, just six days after our visit—the front page of the *Manchester Evening News* had the story. The cat was out of the bag. The Home Office's privatisation plan had been revealed in a job description memo for a new national post of prison manager. One of the prisons named was Strangeways. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the Home Secretary to laugh. He should have been there at the time. His predecessor never came. The prison officers held, and then evacuated the prison. There was no escape.

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

The officers, who, with their families, suffered great mental and physical stress, have been betrayed, sold down the river. They are the victims of an ill thought out scheme. On a previous occasion the Prison Officers Association stated that the privatisation of prisons was ethically dubious and would lead to lower standards. I, along with the prison officers, maintain that privatisation will not, and cannot, cope with overcrowding.

The findings of Lord Justice Woolf have been ignored. What has happened to the 12 main recommendations? The views of the prison officers too have been ignored. We still have the recipe for riots. The Government have not learnt the lesson of Strangeways 1990. They may once again rue the day. But the Home Secretary will turn a blind eye and a deaf ear, as the then Home Secretary did in April 1990.

11.8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary's awareness of the condition of prisons in Britain and of the need to implement Lord Justice Woolf's recommendations as soon as possible are not in question. Indeed, among hon. Members there is an almost unanimous view that prisons are one of the darker corners of our society. That does not apply universally, but there are massive problems, which were highlighted in Lord Justice Woolf's report. In setting out, in contractual terms, the objectives for Manchester Strangeways, Lord Justice Woolf properly drew attention to what was needed.

In introducing this order, the Home Secretary is acting with undue precipitousness and without evidence to support his general assertion that the prisons will benefit from extension of private sector management and control.

Arguments of principle were eloquently and effectively made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) about the appropriateness of placing such matters in the hands of private contractors, who run prisons for profit. Prisoners who are causing trouble have to be manhandled—that is not a purely theoretical issue. The exact nature of the job undertaken by the private sector company has already become clear in the management of the Wolds prison. A recent parliamentary answer reported no fewer than 20 incidents, many of which involved assaults on officers, drug smuggling into the prison, racial discrimination and hostility—many of the characteristics of prison life that cause problems throughout the country.

It must be doubted whether it is suitable to put the task of attending to such problems in the hands of a private company operating for profit and without the normal arrangements for accountability that control the response of the prison service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Obviously, the power that is given to one person to restrain another and keep him in custody depends on the authority of the law, which is ultimately derived from the House. That is the only means by which anybody can lawfully lock someone else up or contain him. That is dependent not on whether or not he is on the public payroll, but on whether he is working by the same rules. Even in private prisons, the use of force and coercive powers can be applied only with the authority of the controller, who is based there as a Crown servant to ensure that matters, particularly the use of force, are closely supervised.

Mr. Maclennan: It is open to a private citizen to use force to restrain a member of the public who is committing a crime. The Home Secretary need not teach his grandmother tricks on such a matter. The question whether it is appropriate to place prison guards in a position where they have to use force as a matter of course, day in, day out, without the advantage of the professional training that has gone into the building up of the prison service, is at least debatable. Many people doubt that it is a suitable policy.

The Home Secretary did not allude to the risk of abuse being covered up for reasons of commercial confidentiality. Questions have been asked in the House about Wolds prison and its management, and answers have been refused on the grounds that they would reveal commercially confidential information. The Minister of State, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), who is now talking to the Home Secretary, knows that to be true.

He has refused to answer questions, saying that he will not give information to Members of Parliament about the management of that private prison because it is commercially confidential. He has been asked questions about staffing levels and the chaplain, and replied that such matters are commercially confidential. That is a means of taking away from Parliament the right to scrutinise the management and conduct of our prison service. That alone is sufficient reason for being dubious about what is planned.

This is the last opportunity that the House has to prevent, or even discuss, the Home Secretary's decision to award contracts for the management of any prison he chooses. Whatever else the right hon. and learned Gentleman is no one would flatter him by calling him prudent. Tonight he made a prediction about the prison population which many of his predecessors would have thought rather rash. We shall see whether he is proved right, but a prudent Home Secretary would have waited to see how the Wolds experiment worked out and how Blakenhurst worked out before invoking the dogma that competition is best and extending the scope of privatisation to prisons already built and being run as part of the prison service. He did not even wait to allow Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons the time to conduct a visit to the Wolds prison and issue a report on it.

The Home Secretary accuses the hon. Member for Sedgefield of dogmatism, and of being doctrinaire. The reverse is the truth. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not interested in a pragmatic evaluation of the experiments on which he has embarked. He is forcing through the House a measure designed to give him untrammelled authority to award commercial contracts to companies that will not disclose to the House how they propose to proceed. I think that that is irresponsible. It is almost inconceivable that any sensible Home Secretary would take such a decision—indeed, his predecessor, now the Foreign Secretary, explicitly repudiated the idea in principle.

The Home Secretary, however, is playing other games. He needs to prove his credentials as a sort of remaining Thatcherite. I dare say he will assume a number of different postures over the next few months in an attempt to further his political ambitions.

The new head of the executive agency, Mr. Derek Lewis, has not been instructed, as the first act of the Secretary of State, to implement the provisions of the

Woolf report. He has been instructed to carry out the doctrine of the Government, to facilitate the participation of the private sector in prison management.

This is a very odd priority, when there is so much wrong with the prisons and when it is clear that we are far short of fulfilling the recommendations of Lord Justice Woolf in so many prisons around the country. It is also clear from all the reports produced by Mr. Justice Tumim that efforts are being made in the service by prison officers to overcome the difficulties. If the Home Secretary would deal with the problems of the prison service with the commitment that he has shown to extending to another sphere of public service the dogmas of Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, he would be performing the role that he should be discharging at this time.

I hope that the House will reject this order tonight.

11.18 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not know about sucking eggs, but there was a moment in the speech of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) when I thought that he was about to lay one. He certainly offered no suggestions as to how the prison service might be improved.

I have only one interest to declare: it is in my interests that none of the unfortunate people whom I have the privilege to defend, though they be innocent, should ever end up in any kind of prison, state maintained or privately contracted.

I have been here for many years and nothing surprises me about the Opposition, but in this debate they have come close to surprising me. For many years they have demanded more humane prison conditions, which they never achieved when they were in power. Every day for years they have demanded better working conditions for prison officers. They have always demanded for prisoners better regimes—no slopping out, daily hot showers, more privacy, better food, rehabilitation, training and education, and fewer wasted hours in prison cells. They have also asked for pilot schemes. They never achieved any of those benefits and now that they are being offered, the Opposition do not want them. What they have said for many years has turned out to be wind.

When Labour was in power from 1974 to 1979 it cut capital spending on the prisons by 20 per cent. although the prison population rose by 15 per cent. Does the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who is the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on these matters, really imagine that statutory minimum standards for prisoners, which the Labour Government never achieved, an independent ombudsman, which they never thought of, more spending, which they could never achieve, are substitutes for better prison management? Are they substitutes for the dynamism that contracting out will bring to our prison service? With that will come funding and proven achievements because of the success of the Wolds prison.

The Government have increased the number of prison officers by 70 per cent., but the prison population has risen by only 3 per cent. They have the largest prison building programme of all time, they appointed Judge Tumim and commissioned the Woolf report. They are committed to improving prison conditions, not just for prisoners but for those who run the prisons—the members of the Prison Officers Association. They made sure, through the Criminal Justice Act 1991, that they will remain accountable for standards, for monitoring, adjudication and discipline, and for ensuring that prison officers are properly trained and certified as such before they are let loose on the prison population. The Government deserve the support of the whole House.

The Government want what the Opposition have been demanding, crying for, over all the years that I have been here. As I have said, their pleas have turned out to be mere wind. They are obsessed by party dogma, and for the sake of that dogma they are determined to make sure that the prison system deteriorates, as it always did under them.

11.23 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): As a member of the all-party penal affairs group, I had not intended to speak in the debate. However, I decided to do so in view of the attack on my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler). My right hon. Friend is chairman of the penal affairs group and probably knows more about prisons than any hon. Member. He was also a prison governor, and perhaps modesty prevented him from making known those two facts.

The Wolds has been an outstanding success. If the Opposition want proof of that, they should ask the prisoners, who would rather be sent to the Wolds prison than to any other in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the new director of the prison service is imaginative. Derek Lewis has a fine reputation in his industry and I welcome not just his appointment but the fact that the prison service is to have agency status. That will be good for the staff and management of our prisons, and good for the prisoners.

I believe that a year from now all the prison reform charities, and those who have a direct interest in the prison service and the welfare of prisoners, will also welcome these imaginative moves from a Home Secretary who, I suspect, although I am not one of his greatest fans, will be recognised in a few years' time as one who has done more for our prisons than any other Home Secretary this century.

11.25 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I listened with great interest to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). He chairs the Select Committee on Home Affairs, on which I have the honour to serve, so it was in my interest to follow his speech carefully.

I was fascinated by the hon. and learned Gentleman's utopian picture of what the Government have in store for us with tremendously improved conditions for both staff and prisoners. Yet according to an article in *The Guardian* today, the full prison complement is 971 for Strangeways, but the contractors are to be asked to bid for provision of places for 1,150 prisoners. The Home Office's comment on this overcrowding was:

"Many prisoners like sharing cells, or they feel lonely."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Lady may not have been here earlier, when we dealt with the point about overcrowding. The point keeps being made, but the fact is that every prison has to make some contingency provision for overcrowding, because we have no control over the numbers sent by the courts. If we made no provision at the prison, it would be argued that the private sector was being exempted from making provision that every other prison

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

has to make. It is a contingency provision, whereby about 70 cells will be doubled up if the courts ever send an excess of prisoners. Currently, overcrowding in the whole system is lower than it has been for years, and we are determined to keep it at that level.

Mrs. Roche: I am grateful for that information, although I have been present since the beginning of the debate. I note, however, that the copy of the contract for the running of the new prison reveals that the Home Office wants the first phase to accommodate 789 prisoners, 116 more than it was designed to take. That is unacceptable.

When dealing with prison privatisation, Ministers appear to be influenced by the American experience——

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am listening with interest to the hon. Lady's speech. Is she basing her arguments on what *The Guardian* says, or on the contract that she has in her hand—if she has it in her hand?

Mrs. Roche: I had moved on from that point, but I am willing to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. Yes, I am basing my arguments on the article in *The Guardian*, but I noted that the Home Secretary did not repudiate the basis of the article, although he was free to do so.

I was talking about the American experience of prisons. An obnoxious example is the involvement in some United States prisons of companies such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, which have been involved in tenders and, indeed, the running of some prisons. Is that not a bizarre and atrocious way to run the system? The American experience also shows evidence of malpractice. In 1989, the state of Texas opened four minimum security prisons; a 1990 audit found that the companies had failed to implement promised educational and job training programmes. I do not know whether the Secretary of State reads *The Wall Street Journal* but it commented:

"Once hailed as the quick fix for the nations' overcrowded prisons, privatisation is turning into quicksand for the companies and communities involved."

The then Minister with responsibility for prisons, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), promised in February 1991 that further prison privatisation would go ahead if,

"and only if, the contracted-out remand centre proves to be a success."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 720.]

Perhaps we should examine that a little more carefully.

Wolds was described as a prison which would provide revolutionary new standards for prisoners and staff. It certainly appears to have been funded at great expense to the taxpayer, although of course we do not know the exact figures because the Government will not reveal them. On 19 December, the *Financial Times* reported that York crown court had heard that a remand prisoner was tortured and injected with heroin by other inmates at the Wolds. The judge, His Honour Gordon Atkinson, said that he had received a letter outlining what had happened to the man at

"this so-called up-to-date prison."

He commented that the letter disclosed a "deplorable state of affairs".

We hear none of that as the Government laud what is happening in the Wolds. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) asked last week about the incidents and disturbances at the Wolds since 1 December 1992. The Minister of State listed 20 separate occurrences in that six-week period, including more than one incident in which a prisoner was assaulted by "assailants unknown".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Lady might be interested to know that there have been 62 incidents in the past 12 months. That sounds a lot, but in the prison service everything is recorded as an incident. There have been 17,657 incidents in the prison service as a whole. In 1992, the average number of incidents per week at the Wolds was 1·3. The prison service average is 2·6—precisely double.

Mrs. Roche: Again, I am extremely grateful for the Home Secretary's intervention. It is always good to get information that we have been seeking for some time. Of course, the Home Secretary did not say that the Wolds is a remand prison, where one would perhaps expect a lower rate of such incidents.

It cannot be denied—I should be the last to deny it—that there is a crisis in our prisons. As shown in Lord Justice Woolf's excellent report and proposals, and in Judge Stephen Tumim's 1991 report, much needs to be done. Conditions in many prisons are entirely unacceptable. We should be establishing statutory minimum standards for prisons, in addition to an urgent programme of refurbishment.

However, we do not need the privatisation of prisons. The Secretary of State announced recently in answer to a parliamentary question, on 1 February 1993:

"when the Prison Service becomes an executive agency on 1 April it should assume full responsibility for taking forward Government policy on the involvement of the private sector in the management of prisons."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 55.]

There has been no press conference about this. The Government have no desire to come clean about their twin-track approach to prisons.

It will also be instructive to see how the contracts for the management of the prison service are to be handed out and to see which of the Secretary of State's friends—honourable and otherwise—get the plum directorships that will arise from prison privatisation. Just as the privatised utilities have given lucrative directorships to ex-Cabinet Ministers, so the Government seem to intend to hive off the prison service to their friends.

For example, Tarmac, a well known donor of thousands of pounds to the Tory party, is involved in Group 4 which runs the Wolds. It is interesting that the latest Register of Members' Interests lists the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), the chairman of the Conservative party, as a non-executive director of Group 4 Securitas. Similarly, McAlpine, a stalwart when it comes to donating funds to Tory party coffers, is involved in the private security firm, UK Detention Services Ltd., which completed the design and build contract for the Wolds.

The reputation of the private security firms to which Ministers want to hand over our prisons does not inspire confidence. I note that a senior official of a private security trade association told the Select Committee on Defence in May 1990 that private guards are lucky to have two days' training. That is the situation that we shall have in our prisons.

Surely the commercial interests of private prison bosses run counter to the spirit of Lord Woolf's recommendations and proposals about equipping prisoners with the

skills and qualifications to increase their chances of re-integrating successfully into society. As Stephen Shaw, director of the Prison Reform Trust said:

"Managers . . . will be more accountable to shareholders 5,000 miles away than to the British public and the British Parliament."

It is a great pity that the Government did not listen to the previous Home Secretary, who said that there was not a case for prison privatisation. The British public would have felt safer and more secure with a proper accountable system, instead of commercialisation for private profit.

11.36 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): At times during the debate, it has seemed to me that people have forgotten what the order is about: it is not about whether a particular prison building is new, modern or efficient, but about the extension of privatisation across the whole of the prison service.

I start from the point of view which I suspect many of my hon. Friends share; that it is mildly repugnant that private contractors should be making profits from keeping people in prison. That is what the order is about. Private contractors do not operate if they are not likely to make a profit. We all agree that standards need to be improved, that we need more enlightened regimes, that we need to cut the number of people in prison and that we need new prison buildings. No one disputes that, but the order is not about building new prisons; it is about privatising the existing prison service.

Let us consider the debate and the order in context. What has been said in previous debates on the topic? In 1987, the then Home Secretary completely ruled out privatisation. The 1988 Green Paper ruled out privatisation except for new remand prisons. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 as originally drafted followed that Green Paper.

It was only as a result of the Government's accepting Back-Bench amendments during our proceedings on the Bill that became that Act that privatisation across the whole service became a possibility. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) pointed out, the Minister of the time made the following very important statement:

"If, and only if, the contracted-out remand centre proves to be a success might we move towards privatisation of other parts of the prison service."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 720.]

What evidence is there that the experiment at the Wolds and that at Blakenhurst, which has hardly started, have been a success? That is the question that the Government should be answering tonight.

At the time of the debate in 1991, senior civil servants said—no doubt with ministerial approval—that it would take three years for a proper assessment of the success of the Wolds to be made. In November last year, I was told in answer to a parliamentary question that Hull university was conducting a two-year survey to assess the success of the Wolds—again, no doubt, with Home Office approval. So where is the evidence? What information is available? I simply do not believe that people who claim that the system is now more accountable have considered what has been happening in the past six months.

For example, we know that the Wolds has not been running at full capacity. There were 233 prisoners in the Wolds in November, when the capacity is 320. At that time, the Government extended the Wolds catchment area in an attempt to fill the prison. How do we measure the success of a prison that has never operated at the capacity that it was designed to operate at?

We have been told that there are 196 staff at the Wolds. However, when we ask how many staff there are in each category, how many prison custody officers and caterers, we are told that we cannot have that information because it is commercially confidential.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) referred to health and psychiatric care. Health care at the Wolds is subcontracted by Group 4 to a French-owned medical company, and we cannot be told the costs or details of that contract because it is commercially confidential information.

The Crown controller will examine the service delivery at the Wolds against the contract. However, we will not be able to do that. We will not be allowed to see the Crown controller's report measuring service delivery against the contract because that is commercially confidential information. We know that Group 4 is being paid, but we cannot be told how much, because that is commercially confidential information.

The definition of commercial confidentiality is preventing hon. Members from discovering what is happening in the Wolds. A day visit to the prison will not help. One simply cannot obtain the information.

How much does it cost to keep people in the Wolds or in Blakenhurst? How does that compare with the state sector? What are the manpower costs per inmate? We have a right to answers to those questions. I find it difficult to comprehend how we are supposed to be able to judge value for money without that information.

Exactly the same problems arise in connection with judging standards. We want higher standards, but it is pointless for hon. Members to compare a brand new remand prison like the Wolds with an old overcrowded state sector prison and claim that that proves that the private sector is a success. It proves nothing of the sort. It proves absolutely nothing.

We know that there have been problems at that prison, and that incidents have occurred there that could occur at any prison. The Government's policy is more concerned with dogma than with penal policy or the improvement of prison conditions. The policy seems to be to hive off new prisons; remand-only prisons first and then new prisons for convicted prisoners and refurbished prisons like Strangeways; keep them under-occupied in the first instance and then compare them to an old, overcrowded, under-staffed prison and claim that the former are successful.

The people who stand to benefit are the private contractors. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green mentioned UK Detention Services Ltd., which runs Blakenhurst. That company is a conglomerate under Corrections Corporation of America. The chairman of that company was tied in with the Republican party which lobbied the Adam Smith Institute in the 1980s to get privatisation on the agenda. In 1991, that company gave a commitment in writing to its shareholders to spend CCA dollars

"only where they have the greatest chance for financial gain."

Such companies are interested only in financial gain. Other people in that conglomerate are the Mowlems and the McAlpines—well-known people who have run prisons

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

for many years. The holding company, Newarthill, and UK Detention Services, McAlpine and Mowlem are all contributors to the Tory party.

It is all about private profit. That is what is going on. It is nothing to do with improving conditions. If we were really interested in improving conditions, we would be making sure that the Woolf report was implemented right throughout the prison sector—not picking out private prisons and making sure that they succeed. The Woolf report was accepted by every one.

Instead, we have privatisation that is opposed by governors, prison officers, prison teachers, prison chaplains and everybody concerned with the prison service. The Government should be making sure that they are directing their energy into implementing the Woolf agenda right through the prison service, uniting the prison service and delivering——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (exempted business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 235.

Division No. 141] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm

Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1991 Contracted Out Prisons) (No. 2) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That, during the proceedings on the Matter of unemployment in Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the Matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Ordered,

That, in the course of its consideration of the Matter of the structure of government in Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee may meet in Cardiff on Monday 8th March at Eleven o'clock and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the Committee shall have leave at that sitting to sit until half-past Three o'clock.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Wheel Clamping

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.58 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am very grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the problems associated with wheel clamping, and I am very pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) is here, because he initiated a debate last July on this subject, to which I want to refer.

On 26 June last year, the Automobile Association sent a letter to members which read as follows:

"Wheelclamping cars parked on private land and demanding money for their release, recently outlawed in Scotland, is spiralling out of control in England and Wales.

The Automobile Association is currently pursuing an incident in which the extortionate sum of £240 was demanded for the release of a car. This is only one of many such cases of wheelclamping blackmail."

I understand that there are now more than 1,000 wheel-clamping firms in action, affecting every part of the country.

Almost eight months ago, a debate was introduced, as I mentioned initially, by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West, who, I trust, will be making a contribution tonight. This is what the Minister said in response to the debate, the self-same Minister who is sitting on the Treasury Bench tonight:

"It struck me that many of the attitudes displayed to the problem are akin to acts of piracy. Perhaps I could add another description: we may be dealing with parking pirates . . . I cannot offer a firm conclusion on some of the issues this afternoon because they raise untested areas of the law. However, I underline my assurance that the concerns that the hon. Gentleman expressed are being urgently considered."

Later, on the question of the Scottish court decision, the Minister said that it had found

"that private wheel clamping amounts to extortion and theft under Scottish law, and we are currently considering the implications of that judgment for England and Wales."

Lastly, the Minister said,

"I appreciate hon. Members' frustration that the situation is not clearer. Indeed, I share that frustration—I have seen some such situations for myself—but I assure them that we are considering the matter urgently, including the question whether any action is needed to prohibit or to regulate the use of wheel clamps on private property."—[*Official Report,* 16 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 1260 and 1262.]

That was eight months ago, and yet the subject has been examined by the Home Office urgently. I wonder how many years it takes when the Home Office looks at a subject at its normal pace. If this is urgent, it must be years before it concludes a routine examination.

I wrote to the Minister on 18 December last year, and I received a reply dated 20 January this year. Again, the Government said that they are

"giving urgent consideration to this issue, as a result of the cases of abuse brought to our attention and the considerable public concern that has been expressed over recent months . . . In addition, we have sought expert advice as to the extent to which current legal provisions might be sufficient to deal with the problems associated with wheel clamping . . . We now plan to carry out a public consultation exercise on a range of options that has been identified. We are working as rapidly as possible to agree within Government the text of a detailed paper to form the basis of that wider consultation."

In view of the lapse of time, the Home Office seems blithely unaware or uncaring of the dangers that wheel clamping creates. This is the law-and-order Government who have done nothing while a menace to ordinary, decent people grows. I want to quote some examples of these circumstances and situations.

I received a letter from a vicar in my constituency in which he said,

"Recently I discovered the horrors of being clamped. Apart from the total inconvenience, I was very concerned about the implications of it all."

And so say all of us.

"Over a few weeks I had parked on a piece of waste ground for a few hours. About 20 cars used this site, which had the remains of a petrol kiosk and has been used for a long time. Once blocked off, it had a 'by custom' entrance established. My concerns are these. It is obviously in the clamping firm's interest to do their job in such a way that they catch people. I note on their form that I am described as a Customer. I cannot believe that it is proper for policing to be carried out by someone who has an interest in this way. The signs were cleverly placed. Once clamped they were obvious, unchallengeable, but I could also see that they were in places where the driver's eye on entrance would not think of looking. I avoid places where clamping signs are in evidence. A simple chain and padlock would have sufficed, with a sign at the entrance. I was trapped, so that they made their money. They did well—most of the other drivers were caught too. The description of the ticket as a Parking fine also concerns me. Surely the Courts alone have the right to levy fines? Why can a private company do this, without legal process? The size of the 'fine' is in my view very high. Out of all proportion to a Parking Ticket, for instance. Who sets this figure, might it be £75 next month? I really am concerned that we seem to have another force of law and order here that seems to be outside the Courts' jurisdiction."

I have many more letters, but I do not have time to quote the whole range. The letters I am quoting happen to be from Bradford, which is the area I represent, but I have letters from all over the country. The fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West is in the House demonstrates the widespread nature of this plague which affects so many people.

This letter is from a man who lives at Hipperholme. He visited the Alhambra theatre in Bradford which I should have thought was a fairly harmless occupation. He wrote:

"I, therefore, found an area of what I took to be derelict land near the University, some half a mile away, and parked, along with about ten other vehicles."

It was derelict land. We are not talking about developed land or land on which cars are being used and an obstruction is being created; it is derelict land. The letter goes on:

"Three hours later, at about 10.15 pm we returned to our car to find that it had been 'wheel-clamped'. Had I not first noticed a nearby vehicle had been 'wheel-clamped' I would never have been alerted to the fact that my own vehicle was also 'clamped' and I would have attempted to drive off and presumably damaged my car. There was no notice or sticker on my car window to draw attention to the 'wheel-clamp'.

I eventually found a small faded notice, nailed to a fence, outlining the fact that 'wheel-clamping' took place in that area. I rang the first number on the notice from a nearby phone box to find that it was 'not available'. The second number was a mobile phone number which seemed to gobble up my dwindling supply of change. All they were interested in was how I was going to pay their £50 charge before they would release me.

I had little cash, no cheque book and no bank cards on me. To say I was getting distraught is an understatement. I could only think of getting my wife and children safely home. Fortunately my wife had a bank card but had to go a considerable distance to locate an appropriate Cash Dispenser."

A woman was forced to wander the streets of Bradford late at night. She was close to a spot where an especially

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

vicious rape had taken place a month before. It is a frightening prospect for people when faced with clamping late at night. The writer says:

"There was no notice visible anywhere on the land and nothing near the exit to alert me . . . Surely better signing should be made a legal requirement . . . Surely if whoever owns the land doesn't want people on it, they should take steps to chain or barrier it off at such times.

3. The obsession of the firm (West Yorkshire Outdoor Security Services) for full payment before releasing me was frightening. They refused to invoice me. The whole approach is surely tantamount to blackmail and extortion. I was made to feel that if I didn't or couldn't pay my children, wife and I would have been left stranded. Also, these firms seem able to make whatever charge they choose . . . Are they really a legitimate business or cowboys making an easy picking? Are they registered with anyone or outside the law? What role does the landowner play in all this? . . . Surely, this is a practice that should be highly discouraged."

I emphatically agree.

I have another letter from a woman whose name I am able to give. Betty Sinclair visited Bradford last year. She says:

"Theatre-going in Bradford last year, a woman friend and I parked behind Alhambra on a patch of waste-ground which has always served as parking in the evening. When we went back to the car after the performance we found it clamped, a notice on the windscreen, and a number to ring which I recognised as a post-code for Preston, Lancashire. We rang it. The call was transferred and a couple of minutes later, two rough and threatening characters turned up with an alsation in a clapped-out Cortina estate. They refused to unclamp the car unless we paid £50 on the spot, and told us that if we refused the car would be taken away and it would cost £200 to redeem it. The alsation was released and jumped at us, we were frightened (not a nice place for two unescorted women at that time of night) and my friend, who had a cheque book on her, paid up. If I'd been on my own without my cheque-book and not carrying £50 in cash, I would have had to leave the car. I gave the men an earful, they were aggressive and abusive, and told us what they were doing was providing security for the owners of the waste-land! That same evening they clamped six cars on that little patch and raked in £300 in about half an hour! The name on the leaflet was West Yorkshire Outdoor Security Services.

The following day I rang the police in Bradford, who told me that they were aware of this firm's activities, shared my view that it was highway robbery, and told me to carry a hack-saw in the boot of my car next time! However, they were, in fact, acting within the law."

There are numerous other cases. A woman's car was clamped within two minutes of her leaving it. In another case, the car was clamped while the driver stood by. One heavily pregnant woman was forced to pay £50 late at night, and another was forced to seek a bank till in that self-same seedy area.

West Yorkshire Outdoor Security Services leave notices which say either, "Parking Penalty" or "Parking Fine", or give a warning of prosecution if the wheel clamp is damaged.

A private prosecution took place on 22 December last year, when Irving William Crowther was convicted of causing criminal damage to property under the Criminal Damage Act 1971. Mr. Crowther used an angle grinder on the clamp when his car was clamped outside a public house in Queensbury, and he pleaded guilty and was fined £80 plus costs of £35. My entire sympathy is with Mr. Crowther and not with the magistrates, who seemed to endorse the action of that nefarious group of scoundrels called West Yorkshire Outdoor Security Services.

While Michael Patrick Sadler, the director of West Yorkshire Outdoor Security Services of Penwell Lawn, Leeds can bring a private prosecution, the police sit on their elbows and do nothing. It is no wonder that there is a crime wave, and people are concerned about the standard of operation of the law.

The other director is Mario de Rome, and the office address is 217 Manningham Lane, BD8, although that is also the address of Falcon Business and Mortgage Services. In a short film on ITN recently, one of the directors was seen interviewing a woman, accusing her of falsely using a disabled person's badge. When she pointed out that her father was blind, that the white stick in the car was his, and that she was anxious to get away and meet him, the response of one of the directors was that her father should be driving the car. So much for the standard of conduct and humanity of these rapacious scoundrels of the enterprise culture.

The Home Office should take action now and recommend that the police take action under the Theft Act 1968. If a car is towed away for the purposes of the person taking the car, it is a crime under that legislation and the police should prosecute.

All efforts to establish the law in the civil courts have failed in England because the companies have repaid the £50, or whatever levy was made, before the case came to court and so no decision has been made.

Breach of the peace is also a crime if threats are used. If they are and they are reported to the police, instead of being indolent, they or the Crown prosecution service should prosecute.

The law was used very adventurously and differently during the miners' strike. If the wheel clampers were picketing miners, they would face all sorts of charges. The police did not sit on their elbows then.

While the Home Office makes recommendations, it could simply ensure that the law in Scotland extended to England and Wales. In Scotland, private clamping is illegal, and I very much fear that the consultation process that the Home Office says that it is embarking on will take months to complete. I hope that it will not take a robbery or murder of a man, or possibly a woman, or the rape of a woman, wandering the streets at night to look for a bank till to pay these people, before the Home Office takes such action. The fear of such a tragedy was expressed in many letters. I read some of them and there are many more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has written with similar stories to the Home Office. He asked me to say that he fully shares my concern. If a tragedy occurs, it will be wrapped firmly round the neck of the Home Office, which seems too indolent and slow to take what should be important and urgent action.

12.13 am

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for allowing me to intervene in this debate. I shall be brief because I want the Minister to have time to explain why his Department has been dragging its feet, and hopefully to make a statement about the public consultation that we have been promised for so long.

As my hon. Friend made clear, the issues are fairly stark. On the one hand are the interests of the landowners, some of whom have a genuine problem. Some are trying to deal with a minor inconvenience and some are just plain

greedy. In addition, there are the clamping companies. Some of them try to operate with standards of some sort, but many—the majority, I suspect—are just cowboys and pirates. It is quite clear that none of the clampers has any interest in or motive for an attempt to solve the problems that are associated with parking. They are dealing with the symptoms rather than with the problems.

On the other side are the millions of motorists, some of whom, we all admit, park carelessly. But many are just in difficult circumstances—often they do not see the signs—yet they are treated as second-class citizens. It is quite clear that, in that balance, we should be on the side of the motorist. Clamping amounts to harassment. It causes inconvenience and, as was graphically pointed out, possibly danger. In addition, the cost is considerable. It seems that the minimum is £50, and the record—held by Hebden Bridge—is still £240. In the Scottish courts, clamping was aptly described as extortion and theft. One could not find a better description. In Scotland it has been banned since the summer, with no ill effects. As the Minister is aware, the ban has given rise to no particular parking or traffic problems. But the motoring organisations and English Members of Parliament are still receiving complaints about the excesses of clampers in our part of the country.

Having looked at the issue, I have come to the conclusion that a simple ban, as in Scotland, is the most effective means of dealing with it. The Home Office may take a different view. It may believe that we should regulate either clampers or sites. If that is what it believes, it should make the situation clear. The matter should be put out to public consultation at an early date. As was outlined very clearly by my hon. Friend, the Home Office has been dragging its feet for months. This has gone on far too long. Public consultation should be started this month. I hope that the Minister will be able tonight to make an announcement to that effect. The Home Office should ask for speedy replies and should take action before the summer is out. The cowboy clampers have had a free ride for too long. It is time to drive them out of town.

12.17 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): I should like, first, to pick up on the point that the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) made in his concluding comments. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we shall be issuing our consultation document within a month. The reason for my making that point is that I wish to repudiate the charge that both hon. Gentlemen have put before the House—that we have been dragging our feet in this matter.

It is only right that I should pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for securing this important debate and for putting forward, with his usual passion and Yorkshire bluntness—and very properly so—on behalf of his constituents and other Bradford Members, his views about the problems that have been experienced with wheel clamping. I deal with a great deal of correspondence on this subject from hon. Members, members of the public and many organisations. Having read those letters very carefully, I understand the real human fears of individuals arising from some of the actions of so-called clampers. That is why we have been working hard since this matter was last raised in the House to devise a consultation process to deal with these issues.

In the previous debate, I said that we would look urgently at the matter. I think I am right in saying that at that time we had not concluded what the way forward was. The hon. Member for Warley, West knows from our conversations that I looked at the matter urgently, and I came quickly to the conclusion that a consultation exercise was the right way forward. The hon. Member for Bradford, South is a man of analysis and care in the preparation of his evidence. I think that when he looks at the consultation document he will see that this is not an easy and straightforward matter.

Not unnaturally, hon. Members are driven by the very real human stories put to them by those affected by so-called cowboy clampers, but in the devising of solutions there is a maze of complexity in dealing with the law, particularly in England and Wales. I hope that in the remaining minutes at my disposal I shall be able to point out that, as a first step, we started to seek counsel's advice. We considered carefully how the law in this area was framed.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned the Automobile Association. That organisation is one of many to which we have listened very carefully in the preparation of our consultation document. We have, as all Governments have, the difficult but proper task of balancing the needs and problems of landowners in protecting their land in respect of parking problems and the difficulties caused by so-called cowboy operators. I do not underestimate the problems that many of our citizens have encountered over such operations. In seeking to encapsulate the problem, we have to decide whether we are dealing with "problems associated with wheel clamping on private land" or with "the problem of wheel clamping on private land". Should we impose a blanket ban or seek to develop good practice? Those are some of the issues that we have been considering. Within the month, we shall produce a consultation paper. Sadly, I realised when composing the consultation paper that there is no easy off-the-shelf answer to the problem. The consultation document presents, in a balanced and carefully argued way, a number of possible ways forward. I look forward to the contributions of both hon. Members when they make their views known for the purpose of the exercise.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South talked about cowboy operators. There are some legitimate companies in the industry which try to work to certain standards and make their terms of business clear. They have contacted us because they realise the difficulties that the cowboy element causes to their industry. I say most sincerely that I appreciate the points that the hon. Gentleman raised, particularly in relation to the vulnerable. He cites the example of a lone woman who may have thought that she had parked her car legitimately, but had actually parked it on private land. She may not have seen the notice, and may be left in a difficult personal position. I take such matters seriously, and they will certainly be to the forefront of my mind when I consider the outcome of the consultation process. The Government agree that we want bad practice to be stamped out.

The Government's first concern was to establish the applicability of the law in this sphere. I repeat the point that I made to the House in the earlier debate: the law on the subject is a maze of possibilities—there are no certainties. It is impossible to say exactly whether an English court would take the view that the activity—or

[Mr. Michael Jack]

parts of it—were legal under English civil or criminal law. That perhaps explains some of the problems mentioned by the hon. Gentleman in relation to police prosecution.

Although the courts have heard a number of cases with some application to the general issue, there has not been a test case which could be compared with last year's judgment in the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland as an examination of the basic legality of wheel clamping on private land. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there are different legal codes north and south of the border, which begs the question of the simplicity of the solution that he offered to the House.

As hon. Members have suggested, there are a number of offences and civil wrongs which might be applicable to wheel clamping, depending on the circumstances. They include criminal damage, interference with a vehicle, taking without consent, theft, blackmail, trespass and conversion. It is impossible to predict what the courts might decide in any given case. The hon. Gentleman—I think in correspondence—has accused me of "condoning criminal activity through inertia". There was a flavour of that in what he was saying this evening. I repudiate that claim because, if there were a clear criminal activity involved, the police and the courts would be able to ensure that the offending parties were appropriately dealt with. But the position is not so clear cut.

I mentioned that we had sought counsel's advice on the matter because of the lack of clarity. That advice will form part of our consultation document and it shed some light on the problem. I shall not go into all the detail now as it will be included in the consultation paper, but I shall say something which I hope will be helpful to those hon. Members who have participated in the debate.

It appears that legal action against landowners and wheel clampers is more likely to succeed if the consequences for a motorist of parking on a piece of land are not advertised clearly, and the landowner and wheel clamper act unreasonably in the manner of their operation or in relation to the fees demanded for the release of vehicles. That guidance goes to the heart of many of the cases eloquently described by the hon. Gentleman. Although there is no certainty and each case will be decided on its facts, I suggest that some of the more extreme practices of wheel clampers may well be found to be unlawful under present civil and criminal law. It may be worth reminding the House that where wheel clamping leads to assaults, intimidation, or a breach of the peace —what might be termed mischiefs on the margin—the law already offers protection.

However, it is also apparent that the present law may not always deal easily or sufficiently rapidly with such abuses as the late night clamping of cars owned by vulnerable motorists.

I have been challenged about what we have been doing about all this. I hope that I have given the House a flavour of the complexity of this issue. It has genuinely taken time to gather legal opinion, without which we could not have framed a consultation document which tried to deal with this problem in a way that offered real solutions. That has been our intention throughout.

We have also had to weigh up the interests of land owners. For some of them, wheel clamping may have been an option that has worked to protect their interests. Chaining off land may not be an option, but they need to think about their responsibilities if the clamping operations that they have employed have gone wrong or caused danger or distress. We have to remember their interests in the matter too.

Equally, we must remember the problems faced by motorists, who should not be unreasonably deprived of the use of their vehicles. Matters of public safety will have to be taken into consideration, too. The consultation document will cover banning the practice, alternatives to clamping, self-regulation of the industry, statutory regulation, and the penalties which might be used. Will controls lead to an outbreak of towing away or blocking? Would solving one problem lead to the creation of another? All this will be included in the paper. I think that within a month hon. Members will have an opportunity to take the matter forward.

Mr. Cryer: How long will the consultation period be? My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) and I are anxious that the process should be reasonable but as brief as possible, so that action may be got under way.

Mr. Jack: The total period involved will be four months. I hope that hon. Members will make their contribution to the process, and I look forward to hearing what they will have to say.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 8 February at Seven o'clock.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL

Orders for Second Reading read

To be read a Second time on Thursday 11 February 1993.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL

Ordered,

That the Committee on the London Underground (Green Park) Bill have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed works, and any sites which have been proposed as alternatives, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CONTINGENCIES FUND 1991-92

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House Accounts of the Contingencies Fund, 1991-92 showing the receipts and payments in connection with the Fund in the year ended 31st March 1992 and the distribution of the capital of the fund at the commencement and close of the year; with the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Trade

1. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further measures he proposes to improve the balance of trade.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): The Government can best assist traders by keeping inflation and interest rates low. Inflation is close to its lowest level for a generation and below the European Community average. Interest rates are the lowest for 15 years and the lowest in the European Community. The extra support for the Export Credits Guarantee Department announced in the autumn statement will benefit many exporters.

Mr. Jones: The problem is growing, and growing seriously. Is it not the case that a Government who lack credibility and any strategy have no chance of surmounting the major problem that they face in that respect? Is it not the case also that the nation needs investment in skills and manufacturing? As long as we have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who is isolated and a Prime Minister who is indecisive, the nation cannot see that problem ever being solved.

Mr. Portillo: The country is receiving investment precisely because those investing from abroad have great confidence in this country and in its future. The hon. Gentleman, in particular, ought to know that, because, in his own constituency, the Toyota company is investing £140 million in a car engine plant at Shotton, which will employ 300 people and produce 200,000 engines a year. That is the sort of investment that is attracted to this country, and that is why this side of the House is optimistic. I do not know why the Opposition run this country down.

Mr. John Townend: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what proportion of this year's balance of payments deficit is likely to be accounted for by Government expenditure on payments to the European Community, foreign affairs, and overseas aid? If Labour Members want a swift reduction in that deficit, should not they join those of us on this side of the House who are asking for cuts in that expenditure? Does my right hon. Friend agree that those European countries that will not send their troops to Bosnia should finance part of the cost, which is £100 million a year?

Mr. Portillo: It is extremely important to maintain tight control on public spending at European Community level as well as at national level. Britain always presses for that, and we are fortunate to have the support of my hon. Friend. It is important also that in the peacekeeping operations mounted across the world, there should be equality of contribution by all the countries with an interest in them. My hon. Friend is also right to make it clear that Government control over public spending can be important in making sure that we keep our balance of payments in a controllable state. Right hon. and hon.

Members across the Floor of the House are always advocating higher spending and higher borrowing, and that makes the task more difficult.

Mr. Darling: Does not the fact that the trade gap is worsening at the height of a recession, even following September's devaluation, reveal the poor state of our manufacturing base? Does not the Chief Secretary accept that, unless the Government adopt a policy to increase investment in research and development and to build up our manufacturing base, the economy will continue to be weak, the pound will continue to be under pressure and there will be no hope of the economy's recovering in the way that it should?

Mr. Portillo: I get very tired of hearing the Opposition bad-mouthing our country, belittling the achievements of our industry, sapping confidence in the country and discouraging foreign investors. As the hon. Gentleman ought to know, our manufacturing productivity grew the fastest among the G7 countries during the 1980s; it was at record levels in the three months up to November last year; and it is now growing at the fastest rate for five years. It is for those reasons that we feel confident in the country, and we only wish that we could hear some expressions of confidence from the Opposition.

Mr. Budgen: Is not a fall in the external value of the pound the market's way of dealing with the deficit in the balance of trade? Is it not important for the Government to point out that a depreciation in the value of the pound affects some but not all prices, and does not cause inflation, which can be caused only by an increase in the money supply?

Mr. Portillo: I agree with two aspects of what my hon. Friend has said. First, Britain's competitiveness will undoubtedly be very high in the coming year: we expect it to increase by 16 per cent. on last year's figure. It is also true that there are strong disinflationary influences in the British economy. No one should jump to any conclusions about the effect of the exchange rate on the rate of inflation.

House Prices

2. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on house prices.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The latest estimate from the Halifax building society is that average house prices fell by 7·7 per cent. in the year to January 1993. However, recent signs of rising activity are consistent with the view that I expressed in my autumn statement that house prices could start to rise this year.

Mr. Orme: Does the Chancellor recognise that housing is at the centre of some of our economic problems? Repossessions are proceeding apace; in no sense can they be said to be halting. What action will the Government take to help people in the housing market—not only those who face repossessions, but those who want to buy, as some of my constituents do?

Mr. Lamont: I should have thought that the lowest mortgage rates for 25 years were quite a good beginning.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that housing has been at the centre of the country's economic problems, but I hope that he is not advocating a return to house-price inflation and inflation generally. That is not what we want. The right hon. Gentleman will have noticed the encouraging signs of increased activity in the housing market: the Nationwide house price index rose by some 1·2 per cent. last month. He will also have observed that the number of contracts completed, particulars delivered, in December was up by over 20 per cent.

The right hon. Gentleman asks what the Government are doing about repossessions. The Government struck a deal with the building societies, which has had a significant effect. Repossessions were down in the second half of the year compared with the first—and, for those in arrears, the sharp, deep cuts in interest rates will be a significant help.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reduction in interest rates and the cost of mortgages has proved a real benefit to home buyers, and has brought stability to the housing market? Has he read the report in last week's *Derby Evening Telegraph* in which Derbyshire business men predict an economic upturn? There is a real improvement in confidence, not just in the high street but in the housing market.

Mr. Lamont: I have to tell my hon. Friend that although I read the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* I do not read the *Derby Evening Telegraph*, but I certainly shall in the future. In confirmation of what my hon. Friend says, she is absolutely right about the effect of mortgage rates, a point I made in answer to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). It is indeed cheaper for first-time buyers to buy a house now than it has been for several years.

The National House Building Council's index of ability to buy is at an all-time high, indicating that houses are extremely affordable. The housing market package that I announced in the autumn statement is well on course. I fully expect that some 17,000 houses will be taken off the market in England alone before the end of March. That is a direct result of the actions that the Government have taken to help the housing market. It is why confidence is rising in the housing market and also why, as my hon. Friend says, confidence is rising generally, not only in Derby but in the country as a whole.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will not the Chancellor's personal legacy when he goes be that more people have lost their homes, more people have homes that are worth less than they paid for them and more people are in mortgage arrears than at any point in our history? Does the Chancellor not understand that his answer to the cause of that, which is rising unemployment since he became Chancellor, has been to cut work and training places for the unemployed by 100,000? Is it the unemployed who have failed to work for the Government or is it the Government who have failed to create work for the unemployed?

Mr. Lamont: I see that the hon. Gentleman has had to work hard to get his supplementary to that question. Usually he asks me outside the Chamber which question I am answering in order that he can put his supplementary to the appropriate question. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] There is nothing more difficult than having to think of a supplementary on your feet, is there?

The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the thing that will most help the housing market and the

employment market is the reduction in interest rates and the relaxation in monetary policy which we have made. That, combined with the measures that we have announced on the housing market, has reduced repossessions in the second half of the year compared with the first.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Government's credibility. I just note his credibility. I notice what his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said about the hon. Gentleman's budget for jobs. He said that it had sunk

"without trace as virtually all of Labour's economic policies have sunk without trace in recent years".

When asked why, the hon. Member for Dagenham said that no one believed that their policies could ever work. That is what hon. Gentlemen think about the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Sir John Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, having secured the lowest level of inflation for more than six years, he will not allow that excellent progress to be jeopardised in any way?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have made it consistently clear that the interest rate policy that the Government will follow is one of achieving low inflation combined with a sustained recovery. That is the objective of monetary policy. The reduction in interest rates that we made a week ago was consistent with low inflation, based on the advice that we had from the Bank of England and is consistent with sustained recovery. However, my hon. Friend is absolutely right to remind the House that inflation must be at the centre of our objectives. Having done so well to get inflation down, not only below the average of the European Community but below the average of the G7 group of countries, we cannot throw it away.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

3. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors the Government will take into consideration in deciding when to rejoin the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Lamont: I set out the conditions for rejoining the ERM in my letter of 8 October to the Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

Mr. Hoon: Given that what now passes for Government economic policy involves the persistent devaluation of the pound, and given the chronic uncertainty that that causes for British business, when can we expect the British Government to go back to their previous policy of managing the exchange rate?

Mr. Lamont: The Government have made it clear again and again that we do not seek a depreciation of the currency, but we have made it clear that interest rates will be set according to a range of factors. That includes domestic money conditions, asset prices—particularly house prices—and also the exchange rate. The exchange rate will continue to be among the factors that we take into account in assessing interest rates, and markets should remember that interest rates can go up as well as down.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Has my right hon. Friend noted that when, yesterday, Japan reduced its discount rate to 2½ per cent., the lowest base rate in the developed world, the Japanese yen strengthened against the European currencies and against the United States dollar? Does not that demonstrate yet again that the quality of industry and the level of investment in research and development ultimately determines exchange rates, and not political manoeuvres by politicians, often with little commercial experience, as exemplified by the disastrous experiment with the exchange rate mechanism and the unrealistic economic and financial convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Lamont: I hope that my hon. Friend is not suggesting—I am sure that he is not—that the recent reduction in interest rates was other than fully justified and justified by economic criteria. I certainly believe that it was. It was based on the advice of the Bank of England; it was based on what is happening to money supply and to asset prices. I believe that the reduction in interest rates that we have had was very fully justified and a good decision.

I agree with what my hon. Friend says about Japan, but the markets, in their reaction to Japan, also take into account the fact that they have a very low rate of inflation and they have a near to balanced budget as well. That is part of Japan's strength, and my hon. Friend should remember that as well.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Does the Chancellor agree that the activities of speculators inflict enormous damage on prospects for trade, for investment and for jobs? Should not he now tell the House what the true cost of Black Wednesday really was? What proposals will he bring forward to tackle the power of the speculators? While he is at that, will he answer one very simple and important question: does he believe in managed exchange rates or in floating exchange rates? Opposition Members have had enough of his casino economy.

Mr. Lamont: As regards what the hon. Gentleman has said, I do not entirely agree with him about speculation in foreign exchange or other markets. Speculation is a fact of life. The truth is that Opposition Members have never adjusted to the fact that we live in a global economy. That is why they are so hostile to inward investment. They think that we can pursue policies on our own, regardless of the world outside.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's question on exchange rate policy, I am astonished that he should put it to us. We are totally at a loss to know whether the Labour party wants or does not want to join the exchange rate mechanism again.

Mr. Marlow: Given the recent devaluation of the Irish punt and yesterday's pressure on the Danish kroner, would it be a good thing or a bad thing for the United Kingdom if the exchange rate mechanism were to collapse altogether?

Mr. Lamont: I do not believe that it would be in the interests of this country if the exchange rate mechanism collapsed, as my hon. Friend said. I have, however, made it clear to the House on many occasions that I do not think that, in present circumstances, we can contemplate rejoining the ERM as long as economic conditions in this country and in Germany are not in step. I am sure that the whole House will want to join me today in welcoming the reduction in German interest rates which has taken place. It is something which I think should have taken place somewhat earlier.

Balance of Payments

4. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the balance of payments.

5. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the balance of payments.

10. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and other countries was in 1992.

Mr. Portillo: The current account deficit in 1992 was £12 billion. Nevertheless, I find it encouraging that export volumes have been at record levels in recent months. Lower interest and exchange rates give a significant boost to our export prospects. It is vital that exporters keep down their wage costs.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that a deficit of £12 billion in the depth of a recession is an appalling indictment of the Government's record? He used comparisons with other G7 countries in an earlier answer. Can he now tell the House what was Britain's visible trade balance with each of the other G7 countries in 1992? Was there a surplus in any of those cases?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman makes the point which was made earlier, that the balance of payments deficit is at the bottom of a British recession. I say to him that most of the world is in recession, and our exporters must compete in that recession. It is remarkable to see export volumes of our manufacturers at a record level in the three months to December—5 per cent. up on the previous three months. It is the case that not only Britain but the world is in recession and our exporters are performing magnificently in that situation.

Ms. Walley: Why is it that we have not heard anything about the contribution that British shipping makes to the balance of payments? Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that the contribution of the shipping industry over the past three years has been £11 billion gross and £3 billion net? Does he agree that unless he makes some contribution to British shipping, the merchant fleet of this island nation will sink without trace and the balance of payments will be much worse as a result?

Mr. Portillo: I believe that the British shipping industry is extremely important, and the hon. Lady is right to draw attention to it. Naturally, we receive all sorts of representations in the run-up to the Budget and she would not expect me to comment on that.

One source of new business for the British shipping industry will be the high level of British exports of motor cars in the coming years with investment by companies such as Nissan which will export two thirds of its United Kingdom-produced cars, which involves 90,000 cars per year. That is an opportunity for British shipping which I hope the industry will be able to seize.

Ms. Quin: Is it not the case that the Government originally forecast a deficit last year of £6 billion, which was bad enough, but in reality it turned out to be twice that amount? Why did the Government get it so wrong?

Mr. Portillo: I believe that many experts were not able to predict the exact figures. I do not know why the hon. Lady revels in the trade figures or what point she is trying to make. I am speaking up for those people who are making a good job of exporting for Britain, and the Labour party constantly runs down their efforts. I call that deplorable.

Mr. Forman: In a world in which capital and investment flows are becoming every bit as important as trade flows, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is an encouraging sign that we still have a strongly positive balance in our net overseas assets?

Mr. Portillo: Yes. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to that. The prediction that we have for invisibles is that our invisible surplus should double in the coming year compared with last year.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the insurance and financial services industry in Great Britain is one of those industries that make a positive contribution to Britain's balance of trade? Does he agree that it is important for our insurance companies to take full advantage of the single market in insurance and, financial services and, therefore, that they need the same tax treatment as is enjoyed by companies on the continent?

Mr. Portillo: First, I pay tribute to the performance of our financial sector industries. They play an important part in the British economy. They play an important part in creating for us an invisible surplus which means that the current balance is better than the visible balance. As I said a moment ago, we expect that invisible balance to improve in the coming year. I do not think that my hon. Friend will expect me to comment now on the tax treatment of financial industries.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time to congratulate our exporters on their magnificent efforts on behalf of Britain and to urge industrialists and other exporters to take advantage of the benefits of low inflation and low interest rates to export even more for the benefit of Britain?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Over the recent period, car exports have risen by 23 per cent. We are now a net exporter of television sets. The pharmaceutical industry has pushed up its exports by 16 per cent. in the past year. All those industries are surely worthy of congratulation. That is why it is so depressing to hear the Opposition talk as though those acheivements had not occurred.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is not the truth of the matter that in the long term our balance of trade was in serious decline every year since the war until 1979 and that in recent years, for the first time, our share of world trade in exports of manufactures has stabilised and improved slightly? Are not structural reforms, expecially reforms of education which Labour has opposed, the best way to ensure a long-term improvement? Would not the worst policy be to go back to the bad old days of penal corporate tax, with union militancy, which hamstrung British industry and forced multinationals such as Ford and General Motors to fall over themselves to resite manufacturing away from Britain?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. For some decades, the United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactures was in decline. During the 1980s that share

stabilised, and we predict that it will rise in the year ahead. My hon. Friend is right to say that one of the reasons for that is the improvements that were made in the efficiency of the British economy and, in particularly, the reforms on the trade union side. My hon. Friend will need no reminding that we have recently seen jobs move from Dijon to Scotland precisely because, as President Delors said, Britain is a paradise for foreign investment.

Unemployment

6. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the causes of the increase in unemployment since 1979; and whether he will make a statement.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): The level of unemployment since 1979 has been influenced by a number of factors, including the cyclical performance of the economy, the growth in the size of the labour market and the competitiveness of British industry. Government policy is to create the conditions for sustained growth in output and jobs, and to make the labour market work efficiently.

Ms. Short: Is not the truth that in the 14 years during which the Government have been in power unemployment has risen from slightly more than 1 million to 4 million on the old method of counting and that that is a disastrous record for people who are unemployed? It is disastrous also because it leads to massive Government borrowing and it partly explains our balance of payments crisis. We need an apology, a U-turn and a Government who get unemployment down and investment up. Otherwise, the long-term future of our economy is deeply worrying.

Mr. Nelson: The Government are, of course, concerned about the hardship and uncertainty which unemployment visits on individuals and families, but 1·3 million people more are employed now than 10 years ago. Unemployment has been rising in all the EC countries and all the G7 countries during the years in question. It remains a fact that a higher proportion of our adult population is employed than in any other EC country except Luxembourg and Denmark.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister's recent success in the middle east in selling Tornados to Saudi Arabia has resulted in 12,000 extra jobs in Lancashire and that Lancashire now has a lower unemployment rate than Hampshire, Kent, Essex or Hertfordshire?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right. The very important deals concluded by my right hon. Friend both with the sultanate of Oman and with Saudi Arabia have major employment implications nationally and regionally and should be welcomed by the whole House.

Mr. Beith: Has the Treasury made an examination of the likely costs of a workfare programme and, if so, have the results been communicated to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Nelson: I acknowledge that there is, rightly, growing public interest in the remarks of the Prime Minister last night. My right hon. Friend opened the debate and it is for Lord Wakeham, who is chairing a committee looking into various aspects of the matter, to produce some conclusions. It is important to remember that my right hon. Friend was not referring to workfare. That has been added to his remarks subsequently—*[Interruption.]* Those who examine his words will see that my right hon. Friend talked about

"offering or requiring some activity from unemployed people in return for benefit."

That already happens to some extent, and there is no reason why we should not consider ways of building on that.

Mr. John Marshall: Has the Minister made a survey of the impact of inward investment on the level of unemployment, and has he made a survey of what would happen to inward investment if we adopted the social chapter?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend rightly draws attention to the important impact of inward investment on employment in the United Kingdom. It is a matter of congratulation for the policies of this country and the attractions of our regions that we have taken the lion's share of inward investment, certainly from Japan. My hon. Friend is right to point out that that has implications for employment and to draw attention to the fact that much of that would not have happened if we had imposed labour costs required by the social charter which have proved such a disadvantage to others and an attraction towards ourselves.

Ms. Harman: Is the Minister now distancing himself from the Prime Minister and—we want to be clear about this—are the Government now in favour of workfare?

Mr. Nelson: Obviously, as I said, the Government are conscious of the growing public interest in the matter and, in particular, the question raised by the Prime Minister about whether paying benefit to the unemployed without requiring any activity in return is helpful to the unemployed or to society as a whole, but no decisions have been taken and I cannot anticipate whether any new measures will be introduced.

Mr. Streeter: Does the Minister agree that the best and perhaps the only way to create new jobs is to put in place the right conditions for economic growth, which are low inflation and low interest rates? Does he agree that those are precisely the conditions that the Government have now put in place?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is spot on. Nobody can deny that low inflation and low interest rates are a pre-condition for a return of confidence, but it is important also to contain wage settlements and labour costs, both of which have been falling sharply.

Yorkshire and Humberside

7. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of his policies on Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Nelson: I pay attention to a range of statistics and information—for example, the economic survey of the Association of Yorkshire and Humberside Chambers of Commerce, which showed an improvement in sales, exports and business confidence for the fourth quarter of 1992.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My children aged seven and four have asked me to press the Government on their concern about the fact that the ice cream man no longer comes down our street—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Such interruptions are a tremendous waste of our valuable time.

Mr. Hinchliffe: How do I explain to my children that the ice cream man has joined the 250,000 other unemployed people in Yorkshire and Humberside and that his company, which produced excellent ice cream for generations of my constituents, has gone bust and is yet another casualty of the Government's lunatic economic policies?

Mr. Nelson: I am sorry to hear about the ice cream man. I must confess that that was one supplementary question that I did not anticipate, but perhaps I can say to the hon. Member, as someone who frequently visits his constituency and knows that area well, that perhaps his children will take more comfort from the fact that Wakefield has been chosen as the site for the British Rail channel tunnel freight centre. That will mean a £150 million scheme involving the employment of some 4,900 people. Is that not good news?

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that industry in West Yorkshire is among the most prosperous in the country and will he make sure that he and his colleagues do nothing either fiscally or regionally to disturb those deep-rooted businesses?

Mr. Nelson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I would only add that since this Government came to office some £300 million of Government support has been made available to companies in the region to create and safeguard jobs. Added to the investment and enterprise in the area, that is a powerful combination which should give encouragement and confidence.

Value Added Tax

8. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning rates of VAT.

11. **Ms. Estelle Morris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning rates of VAT.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): Many representations have been received, and these will be considered in the run-up to the Budget.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister place on the record in the House what he has already put in writing—that the Government have no plans or proposals to extend VAT to cover newspapers and periodicals?

Sir John Cope: We have repeatedly made ourselves clear, and I am not taking back anything that we have said, but at this point we cannot discuss any tax changes so near to the Budget.

Ms. Morris: As the Conservatives claim to be the party of low taxation, will the Minister confirm to the House that the Government have already extended the scope of VAT on 14 separate occasions? Will he also take the opportunity to tell the House that he will honour the pledge made by the Prime Minister last March that there would be no further increase in VAT and no further expansion of the scope of this tax?

Sir John Cope: I am not sure how the hon. Lady works out her precise figures, but I will not add anything to what I have said.

Sir Terence Higgins: As I had the task of steering the original VAT legislation through this House, may I urge my right hon. Friend not to restrict the scope of zero-rating for VAT for short-term revenue reasons, given that pressure from the European Community is likely to mean that any such change would be irreversible and would bring further pressure on the argument for abolishing zero-rating altogether?

Sir John Cope: I acknowledge that that was another Budget representation from a particularly authoritative source.

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend will agree with me that it is important to recognise the importance of market forces where VAT differentials exist. In doing that, will he accept that thousands of jobs in my constituency and elsewhere depend on a satisfactory outcome to his own efforts to resolve the differential in VAT on bloodstock?

Sir John Cope: Yes indeed. My hon. Friend and I have discussed this on a number of occasions including last night or, rather, early this morning. I have nothing further to add to what I said then.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: On Channel 4 news on 31 March 1992 the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to tell viewers, "we will not have to increase taxes"; he could not see any circumstances in which that would be necessary. Is that true?

Sir John Cope: It proved exactly true, did it not?

Exports

9. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the trend in export volumes arising from the figures for recent months.

Mr. Nelson: As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said earlier, export volumes are at record levels. Their trend is firmly upwards, and manufactured export volumes are forecast to rise a further 7¼ per cent. in 1993.

Mr. Knapman: I congratulate my hon. Friend on that excellent reply and those encouraging figures. Does he agree that if we maintain low taxation, low interest rates and competitive exchange rates, we can expect more excellent figures?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those are necessary pre-conditions for a continued good export performance. The figures are positive. They are record levels across the board and not just for manufactured exports.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are export volumes helped when a west Cumberland company such as Circuit Foils UK, with an outstanding export record for exporting two thirds of its production, is simply closed down and the whole manufacturing operation shifted to Luxembourg? Should not the Government intervene to protect

companies in this country that produce products of strategic importance to the nation's economy so as to ensure their survival within the United Kingdom?

Mr. Nelson: I understand the importance of both matters, although I believe that they are separate. Disregarding for the moment the question of strategic interest, the decisions of international companies must be a matter for their commercial judgment. I take it that the hon. Gentleman's question underlines the importance of inward investment here. While it is regrettable that we may lose some companies abroad occasionally, it is welcome indeed that we seem to be net gainers, as the decision by Hoover demonstrates.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Dr. Fox: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the positive response to what he said last night—that the Government will consider new ways to give extra help to unemployed people and to keep them in touch with the jobs market? Is not that open-minded approach in stark contrast with the closed minds but open mouths of Labour Members?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. My concern is to make sure, wherever possible, that we keep unemployed people in touch with the world of work. Both here and elsewhere, that is a vital issue and I believe that we need a public debate on it. It is right to look at all the radical options and we propose to do so. That may mean offering more opportunities, for example, of volunteering, or extending an element of compulsion, which we already have in Restart. I do not believe that we should shy away from considering those options, and we will not.

Mr. John Smith: After a week of chaos over Government economic policy and yet more redundancies in British industry, does the Prime Minister understand that it is vital for British manufacturing industry that Leyland DAF should not be allowed to collapse, as there are 5,500 jobs at stake in the company and 10,000 among its suppliers? Will the Prime Minister undertake that if the Dutch and Belgian Governments rescue their parts of the company, the British Government will do at least the same for Leyland DAF?

The Prime Minister: No. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the receivers appointed yesterday at Leyland DAF have made it clear that they believe that at least parts of the business can be saved as a commercially viable business without unnecessary state hand-outs. I believe that that is the way to proceed.

Mr. Smith: Does the Prime Minister not understand the concern which exists in the country because of the Government's record of neglect of manufacturing industry, and the hesitancy and ambiguity of statements made by the Government? Can the Prime Minister not give a clear undertaking that he will do for Britain what the Dutch and Belgian Governments will do for their countries?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is asking us to do what has been tried in the past by previous Labour Governments and others and has failed. He should recall the disastrous outcome of the Labour Government's merger of Leyland with the British Motor Corporation, involving millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money; later they had to nationalise it, which cost even more millions. Much of that money paid for wasteful working practices and unjustified wage increases insisted on by the unions. That was Labour's idea of industrial strategy and it is clear from the right hon. and learned Gentleman that it still is. He has learnt nothing.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not understand that that long answer will cause even greater concern to the people in Leyland DAF? Does he not understand that in the real world outside the Carlton club people see a Government lurching from one muddle to another, whether it be interest rates, defence cuts or workfare? Can he not set one simple objective and stick to it? Leyland DAF is a vital British interest and it ought to be secured.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade set out our position quite clearly the other day. Hon. Members must understand that we are not prepared to spend taxpayers' money to provide working capital for companies in difficulty. Many private companies need more working capital from time to time; it is simply not realistic to expect the Government to provide it. That approach was tried in the 1960s; it failed. It was tried in the 1970s; it failed. That is the economic reality which the right hon. and learned Gentleman should face up to.

Mr. Onslow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday's announcement about the size of the Army is particularly welcome as renewed proof that the Government are ready to respond to changing circumstances overseas? As the Opposition are committed to a 25 per cent. cut in the defence budget, will he use his influence with the Leader of the House to make sure that we have an early debate on the subject?

The Prime Minister: The measures announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence yesterday are a small but necessary adjustment to a changing world situation. They will ensure that the Army has the flexibility and resilience necessary to meet challenges in the years ahead. Had the Opposition been in power and carried out their defence policies, they would have slashed £6 billion off defence. I wonder what they would have said then about the defence jobs that would have been lost.

Q2. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Galbraith: In view of the continuing uncertainty in the money markets, can the Prime Minister say whether his

Chancellor will be presenting not only the March Budget but the December Budget? May I have a straightforward answer? Will the current Chancellor be presenting the December Budget—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I cannot imagine anyone other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer presenting a Budget.

Q3. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duncan: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that criminals, even teenage criminals and other young offenders, are responsible for their own actions and deserve to be punished accordingly? Will he take this opportunity to reaffirm that it is Government policy to punish such young offenders and not to make excuses for them like the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no excuse for crime. Society is not to blame, and individuals are. For a small number of persistent juvenile offenders we need a new approach. We need new powers to put them into secure accommodation where they can be trained for a useful future. Unless they are trained at an early stage, we betray them, for we leave them in a position where they may believe that crime is justifiable and then wreck their lives as well as other people's.

Mr. Ashdown *rose——[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a very important time, not only for the House, but for people outside who watch and attempt to listen to us. The House must come to order before we can make any further progress.

Mr. Ashdown: In the light of the Prime Minister's previous answer and his speech last night, will he assure the House that he understands that any scheme designed to make the victims of his policies the inmates of a compulsory ghetto of low wage and no hope would be rightly condemned? But a policy and programme designed to give the long-term unemployed real training and real job experience—one like the community programme from which I and thousands of others benefited 10 years ago —would be well worth considering.

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman had read my speech before asking his question he might not have asked it in that form.

Q4. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sumberg: Has my right hon. Friend noticed reports in today's press that the National Union of Teachers is requiring its members to boycott the English test for 14-year-olds? Is not that disgraceful decision a grave disservice not only to parents and children but to the vast majority of decent and honourable teachers who serve the community?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe that it is a disgraceful decision, and one which, in time, the NUT itself will regret. English is the single most important subject in the curriculum, and I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is absolutely right to insist that grammar and standard school English should be taught in our schools. I condemn without reservation the action proposed by the NUT and I utterly deplore the politically motivated campaign being waged by some members of that union. They said yesterday:

"A boycott of English tests presents militants with an opportunity to broaden the current struggle."

Those militants are playing politics with children's futures, and the sooner the NUT denounces them the better it will be for everyone.

Q5. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Eagle: Is the Prime Minister aware that this week sees the 75th anniversary of the occasion of women's gaining the vote? Is it not an insult that his Government have decided to celebrate this great anniversary by abolishing wages councils, thereby adversely affecting the earnings of 2 million women?

The Prime Minister: Certainly not. We believe in equality.

Deregulation

Q6. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Prime Minister what conclusions were reached at his seminar on deregulation held on 2 February.

The Prime Minister: We agreed to review all 7,000 regulations currently imposed on businesses, with the aim of abolishing regulations wherever possible. Where they cannot be abolished—for overriding reasons of health or safety, for example—we shall work to simplify them. We agreed also that future proposals for new regulations must always spell out the costs to businesses of complying with them. We must not impose burdensome regulations on business unless they are absolutely necessary, and we are determined not to do so.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for his response, which will be most welcome to businesses in my constituency and in all other parts of the country. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and his junior Ministers have absolute freedom to seek out and destroy unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation, in whichever Government Department or whichever institution it may reside?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. That is precisely the task that I have given to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. There is a problem with excessive regulation in Brussels, but there is also a problem in Whitehall. We need to deal with both.

Engagements

Q7. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McGrady: May I draw the Prime Minister's attention to the patients charter that he had published and so ardently supported? The charter sees clinical effectiveness and accessibility as the twin pillars of a good acute hospital service. Is the Prime Minister aware that in many areas, and in particular my constituency of South Down, with an area of 750 square miles, all hospital services are being abolished? Will the Prime Minister join me in condemning that action as contrary to the patients charter, and will he take a personal interest in seeing that those scandalous proposals are abandoned?

The Prime Minister: I was certainly not aware of the point made by the hon. Gentleman. I shall ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to investigate and report back to me.

Mr. Shersby: Further to my right hon. Friend's earlier reply about juvenile offenders, does he agree that the two single most important actions that the Government can take to deal with the problem are, first, to stop juvenile offenders reoffending on bail and introduce legislation to deal with that secondly, and to provide the resources for secure accommodation so that youngsters who persistently reoffend can be locked up?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the two points made by my hon. Friend. I assure him that we have both those matters in mind.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Q8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to prevent Ministers from granting public interest immunity certificates in relation to export licences.

The Prime Minister: The law on public interest immunity has been developed by the courts over time, and they are the ultimate judge of where the balance of the public interest lies. Public interest immunity is within the terms of reference of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry and we await his report.

Mr. Dalyell: Should it not be the House of Commons now, rather than Lord Justice Scott in the ever-receding future, that asks for an explanation as to why—in order to protect five Ministers, including the Foreign Secretary—Alan Moses QC for the Crown in court, and the Attorney-General on 12 November, were very seriously economical?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Claiming public interest immunity is an obligation, not a privilege. In any case, the prosecution in the Matrix Churchill trial failed not because of the disclosure of documents but because of the change of evidence of a key witness. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman awaits the outcome of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY—Motions on the Welsh revenue support grant reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY—Remaining stages of the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY—Until about seven o'clock, completion of remaining stages of the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

Motions on the Social Security Benefit Uprating Order and other orders and regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The House will then be asked to agree spring supplementary estimates 1992-93.

THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY—Motion on the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 6).

Motion on the Maximum Number of Judges Order.

Motion on the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgements Act 1982 (Amendment) Order.

FRIDAY 12 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill *[Lords]*.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 10 February at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

Standing Committee A—Document No. 8642/92, relating to the appointment of an officer for prevention of risks inherent in the carriage of dangerous goods.

Standing Committee B—Documents Nos. 9766/92 and 10341/92 relating to the restructuring of the Spanish steel industry.

The House will recall that, before Christmas, I announced the dates of the Easter recess. I hope that it will now be for the convenience of the House to know that, subject to the progress of business, it is proposed that the House should rise for the Spring Adjournment—the Whit recess in common parlance—on Friday 28 May until Monday 7 June.

[Monday 8 February:

Welsh Revenue Support Grant Reports: 1. Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 (HC 412); 2. Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94 (HC 413).

Wednesday 10 February:

Social security uprating and other orders and regulations: 1. Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1992; 2. Social Security Benefits Up-Rating Order 1993; 3. Social Security (Contributions) (Re-Rating) Order 1993; 4. Social Security (Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations 1993; 5. Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order 1993.

European Standing Committee A: Relevant European Community document—8642/92, risk prevention officers; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee—HC 79-vii (1992-93).

European Standing Committee B: Relevant European Community documents—9766/92, 10341/92, Spanish steel; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee—HC 79-ix (1992-93)]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement, and in particular for his courtesy in letting the House know the dates of the Whitsun recess, which will certainly be most helpful to people's planning.

Could I ask him to find time as soon as possible for a debate on legal aid, in view of the growing concern about the serious consequences of the Government's proposals and their implications for the access to justice of many citizens—something that should be everyone's right?

The House is owed time for a number of outstanding debates not only on the Government's public expenditure programme, but on the estimates for the Army and the Navy. There is particular concern about the employment implications of the Navy's present programme and, unless we are granted those debates, the employment implications of the Government's overall defence programme may simply trickle out piecemeal.

May we have an assurance that we will have a debate on the Home Secretary's plans for the police force before he does for police morale what he has already done for the morale of doctors and teachers?

Finally, may I press the right hon. Gentleman to find time for an Opposition day in the near future?

Mr. Newton: Most of those requests must be taken on board for consideration, including those about the police and legal aid, on which the Lord Chancellor will be bringing forward his proposals.

As for the economy and the hon. Lady's reference to public expenditure, there is not much that I can usefully add to what I told her last week. I can be a little more forthcoming on her reference to defence issues, and there may be others in the House who would have mentioned foreign affairs. It would be helpful to have a debate on defence and foreign affairs issues, and while I cannot give an absolute commitment about the timing, I shall be looking for an opportunity in the not too distant future. Finally, in line with the spirit with which the hon. Lady spoke, I thank her for her thanks for the early notice of the Whit recess.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will it be possible some time to have a debate on international trade protectionism in which it will be possible to emphasise the vital importance of President Clinton making quite clear the views of his new Administration on protectionism and isolationism?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is expecting to meet President Clinton later this month, and I have no doubt

that my right hon. Friend will wish to take account of that point. Much as I would like to please my hon. Friend, I cannot promise an early debate in exactly the terms that he has suggested, but I guess that a number of these issues might prove in order during the debate on the Budget, which is not too far away.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Having regard to some of the comments made in the other place yesterday by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, about the draconian nature of the proposed civil legal aid cuts, can I reinforce the request by the official Opposition for an early debate on civil legal aid? If rumours are to be believed, these measures are supposed to come into effect on 1 April, and it is necessary for people to make proper arrangements and plan for those changes, Can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that we will have an early debate on the matter on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Newton: I will add a little to what I told the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has said that he will consider the proposals by the legal profession, which embrace some of the points made in another place, but he has not been persuaded that they will yield the required amounts. He will shortly be laying regulations to bring into effect the changes he has announced, and we shall then consider having a debate.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early and urgent debate on Angola? Three British citizens, including my constituent, Mr. Stephenson, have been caught up in fighting between the UNITA rebels and the Government forces along with nationals from other countries. There is a need for concerted international action to secure their release and bring an end to the fighting which has ravished Angola for so long.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having given me some notice of his concern, which I am sure the House will understand and share. I understand that the Foreign Office has had further meetings with UNITA officials this afternoon to discuss the plight of the British oil workers held captive and has been assured that UNITA is actively trying to arrange for those people to be flown out. My right hon. Friend's officials will continue to pursue the case very urgently.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Can I press the Leader of the House to find time for an early debate on the Royal Navy? He will be aware that the House has not debated the navy since June 1991 and, in addition, that the Ministry of Defence is about to take important decisions on those projects that will form the long-term programme and forward plan for the Ministry of Defence. Given the importance of the naval procurement programme to shipbuilding communities like those on Tyneside, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate so that the views of the House can be heard before the Secretary of State for Defence reaches final decisions?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request, but I cannot go beyond what I have already, I think reasonably forthcomingly, said to his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about the possibility of a debate on defence and foreign affairs issues.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on children's play and recreation? He may be aware that, from 1 April, ring-fenced funding for children's play will no longer exist and that what funding there is will go through the Sports Council rather than through the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit. There is concern on all sides of the House about the issue of children's play, and I would be grateful for an early opportunity to raise this in a debate.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I can satisfy my hon. Friend reasonably rapidly. The motion on the Local Government Finance (England) Special Grant Report (No. 6) which I announced for next Thursday covers community care issues.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Can we have a clear indication from the Leader of the House as to when the Secretary of State for Scotland will announce the results of his taking stock exercise? Can it be done in the form of a proper debate in which we can fully explore the United Kingdom dimension, so that, before the status of Scotland and Scottish business in the House is enhanced, Northern Ireland business can be lifted to at least the present level enjoyed by Scotland, so that we do not suffer even greater discrimination?

Mr. Newton: Had the hon. Gentleman been able to be here—I have no doubt that he was pursuing urgent business—he could perhaps have asked that question of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland yesterday.

Mr. Trimble: I was here.

Mr. Newton: In that case, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I am sorry that he did not get the opportunity to ask the question.

As to the thrust of his main question, I strongly suspect that there would in other parts of the House perhaps be some objection to an announcement taking the form directly of a debate rather than of a statement followed by some opportunity for hon. Members to consider what it said.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): As the Government are very wisely not proceeding next week with the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, and are therefore presumably in no great hurry to complete the Bill, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that Ministers in future will at least be given an opportunity to wind up after debates rather than before, and that the Government will not close a debate before they have had an opportunity to do so?

Mr. Newton: I probably ought to make it clear to my hon. Friend, while appreciating his motivation and dedication on this subject, that I do not wish to validate the interpretation that he placed on next week's business in his introductory remarks. As to the rest, he would not expect me to give undertakings about the details of handling the Bill from day to day, except, to pick up the words that he actually used, that I am not aware of Ministers having sought to wind up a debate before it had started.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate on the Leyland DAF situation as soon as possible and, more important, on the wider aspects

[Mr. Terry Lewis]

of Government support for industry? People watching the proceedings today on television will have been perplexed to see, in the range of one question time, one Minister lauding the £300 million given in taxpayers' money to encourage Nissan and then his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saying that we should not support indigenous manufacturing industries which are otherwise sound. It is perplexing to hon. Members, and even more perplexing to people outside. We need a debate.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member has asked two questions. On his request for a debate, I cannot add to what I have said on a number of economic and related issues in earlier exchanges this afternoon. On his second point, my understanding is that no rules would prevent any firm from applying for regional selective assistance; but that is not the principal issue that he has in mind, I think.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Can my right hon. Friend promise the House a full debate on local government corruption, as it has been reported, or at least a full statement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment? Our debates on the revenue support grant for England have passed, and soon local councils will be setting their council tax and householders will be receiving bills through their letter boxes. It is a matter of great concern to many millions of citizens that councils are reported to have deep-rooted corruption within them, and it is time that the House discussed that issue.

Mr. Newton: I am well aware of the concern expressed by my hon. Friend, which I believe is widely shared. I must rest on the proposition that there have been or will be at least four opportunities to debate local government matters in a short space of time. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have shown some ingenuity in raising the issue to which my hon. Friend referred on those and other occasions.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on law and order? The crime rate is rising, the detection rate is falling, and the courts are half-empty—I declare an interest as a barrister—because nobody seems to be arrested any more. Labour has been out of power for 14 years, and in the Government's 14 years in power law and order has got into quite a mess. It is time to debate that issue.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a debate, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be here to answer questions this day week.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on tourism, which is of great and growing importance to the British economy? It has not been debated in the House for five years.

Mr. Newton: I cannot give an immediate promise, but that issue has been raised several times in recent weeks and I will certainly bear it in mind.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate on workfare, so that the House can discuss all its aspects and the Government's proposal to throw several hundred thousand more people out of work this year and then call upon them to clean the streets or whatever? At the same time, Members of Parliament are picking up £30,000 a year—and some do not turn up for work. More than 200 Tory Members of Parliament have 500 consultancies and directorships between them, and 19 Tory ex-Cabinet Ministers have 52 directorships between them. Let us have a proper debate about workfare and the way in which the right hon. Gentleman and his Tory friends look after one another.

Mr. Newton: Not for the first time, I shall seek to resist the provocation that I am offered. I will simply say that the hon. Gentleman's interpretation bears no relationship whatever to what was said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last night.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On the evening opening of betting shops, about which I asked last week, I understand that a prayer has been laid against us by the Opposition, and that there are two early-day motions—Nos 1311 and 1175.

[That this House expresses its concern that the plans to extend the opening hours of licensed betting offices has already resulted in Ladbrokes issuing revised contracts with the threat that refusal to sign will result in individuals being given notice to terminate their existing contracts; and calls upon the Government to take this into account when amending the law to ensure that existing workers are not penalized.]

Will the House have an opportunity to debate that matter? There is growing concern among right hon. and hon. Members that betting companies are forcing employees to sign new contracts, failing which they will be fired—and there are no proper safeguards in that industry.

Mr. Newton: Any thoughts that the Government have about those matters may be expressed at the Statutory Instruments Committee next Thursday. As I understand it, they do not affect the rights of betting office employees, which would remain a matter for discussion between them and the companies that employ them.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the right hon. Gentleman provide an early opportunity to debate the waste of millions of pounds by Wessex regional health authority in the light of today's reports of the confidential district auditor's study? It shows that the chairman of that authority, Sir Robin Buchanan, appears to have been personally involved in disastrous decisions —including the removal of penalty clauses from contracts with private sector companies and creating the situation in which an IBM employee was advising the authority on the purchase of IBM equipment.

May the House have an early opportunity to debate that appalling waste of money and the bumbling incompetence with which the Department of Health failed to supervise Wessex regional health authority, despite grave public concern stretching back to the mid-1980s?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to promise an early debate on that subject, but I will certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that next week's debate on the Maximum Number of Judges Order will give the House an opportunity to ascertain whether enough judges are available to

adjudicate in cases involving allegations of fraud in Labour councils in London and elsewhere? There will be a number of such cases.

Mr. Newton: A few months ago, I referred to the ingenuity with which such matters had been introduced. My hon. Friend's question certainly falls into the ingenious category. The issue of what is in order during next week's debate will, of course, be a matter for whoever is in the Chair.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is it not, at the very least, deeply disquieting that a report from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council that went to the Secretary of State for Social Security last autumn, and recommended benefits for miners whose work underground had left them with emphysema and chronic bronchitis, has still not been acted on by the Government? Is the Leader of the House aware that many of the intended beneficiaries have died, week by week, since last August, and that many others have to struggle even to breathe? May we have a statement from the Secretary of State next week?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise what the right hon. Gentleman requests. I can say, however, that—having held responsibilities in such maters myself for some time —I know of the difficulty and complexity of some of the issues raised, and I consider it right for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to give them careful and proper consideration.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will my right hon. Friend consider arranging a debate on a subject that I believe will be of grave concern to the House? Is he aware that Peter Sutcliffe—the Yorkshire ripper—is seeking to publish his memoirs? Does he appreciate the enormous revulsion that will be felt by the people of Yorkshire, not least the families of victims?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that many will share my hon. Friend's view. He will be aware of the opinion expressed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on a not entirely dissimilar matter that came up during Prime Minister's Question Time last week. I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's concern to his attention.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Should not the Secretary of State for Defence make his announcements about the Navy's helicopter carrier in the House of Commons, rather than on "Newsnight"? On that programme, when the Secretary of State was asked whether he intended to cancel the order for the carrier, he said, "No, it's not true." We have been trying for weeks to get him to say that in the House of Commons. Will he come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement, either tomorrow or next week?

Mr. Newton: That question is—if I may use the vernacular—a bit over the top. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State very properly came to the House only yesterday to make a substantial statement, on which, if I remember rightly, the hon. Gentleman managed to question him—*[Interruption.]* In any event, there was certainly a clear opportunity for him to ask the question that he has just mentioned.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I think that many hon. Members will be baffled about the dog that didn't bark, knowing how keen the Government are to get the Maastricht treaty on to the statute book. Why are we not debating it next week? Perhaps my right hon. Friend could take the House into his confidence. Is it that the Liberal party has not agreed to be there next week, or something?

Mr. Newton: I have already taken the House into my confidence: I have announced the wide range of important business with which the House needs to deal.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): In considering next week's business, will the Leader of the House also consider what happened on 22 January, when the House voted for my Shops (Amendment) Bill by a majority of 173? Now that the Standing Committee has been set up, will he assure me that it will not be held up unduly? I understand from rumours that the Committee stage of the Osteopaths Bill is being deliberately delayed so that my Committee will have to wait.

I waited eight months for the Bill to be given a Second Reading. Surely the Government should now allow time for a Committee to debate it.

Mr. Newton: I and my right hon. Friends the business managers certainly have no interest in doing anything other than ensuring that measures that have been granted a Second Reading are properly discussed in Committee. As for the right hon. Gentleman's specific point, while I understand the reason that he made it, the Osteopaths Bill is also a very important measure of considerable interest to many people.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Bearing in mind the great importance to children and the nation of the key stage 3 English tests and the great uncertainty created by the call by the National Union of Teachers to boycott them, may we have a statement or debate next week to resolve the problem so that children may know, as they need to, that the tests will go ahead and that they can prepare properly for them?

Mr. Newton: The Government's intention that the tests should go ahead as planned has repeatedly been made clear, and was, I think, reiterated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—I hope to my hon. Friend's pleasure —only a few minutes ago.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House now answer the question that he was asked: why no Maastricht Bill debate next week? Is he losing his nerve? When can we look forward to discussing the Government's taking-stock talking shop proposals for Scotland?

Mr. Newton: On the latter subject, I cannot add to what I have said and to what my right hon. Friend no doubt said during Scottish questions yesterday; nor can I say very much more on the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, beyond what I have already said to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). We shall discuss a wide range of business—Welsh revenue support, the Housing and Urban Development Bill, community care and private business selected by the Chairman of Ways and Means, as well as private Members' motions, about which the House would certainly feel aggrieved were they to be swept away by Government business—which needs discussion in the week for which I have today announced the business.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): May I add my voice to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) and ask for a debate on tourism soon? My constituency's economy relies heavily on tourism. Nationally, £8 billion was contributed to the British economy last year by visitors from abroad. Much has been said today about the balance of payments, but it is only too easy to overlook tourists' great contribution to our economy.

Mr. Newton: I shall add my hon. Friend's request, which I well understand in view of the nature of the area that he represents, to the growing list of such requests which, as I have already said, I shall bear in mind.

Mr. Piara S. Khabra (Ealing, Southall): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1251, which has been signed by 115 hon. Members?

[That this House believes that, to implement an EC Directive on the Use of Personal Protective Equipment, which makes it compulsory for the Sikhs, against their religion, to wear protective headgear whilst working in the non-construction industry, is an attack on the freedom of the Sikh religion; further believes that the effects of the EC Directive will mean widespread dismissals, demotions, redeployment and loss of promotion opportunities for Sikhs; and calls on the Government to reconsider its decision and grant an exemption for members of the Sikh community with similar terms to that already granted for construction areas.]

It is a matter of great importance to the Sikhs, who are a large section of the community and who will be affected by the EC directive. It will be mandatory for them to wear protective gear while working in the non-construction industry. I belong to the same community. Unless the community is exempted from wearing protective gear, it will be an attack on the religion of the Sikhs. Will the Leader of the House make a statement on this issue?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he seeks. He is right to say that we are talking about the implementation of a Community directive. I understand that the issues involved are complex and cause strong feeling. The right course is to draw his remarks to the attention of my appropriate right hon. Friend.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is the delay on the Maastricht debate due to the continued ill health of the ERM—is it because last week it was the punt, this week it is the kroner and next week it will probably be the franc? Are the Government terrified that they will finish up having to recommend to the House a dead mechanism?

Mr. Newton: I will try to choose slightly different words to say for the third time that the programme of business for next week has absolutely nothing to do with any of the factors to which my hon. Friend referred. It has to do with the fact that we also have other important business with which the House needs to deal.

Several hon. Members *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I am grateful that the gestures of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) have such weight in this place.

Does the Leader of the House recall that, two weeks ago, I raised with him the reduction in section 11 expenditure for many inner-city schools? It will affect many thousands of children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The Leader of the House will be aware of early-day motion 1183 in my name, which is signed by nearly 100 hon. Members and which expresses the increasing disquiet and anger that is being felt throughout the country.

[That this House is appalled at the Government decision to cut the level of financial support available for Section 11 expenditure; notes that this reduction will adversely affect those parliamentary constituencies with ethnic minority populations from Commonwealth countries; believes that this decision will undermine the education of these children who learn English as a second language, with the result that they will be deprived access to the full range of educational opportunities with consequential effects on their examination results, their access to higher education and their role in society as equal citizens; and urges the Government to withdraw this discriminatory, unjust and shortsighted policy.]

I know that the Home Secretary will be here to answer questions soon, but that is not sufficient. I urge the Leader of the House to urge his right hon. and learned Friend to come to the House and make a statement, or the Leader of the House should arrange an urgent debate.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate, but I will certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is a strong rumour going around the House that, in the next few weeks, he will find time to arrange a debate on energy matters. Will he confirm that any such debate will enable hon. Members with constituencies that no longer have coal mines to point out that their constituents have had to suffer considerable change without the enormous support and suggested subsidy that was recently canvassed for coal mining communities?

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be an opportunity in that debate for us to make the point that, if there is to be considerable Government support, constituencies such as mine of Dover should also receive it?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps that is an advance bid for a slot in the debate which will take place on my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's White Paper. If I might take the liberty, I draw that bid to your attention, Madam Speaker.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): In view of the fact that on both sides of the House there is a recognition that the interests of representative democracy would be better served if there were more women Members, and since the job of a Member of Parliament should be commensurate with a decent home and family life, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the Select Committee report on the reform of the sitting hours of the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will know that we are seeking to advance discussion of those matters through the usual channels, with a view to making the progress that the hon. Lady would like.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the Prime Minister's statement today that there could be a discussion of the workfare proposals which he sailed out yesterday, could we not have a very early debate on that subject? Surely the right way to keep unemployed people in touch with the world of work is to find them jobs, and the right way to keep the House in touch with the unemployment situation is to debate it. Perhaps that is the only way to keep the Secretary of State for Employment in touch with what the Prime Minister is going to say about unemployment.

Mr. Newton: I have already said in my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South that I anticipate that the House will have a considerable opportunity to debate economic matters within the next month or so, taking account of the impending Budget.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Is the Leader of the House aware of the deep sense of outrage that is felt by some of my constituents at the implications in the Prime Minister's remarks last night that the long-term unemployed are unemployed not because of his Government's economic policies but because they are not looking sufficiently hard for work? Will the right hon. Gentleman use his best offices to urge his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to make a statement about workfare to the House, and not at the Carlton club?

Mr. Newton: First, I do not believe that my right hon. Friend's remarks carried that implication. Rather, they made clear the Government's wish to do everything possible to help those who, unhappily, have been unemployed for a long time to find work again. Secondly, as for my right hon. Friend coming to the House, he was here and he extensively commented on the subject.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I back the call of the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) for a debate on the European Community proposals for headgear at construction sites and the like? During that debate, we could highlight the support given by the Conservative Government to the Sikh community and its concerns in the Employment Act 1989.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's helpful comments. Obviously, I cannot add to what I said earlier on the specific request for a debate.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate or a statement on the Government's cost-reduction exercises in the NHS? Is he aware that last night, Committee Room 14 was packed with people from all walks of life who are deeply concerned that the Government might introduce prescription charges for contraceptives? Is he aware that such a proposal would be serious socially, lead to many unwanted pregnancies and probably save no money whatever? Is he aware that people in my constituency want some decent research at a reasonable cost to produce quality products at prices which the NHS can afford?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman probably would not expect me to promise a debate in response to his question, but I will draw his concerns to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Arising from the action taken by the management at Timex in Dundee, which is simply tearing up current agreements which were negotiated with the workers and imposing wage cuts and redundancies on the work force, will the Leader of the House find time to debate the erosion of trade union rights which has given birth to brutal management? The erosion of trade union rights and the rise of brutal management are hitting jobs and destroying the economy not only in Dundee but throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: Without commenting on the specific case —and still less accepting some of the language used by the hon. Gentleman—I simply make the point that the House has before it at present a fairly wide-ranging Employment Bill on which some of those matters will undoubtedly be relevant in due course.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can we have a debate in the near future on the seminar on deregulation which was held by the Prime Minister recently? The Prime Minister could then explain why, in 1992, the Government produced 3,359 statutory instruments, producing the largest number of regulations, rules and orders in the history of any Government or any Parliament, and how double standards apply in that case? Those who claim to take government off people's backs are piling it on in a move towards centralisation and dictatorship.

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear during Prime Minister's Question Time about three quarters of an hour ago, the deregulation initiative has been launched precisely to deal with aspects of the problem of centralisation.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Did the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) hear the statement?

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I call Mr. Deva.

Mr. Deva: I ask my right hon. Friend to support the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) to discuss the motion about Sikh turbans. It is a matter of grave concern to my constituents, and I should be pleased if my right hon. Friend would take note of my views.

Mr. Newton: I certainly take note of all views that are expressed to me, not least those of my hon. Friend. I cannot add to what I said earlier.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I have said previously to the hon. Gentleman but that does not mean that I have lost interest in the matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I welcome the fact that at least next week will be free from Maastricht, but will it be possible to have an early debate on the economy? Bearing in mind the daily shambles—one is not certain whether the Prime Minister or the Chancellor is in charge of the economy—the contradictions and the question whether interest rates will remain at the present rate, increase or go down, why can we not have a debate on the whole subject as quickly as possible?

Mr. Newton: I have already responded to a slightly less aggressive question of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). I do not think that I shall seek to go beyond that in responding to the more aggressive stance adopted by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Roads (Investment)

4.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the Government's plans for investment in national roads in 1993-94. I made a statement to the House on 15 December about the Government's record level of support for expenditure on roads by local authorities. I am now pleased to be able to announce similar good news for the national road network of motorways and trunk roads.

I am authorising the start of construction works in the coming financial year on 41 new road schemes. Assuming the remaining statutory processes are completed, we will have started all the schemes by March next year. They represent new investment in the nation's infrastructure of over £1·3 billion. I am arranging for a list of the schemes to be included in the *Official Report* and made available in the Vote Office.

Expenditure on new construction and maintenance of national roads will reach £2,092 million in 1993-94. This is the highest level for over 20 years in real terms and one of the highest ever. In a difficult year for public expenditure, this level of spending clearly demonstrates the extent of the Government's commitment to capital expenditure and to investing in the nation's road and—as we showed on Tuesday—rail infrastructure. The sum includes £550 million for the capital maintenance of roads and bridges, and £1,369 million for new road construction.

The 41 new starts are in addition to the substantial construction programme which is currently taking place. We have 51 schemes under construction, mostly started in the past couple of years. During 1993-94 100 miles of new or improved roads will be opened to traffic.

One aim of the programme is to tackle increasing congestion on the core motorway network: we will be adding a fourth lane to 18 route miles of motorway, including the M25 in Surrey and the M62 in Greater Manchester. The north-west will also see the start of construction on the long awaited remaining link on the M65 around Blackburn. The biggest single project to start will be the upgrading to motorway of 13 miles of the A1 between Walshford and Dishforth in north Yorkshire, part of the A1 motorway between London and Newcastle.

Another key objective of the road programme is removing through traffic from our towns and villages. Nineteen bypass schemes will be built across the country, taking heavy traffic away from streets in towns and villages. In addition, on-line improvements will be started on 11 other routes, including the A66 northern trans-Pennine road, the A11 to Norwich, and the A27 south coast route.

I am particularly pleased that we will now be able to start work next year in tackling some of the worst bottlenecks in London through a programme of nine junction improvements and other schemes. Taken in conjunction with the red routes network, which will also come on stream from 1994, this is a sensible, cost-effective and environmentally friendly response to congestion in the capital.

All these 41 new schemes will bring substantial economic, safety and environmental benefits to road users and the country as a whole. They are particularly important in helping to reduce the costs of congestion to industry. The value of the benefits from these new schemes

in terms of accidents avoided and time savings to road users has been assessed at £2·5 billion. That is before any allowance for the net environmental gain achieved by reducing urban congestion and taking traffic away from town and village centres. All the new schemes have, of course, been subject to full environmental assessment and have been designed sensitively to fit into the landscape as closely as possible. This is how we aim to minimise any adverse environmental effects; indeed, we can sometimes reduce the environmental effects of an existing road with a new scheme.

The £550 million to be spent on capital maintenance is a 12 per cent. increase in real terms. I will be announcing the details of the maintenance works before the start of the new financial year, but I can confirm now that sufficient funding will be in place in 1993-94 to avoid deteriorating road conditions, as well as ensuring that the programme of bridge strengthening remains on course. Higher expenditure on maintenance will also mean that the latest techniques of traffic management can be applied to minimise delays to the road user.

The levels of investment that I am announcing today will continue to meet the needs of business and the community and provide the right conditions for economic growth. In addition, I shall be publishing a Green Paper on the basis for charging for the use of inter-urban roads which will also examine the scope for attracting more private finance.

Following are the schemes:

National roads
New starts for 1993-94

Region	*Road number*	*Scheme name*	*Total works cost [1] £ million*	*Miles*
Northern	A66	Stainmore—Banksgate	11	3·7
North West	M62	Junctions 14–17 widening	13	2·5
North West	M65	Blackburn southern bypass (Contract 1)	56	13·1
North West		A6M—M56 link (Central section)	16	2·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	A1(M)	Walshford—Dishforth	113	13·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	A65	Burley in Wharfdale bypass	9	1·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	A65	Gargrave bypass	7	3·7
West Midlands	A45	Stonebridge grade separated junction	12	1·3
West Midlands	A50	Blythe bridge—Queensway (Phase 1)	73	3·0
West Midlands	A435	Norton—Lenchwick bypass	24	7·5
East Midlands	A17	Leadenham bypass	3	6·0
East Midlands	A17	Wigtoft—Sutterton	7	3·0
East Midlands	A52	Ashbourne relief road	4	1·6
Eastern	A11	Besthorpe—Wymondham improvement	25	5·4
Eastern	A11	Stump cross—Fourwentways improvement	28	3·4
Eastern	A12	Lowestoft eastern relief road	1	0·8
Eastern	A47	Walpole—Tilney high end bypass	23	6·2
Eastern	A140	Scole—Dickleburgh	12	1·3
Eastern	A428	Bedford southern bypass	51	5·4
Eastern	M40	Junction 1A–3 widening	55	7·5
London	A12	Hackney—M11 (Contracts 2 and 4)	122	2·4
London	A13	Cotton street	8	0·6
London	A13	Butcher row	1	0·1
London	A13	Heathway—Thames avenue	54	5·0
London	A13	Thames avenue—Wennington	58	3·1
London	A40	Long lane—West end road widening	4	1·5
London	A406	East of Falloden way	42	1·4
London	A406	Dysons road	63	1·5
London	M1	Junction 1	5	0·4
South East	A27	Patching junction improvement	11	1·6
South East	A249	North of Iwade—M2 improvement	47	7·0
South East	A303	Bullington cross	4	2·5
South East	M25	Junctions 10–11 widening	36	4·8
South East	M25	Junctions 7–8 widening	32	3·1
South West	A30	Shallowater hill	2	1·3
South West	A30	Indian queens, Fraddon, St. Columb road bypass	21	5·3
South West	A31	Ashley heath grade separated junction	11	1·0
South West	A46	Batheaston—Swainswick bypass	51	3·3
South West	A417	Brockworth bypass	32	3·3
South West	M5	J18 improvement and Avonmouth relief road	13	1·0
TOTALS		41 Schemes	1,148	141·6

[1] Including VAT.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The statement today announcing billions of pounds of investment on the roads, welcome though it may be in certain areas and perhaps in producing extra jobs, contrasts vividly with this week's statement on British Rail. That announced that, in the same year as this increase in roads investment will occur, British Rail investment will be cut by half, causing thousands of redundancies in the railway industry and the manufacturing industries that are dependent on it.

Does the right hon. Gentleman have an assessment of the job gains and losses in those areas? May we be assured that it will be full-time labour for full-time work and not the work gang dole labour which the Prime Minister has now discovered?

Does the Secretary of State accept that this policy sounds the death knell for the Government's commitment, given at the Rio summit, to reduce exhaust gas emissions, which requires the very opposite strategy to that which he is adopting, to encourage the greater use of public transport?

Does he accept that the Department's estimate of traffic growth, of 140 per cent. in 25 years, will require a motorway of 270 lanes from London to Edinburgh—just to park the vehicles? Is he aware, and will he make it clear, that we cannot possibly build our way out of this environmental disaster based on that kind of policy?

Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to continue adding to the road congestion, considering his announcements this week, by forcing British Rail to move hundreds of thousands of lorry loads of rail freight on to the roads? Does he really believe that his programme will relieve bottlenecks in London? Would it not be better to scrap the silly proposal to deregulate London Buses and finance alternative rail projects such as crossrail, Network SouthEast and Paddington-Heathrow and encourage people to use public transport more, rather than private vehicles which add to the congestion?

When can we expect publication of the Green Paper on road pricing and private finance? Is he aware that the private financing of the recently opened £100 million QEII bridge at Dartford is encouraging, with the growth of mega-shopping centres on either side of the bridge, a demand to build 14 lanes on the M25, at a cost of billions of pounds, to encourage people to take shopping trips on what is our most strategic motorway? That is not an intelligent use of public resources.

Is it not a fact that the right hon. Gentleman's policy will force people off public transport and into private road car transport, thereby providing a new, massive finance tax for the Treasury at the expense of the environment and adding to congestion on the transport system?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on every count, and I am sure that the country will note his extremely grudging welcome—he could hardly get a word of welcome out—for our record road programme. There are communities and businesses all over the country and hon. Members in all parts of the House who have been pressing for it and will warmly welcome it.

The hon. Gentleman referred to British Rail investment being cut by half. He will know that next year, British Rail's investment will be at record levels—*[Interruption.]*—or certainly higher than at any time in the last 30 years.

Mr. Prescott: When?

Mr. MacGregor: In 1993-94. That is, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the anticipated level of investment in British Rail next year.

Bearing in mind that 90 per cent. of all passenger and freight traffic goes by road, the levels of investment that we are proposing for the roads, national and local, next year amounts to £2·9 billion compared with £2·2 billion on public transport, and local authority public transport gains from the benefits of the road programme. So to suggest that we are putting the entire emphasis on the road programme and not on public transport is completely and wholly wrong and is not borne out by the figures.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman has just proved it.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman says that I have just proved it, so I will give him the figures again. They are £2·9 billion on roads, including roads which benefit public transport, and £2·2 billion on public transport, given that 90 per cent. of all traffic goes on roads. I should have thought it clear that we are doing a great deal for public transport.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the environmental disadvantages. He should know that there are substantial environmental advantages from taking traffic out of towns and villages through our bypass programme, and that enabling traffic to move at proper levels, instead of at congested levels, improves exhaust gas emissions. He ought also to know what we are doing with catalytic converters and in all sorts of other ways to improve that. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that what creates the traffic forecasts and traffic growth is economic growth itself which inevitably creates more freight, traffic and, inevitably, more people wishing to use more cars and to use them to their own benefit on the roads. It is to that we are responding which is why I say I believe the programme I have announced today will receive a wide welcome from industry which is constantly pressing for it, and from car passengers.

Mr. Prescott: He hasn't got a clue.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not me who has not got a clue, it is the hon. Gentleman who is way out of touch with reality. Finally, can I say to him on London—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman just cannot face up to the facts. Let me turn to London. He talked about the London position. May I point out to him that the red route programme that we are introducing will greatly assist public transport in itself and has led to an increase in public transport in the pilot areas because it has helped to deal with congestion. When the hon. Member looks at the figures for London next year he will see that for every pound we are spending on the road programme, which is very important for docklands, for the north circular and for easing congestion in central London, we are spending £3 on public transport in London.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will the Secretary of State ignore the over-rehearsed carping from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and understand that his record announcement today will be warmly received right through the country, but not least in Cumbria where the improvement to the A66 road, which he has announced, will do a great deal to eliminate an appalling length of that

road which I think he knows himself? It is essential to improve that piece of road to link Cumbria with the east coast.

I wonder if my right hon. Friend will help me over one thing? There is a certain amount of misunderstanding as to whether the programe that he has announced will result in linking the Brough bypass with the newly-opened long stretch of dual carriageway over Bowes Moor and Stainmore. There is some doubt about this. Will he confirm that the new road will link those two existing bits of dual carriageway?

Mr. MacGregor: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend both for his general comments and for his specific welcome for the inclusion in the programme, as I said in my statement, of another scheme for the northern trans-Pennine route. I know that route well and was driving on it myself last Sunday evening. I therefore know how important it is that we have been able to carry through major improvements to that road. It is very important for business and to everyone who moves along that road, not least because the road has had a poor accident record and this will help to deal with it. I am happy to confirm that the project I have announced today will complete the dual section between Brough and Bowes.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I welcome the announcement made today, particularly for its effects on jobs, but is it not the case that it just gives detail to commitments already made in the autumn statement and that it is not quite the bonanza it is portrayed as, particularly as people in the northern region will be less than delighted to see only 3·7 miles of new road there, with no moves to improve the A1 between Newcastle and Edinburgh? I wonder whether it is quite as green as the Secretary of State would have us believe. Will not widening the M25 simply make it easier to get into logjams rather than relieving them, and bring more development pressure on the green belt area instead of regenerating the inner city?

Mr. MacGregor: I note the astonishingly grudging approach of the Liberal party. I wish the hon. Member would make up his mind whether he wants the improvements on the M25 or not; whether he wants the expanded road programme or not. He seems to reject some but to demand more in other areas. May I tell him that the improvements that I have announced to the A1 to bring it up to motorway standard on a priority section. Clearly not all of it can be done at once and much is still going through statutory procedures, but the improvement that I have announced will be warmly welcomed by people from the north who travel on that road, particularly road hauliers and so on. It is very important for them. Jobs are a very important aspect of the programme I have announced today which will involve more than 30,000 jobs in the construction industry.

There is no doubt that one of the priorities that we need to deal with now is the M25, on environmental and other grounds which involve congestion, not least for businesses in the north and Scotland wishing to take advantage of the single market by going through the channel tunnel.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on the A6M—M56 scheme, which runs through my constituency? The House will note that the announcement refers only to the central section. While I welcome today's announcement, which is of great benefit to jobs and the relief of many villages, the central section is to be built four years ahead of the rest only because of private money from a local developer. I and my constituents support the completion of the whole scheme, which would give great relief to the villages of Bramhall and Woodford in my constituency. As only the central section of the scheme is being built, those villages will suffer from increased car movements. I urge my right hon. Friend to complete the rest of the scheme as soon as possible.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He refers to the first of three linked projects to relieve congestion in the south of the Greater Manchester conurbation and to provide a link road to Manchester airport. A number of schemes cannot yet go ahead as they are still subject to statutory procedures. It is the intention to complete the scheme, and I am sure that he will welcome the major start this coming year.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that his proposals for the widening of the M25, the north circular and the A13 will increase road traffic, congestion and pollution in London and lower the environmental standards of our already overcrowded capital city? Is it not time that he took a real look at the transport needs of London and put real investment into the public transport infrastructure, lowering fares and developing new schemes such as the crossrail, which is so desperately needed to relieve congestion in this city?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman ought to realise that improving the M25—and its very existence—removes traffic from London. The M25 has taken about 25 per cent. of the traffic out of London and improving it, to prevent drivers looking for other routes, undoubtedly helps residents, helps with problems in central London and so on. These announcements are important for London and the hon. Gentleman is not right to suggest that through them we are diminishing the importance of investment in public transport. As I said, for every £1 being spent on road projects in London, £3 is being spent on public transport.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is not it necessary for any Transport Secretary to have a policy of investment in all forms of transport infrastructure? Is the Secretary of State not therefore assured of a welcome from dispassionate minded people for his statement this afternoon? Can he confirm that the A31 Ashley Heath junction in Dorset in my constituency is included in his scheme? Will he nevertheless bear in mind that it is perhaps only wishful thinking that reminds some of my constituents that that junction is built on the site of the former Ringwood-Wimborne railway line? My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), in his reference to Stainmore, welcomes a road being built on another railway line. Even at this stage, will the Secretary of State consider imposing a ban on the sale of disused track bed so that we do not destroy future possible transport options?

Mr. MacGregor: I noticed my hon. Friend's welcome, at the beginning of his question about a balanced infrastructure programme, which is what we are achieving. I can confirm, and I hope that he will welcome this warmly, that the Ashley Heath new grade separated

[Mr. MacGregor]

junction is being included among schemes next year. He refers to the fact that it is on an old railway line, but we must take into account that a considerable number of railway lines have ceased to have custom and that it therefore makes sense to make use of them, wherever possible, for road projects. I hope that he will not ignore the importance of that.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): While many people in the north-west will welcome the statement about the extension of the M65 from Blackburn to the M6, can the Secretary of State take the opportunity to end damaging speculation about the possible extension of the M65 eastwards over the Pennines? He will appreciate that it finishes in Colne in my constituency and that that has sterilised many acres of land there for far too long.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the Pennine study is a very important one. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has indicated one route that we would wish to exclude from it. We are considering the study and obviously wish to come to decisions as quickly as is practicable.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that Bedford is the largest town in England that has not been bypassed? Does he realise that this is paralysing business and the movement of traffic across the river? This is a very urgent matter indeed and I hope that he can do something to expedite it.

Mr. MacGregor: I am very pleased to tell my hon. Friend that the Bedford southern bypass is being included in the programme next year. It will be a dual carriageway bypass, at a total cost of £51 million.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Secretary of State aware that the only aspect of his statement that I welcome is the statement in relation to bypasses? Is he aware that I have been trying to get bypasses at Girvan, Maybole, New Cumnock and Mauchline for many years——

Madam Speaker: Order. We are well aware that that is not included in the statement. Hon. Members must question the Secretary of State precisely on the statement, not on wishful thinking as to what might happen in the future.

Mr. Foulkes: That is precisely the point, because what I want to ask the Secretary of State is whether he, as a member of the Cabinet, knows when Scottish Members will get a statement about the roads programme in Scotland? When will we be able to ask questions about——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is questioning the wrong Minister on these issues.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the great majority of the people of this country, unlike Opposition Members, well understand that, however much we improve the railways, it is essential to continue the development of the roads on the lines that he has described? Will my right hon. Friend undertake to ensure, wherever possible, that the management of individual road development projects is conducted in such a way as to retain the maximum speed of development, so that the disruption to local residents is kept to the minimum? Secondly, will my right hon. Friend use, wherever possible, the noise reduction aids that are increasingly available, such as porous asphalt?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes two very important points and I can assure him that we endeavour to complete the schemes with a minimum of disruption to those who are affected. Indeed, the record of construction in this country shows that we are one of the fastest in the world in completing the construction of roads. I can also tell him that, with the programme so heavily focused on the widening of motorways and bypasses, not new roads, there is much less disruption to a whole range of people who would have been affected by the construction of new roads. Widening existing motorways helps very much with that. On his second point, about asphalt, yes, we are endeavouring to use it wherever possible, and it will obviously be looked at in the case of a scheme which is coming in his constituency.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he has not announced any proposals to improve the road or rail communications between Sheffield and Manchester? These are two major cities in this country. The communications between them are appalling, and this is bad for business. Can he tell the House whether he has any plans to improve this situation in the future and whether, as part of his statement, he will give a commitment to start funding the planning process to ensure that communications are improved?

Mr. MacGregor: The communications to which the hon. Gentleman refers are contained in the trans-Pennine study. That was a major study and we are now looking at it very carefully. There are also, as he will know, improvements going on to the M62.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): While, as a London Member, tending to prefer railway development at the moment, I very much welcome what the Secretary of State said about bypasses in so many parts of the country. I am particularly after one to bypass Malden Rushett, in my constituency. Can he assure the House that the aggregates that will be used in this particularly valuable work of road building and bridge maintenance throughout the country will come from our own resources, from marine and land-based resources, and certainly not from abroad, which would of course do considerable damage to our balance of payments?

Mr. MacGregor: On my hon. Friend's first point, as it is very important to get the balance clear, it is worth stressing that in the coming financial year London Transport and Network SouthEast are expected to invest nearly three times as much as the Department will spend on the construction and capital maintenance of roads in London.

With regard to my hon. Friend's second point, I have to say that there are competitive elements that contractors have to take into account. However, so far as I am aware, the vast bulk of aggregates come from here.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. Will the plans that he has

announced lead to upgrading of the route between Seaforth and Hull and, therefore, to widening of the choice of routes to Europe?

Mr. MacGregor: That is not in the programme to which this statement relates.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Nothing in my right hon. Friend's statement will be more welcome than his announcement that a bypass is to be provided at Scole, on the Norfolk-Suffolk border, which he and I know very well. There is immense pressure on the roads in East Anglia. This arises from commercial as well as holiday traffic. There will be delight that the great disruption that occurs in the area throughout the year—but particularly at holiday times—is to be cured. I urge my right hon. Friend to do all he can, in the slightly longer term, to have the A140 dualled from one end to the other.

Mr. MacGregor: I know that my hon. Friend is closely interested in this road, as, indeed, I am. I am aware also of his interest in the A140, which goes through his constituency. He knows that that matter is being examined at the moment by consultants, as the first stage in the whole process. On the question of the Scole bypass, which is in the programme for next year, my hon. Friend will know that in December I made an announcement about the local authority aspect. I am glad to be able to confirm now that the trunk road aspect will be completed at the same time. My hon. Friend is quite right in saying that this will be warmly welcomed.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): While the announcement that the M65 is to be linked to the M6 and the national motorway network is extremely welcome news for Burnley and north-east Lancashire, are there any plans for associated steps to improve the M6 between the M61 and the M55—a length of road whose capacity is becoming increasingly overstretched?

Mr. MacGregor: There is a programme in respect of this matter. If I may, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the specific points he has raised.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Can the Secretary of State confirm that the representations made to him by myself, the borough council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and the local business community that the A47 at Walpole-Tilney bypass should be started have been listened to and that the project will go ahead? Can he tell the House when draft orders in respect of the flyover at the Hardwick roundabout will be issued?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend and I have corresponded and talked on a number of occasions about the second point that he raised, and he knows that it was raised with me recently when I paid a visit to his constituency. As he knows, there have been technical delays in respect of the orders. The position has not changed since the last time we talked, but I shall continue to watch it very carefully.

I can confirm that the Walpole-Tilney High End bypass is included in next year's programme. The total cost of the scheme will be £23 million. It is a further development of the upgrading of the A47 to dual carriageway status. I know how important it is to everyone in Norfolk that that upgrading should continue so that the routes from Norfolk to the midlands may be developed in the same way as the routes to London and the south-east, which are being very substantially developed at the moment.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I note that, of the £1·1 billion expenditure that the Secretary of State announced today, only £11 million will be spent on the northern region. That is a matter about which I have some concern. My concern would be lessened if the Government were to make available to British Rail the money that it needs to upgrade the west coast main line. If communications in the north of England are to be improved, that line must be upgraded.

Mr. MacGregor: We discussed those matters on Tuesday. On a quick count, the figure for the northern region is £11 million, but for the north-west, which the west coast mainline also affects, the figure is a good deal higher.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents, including Labour voters—I know, because they tell me so—fully understand the importance for jobs and economic growth of the new road programme? They will have taken careful note of the hostility of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to the package of road building. As my constituency has one of the highest unemployment rates in the south-east of England—indeed, in the country—my right hon. Friend will know of the tremendous welcome that there will be in my district for the dualling of the A249 from the motorway through to Kingsferry bridge. I express my thanks for that decision after so many years of waiting. Will my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic continue the help and encouragement that they are giving to the joint public and private sector project for the development of the second Swale crossing, which continues the A249 to the Isle of Sheppey?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and should like to pay tribute to the work that he has done in frequently pressing for the scheme. He and I have had a number of exchanges on the scheme, and I am well aware of its importance to his constituency and his part of the world. The total cost of the scheme is £47 million. On my hon. Friend's second point, I assure him that my hon. Friend the Minister and I will continue to pursue the project that he mentioned, although I cannot make any promises.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am now bringing questions on the statement to a close.

Points of Order

4.42 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Scotland may have inadvertently misled the House in an answer to a question on water privatisation. He said that his office had received about 3,000 submissions on water privatisation, but my hon. Friends the Members for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and for the Fife constituencies and I delivered 90,000 individual signed submissions on 25 and 29 January. Is there some way to correct the error, as it gives the impression that not many people are writing to the Secretary of State about the issue?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates. All Ministers and Members are responsible for the statements they make in the House.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that you were understanding about my earlier frustration when I tried to ask a question about bypasses in my constituency. You rightly said that the Secretary of State for Transport was not responsible for that. I have been trying to arrange a meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland, or even the Under-Secretary of State, for a number of months, but they keep refusing. There has been no statement in the House similar to the one that the Secretary of State for Transport gave very well. Can you, Madam Speaker, do something to get the Secretary of State for Scotland to come to the Dispatch Box and make an announcement on the roads programme in Scotland similar to the one that has been given in relation to England?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I have no authority to demand that a Secretary of State comes before the House. I very much understand the frustration of all Back Benchers who seek to put questions to various Ministers. I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman; my heart bleeds for him, as his is a hard-luck case.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to express the annoyance that we in Northern Ireland feel about the matter. This morning my constituency office faxed me a letter about roads from one of the Northern Ireland Ministers. It is particularly galling to find that the last page of the statement delivered here refers to "national roads". Hon. Members for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are unable even to ask questions about the national roads that have not been announced in the Chamber.

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman might have sought to raise that issue with the Leader of the House in business questions. I remember calling him as he caught my eye then.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No, I will not take any further points of order.

Mr. Foulkes: I did not catch your eye, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I know: that is why the hon. Gentleman is frustrated.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek to assist the process whenever I can. It occurred to me that it would be helpful to the House if, when statements are made about long lists of projects, they could be placed in the Vote Office, not when the Minister rises but well beforehand. That would allow hon. Members to get hold of a copy to see whether their constituencies are affected, which would cut out those people who ask whether their constituencies are affected and whether roads are being built. It would clarify questions to bring a sharpness and point to the interchange, which is occasionally, lamentably, absent.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter that might be taken up with the Leader of the House.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 1 February]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

4.47 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You may be aware that the votes at the close of proceedings in Committee last week gave rise to much mystification about what is afoot which has also been expressed in circles outside the House, particularly among those who only occasionally sit in on or view our proceedings. I think, and hope that you will be able to confirm, that the difficulties that arise are not due to the proceedings of the Committee and are not within the discretion of the Chair. They arise from the brevity of the Bill, and the length and complexity of the treaty that we are considering, which amends another treaty in order to form yet a third treaty that we have not seen. Difficulties are caused by the large number of amendments that can be tabled, a combination of votes on closures, suspensions of the rules and procedural questions that are not substantive.

In future, to make things more difficult, we face the prospect of votes on substantive questions that have already been debated—the time of the decision and the vote may be separated by several weeks. If you, with your knowledge as the Chair, can confirm those facts, it might help you and the Committee. The problems we face relate not to the proceedings as set out in the Order Paper or your discretion, but to the nature of the Bill and the treaties.

A few sittings ago, Mr. Morris, you kindly said that you and your Chairmen's Panel would consider the possibility of marking new amendments selected for debate on the informal circulation of provisional selections. You said that consultation would be needed, which we understand. You will know that it is not unknown in Committee for the Chair to draw to the attention of the Committee additional amendments of particular importance—indeed, any that have been added to the amendment paper.

In the light of that semi-precedent, I was wondering whether you would consider whether, at the beginning of every sitting after today's—I think that we are to have a short break—you could announce verbally any additional amendments that you have selected since the informal selection. That would greatly assist members of the Committee, even those who have been Members of Parliament for some time. I am not asking for a ruling now, but I hope that you will consider the matter in the next day or two.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): As I understand it, the Committee is to be given a week off, and I shall seriously consider the points made by the hon. Gentleman. I think that there is some merit in his latter point. On the earlier issue that he raised, he was right to say that the Chair is constrained by the rules of Committee procedure. The only addition that I can make to the comments of the hon. Gentleman is that we have spent more than five hours on points of order, which have not been totally productive.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I hope to spread an atmosphere of good will and consensus. An unpleasant suspicion has arisen—which I have tried to banish from my mind—that our proceedings have been conducted by a conspiracy between the two Front-Bench teams, to the exclusion of many other hon. Members.

May I make a suggestion? It is obvious that the Government are not now as urgent in their desire to get the matter dealt with by the House as was apparent at one stage, and a large number of hon. Members from the regions, and especially from Northern Ireland, wish to discuss the matter fully. Rather than having a conspiracy between those in power who try to control the proceedings, perhaps it could be announced at this stage that consideration of this part of the Bill will continue no later than 10 o'clock tonight.

That will be for the convenience of the House. It will also enable those who live in the regions of the United Kingdom——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): And the other nations of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Budgen: However they may be described, the Committee will not be run in an aggressive English way which makes them feel that their contributions cannot properly be heard at a convenient time.

The Chairman: I am most grateful for the harmonious way in which the hon. Gentleman has raised the point of order. Of course, the point he makes has absolutely nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. As you can see, the amendments selected for discussion today dealing with the Committee for the Regions and the cohesion fund are matters in which hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies have a very keen interest. The cohesion fund will pour billions of pounds into our near neighbour and aid its competitive position and disadvantage us, so many hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies are anxious to participate in the debate at a civilised hour. We have obligations some distance away and travel is difficult between here and Northern Ireland.

It may not be entirely within your control, Mr. Morris, but we would be very glad if proceedings could be conducted at a civilised hour, and, if that is not possible today, that the amendment be carried over for debate when we return to the issue.

The Chairman: I share the hon. Gentleman's views about civilised hours. I was aware that hon. Members from the Province were likely to wish to catch my eye, so the sooner we get on with the job, the sooner they will be successful.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. In view of the interesting suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that a large number of colleagues from all parts of the House, particularly from Northern Ireland, might want to speak, and that

[Mr. Michael Alison]

proceedings should perhaps be terminated at 10 o'clock tonight, will you consider the possibility of putting a limit of 10 minutes on speeches after 6 o'clock?

The Chairman: That would have to be a voluntary limit, but it has much to commend it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I recognise that we are in Committee, but as you will know, there has been a good deal of informal discussion and debate on what is known as the Jopling report, which expresses the view of a number of Members about the hours that the House sits and the general desire that it should not go beyond 10 o'clock. Bearing in mind the fact that we are in Committee, would it not be useful if hon. Members knew in advance whether or not we would sit beyond 10 o'clock?

At present, no information is given—I assume that that applies to both sides of the Committee—and we do not know whether we shall sit beyond 10 o'clock depending on whether the Government decide to move the necessary business motion at 10 o'clock and whether they get a majority. It is a rather odd and unfortunate way of proceeding, and I wonder whether you could advise us accordingly.

The Chairman: It is not for me to advise, as I know no more than the hon. Gentleman.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I refer to the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and make my point in the same spirit as he made his. We all appreciate his anxiety to return to his constituency this evening. He is very conscientious about that, but it should be placed on the record that the only conspiracy of which I am aware is between my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West and Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am sorry about my right hon. Friend's intervention, because it is my intention to add to the good will and harmony. As you know, Mr. Morris, one of the most important issues we are debating today is the cohesion fund. The House will take a decision today on whether we want to include the cohesion fund in the Bill.

Imagine my consternation and surprise when I discovered that the European Commission has drafted a regulation on the basis of the cohesion fund without knowing whether the House would accept it. You are a man of great personality and influence, Mr. Morris, and I wonder whether, on behalf of the House, you could get in touch with the European institutions and ask them to delay taking those initiatives until the House has taken its decision.

The Chairman: I have a full-time job dealing with the Committee, and it is certainly not my job to contact the Commission.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I refer to the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and I should like to ask, first, whether the 10-minute rule has ever been applied to a Committee of the whole House; and, secondly, whether it can be applied in that way.

The Chairman: I regret to say that it cannot be applied; therefore, it is a voluntary rule. However, the list of hon. Members who have contributed to the debate includes some who have made most powerful and persuasive speeches in 10, 11 or 12 minutes which read exceedingly well, while some have taken several hours and are rather difficult to follow when read afterwards.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

The Chairman: I hope that it is a new point of order, as the hon. Gentleman made a plea that he wanted to get cracking.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Further to the points of order which have been raised with such good humour and sense this afternoon, Mr. Morris. The groups of amendments that we are to consider this afternoon, and hopefully on another occasion when we consider the Bill, have a fundamental impact on the country. You will be aware that one or two major companies such as Leyland DAF, which was the subject of a statement in the House, have gone into administrative receivership and that therefore employment in some of the basic industries——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House a long time. He is a member of the Chairmen's Panel and he should know that he should put a specific question to the Chair and not adduce an argument.

Mr. Winterton: I am seeking briefly, and in the same vein as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), your advice and support for the views that have been put forward by hon. Members from all sides of the House about the importance of the group of amendments and the need to ensure that hon. Members from all parts of the United Kingdom participate because all parts of the United Kingdom are influenced. I make my plea at this early stage that such an important debate should continue into a second day.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman did not define a day in the first place, and his argument had already been put.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

The Chairman: Is this a new point of order?

Mr. Trimble: Yes. I am sorry to try your patience on this matter, Mr. Morris, but it has just been drawn to my attention—perhaps this is evidence of the conspiracy the Minister thinks does not exist—that, if the Committee were sitting upstairs, we would know in advance what the timing was. Perhaps it might be a good idea if some similar arrangment could be adopted here.

The Chairman: I am not sure which hon. Gentleman pointed that out, but it was not totally accurate information.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As has already been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), the debate on the cohesion fund is important to all parts of the United Kingdom, particularly to Northern Ireland, which will be very badly treated. The southern Irish will receive between

£3 million and £6 million, while we will be left out altogether. Can you assure me that, for the first time, you will favour some hon. Members representing Northern Ireland, and myself particularly, and call them to speak to the Committee?

The Chairman: Special pleading falls on deaf ears, but I recognise the importance of all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Bearing in mind all that has been said and the difficulties of hon. Members from all parts of the United Kingdom who wish to speak, and bearing in mind the fact that, during debate on the Single European Act, the average number of amendments was three whereas in this instance we have 27 amendments and six new clauses, would it be helpful and convenient——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman raised that point of order at our last sitting, and I pointed out to him then that his submission was not accurate. Frankly, it is no more accurate today than it was on Monday.

Mr. Knapman: Yes, Mr. Moris, but on that occasion, although the point of order was similar, there were 12 amendments grouped together, whereas on this occasion——

The Chairman: Order. I made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that the number of amendments was totally irrelevant. There can be two or three; there can be 20 or 40. The number of amendments is irrelevant to the length of time that we debate an issue. My job is to ensure that we have a full and fair debate on the totality of such amendments as are down for selection on the day.

Without further ado, therefore, we come to amendment No. 13.

5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Title XIV on pages 36 and 37 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following: Amendment No. 28, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(provided that in the implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 concerning the Committee of the Regions, the 24 members and 24 alternate members of that Committee shall be drawn from elected local government representatives.)'.

Amendment No. 102, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 198(a) on page 54 of Cm 1934 which relates to the Committee of the Regions)'.

Amendment No. 103, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 130(a) on page 36 of Cm 1934 which relates to regional policy)'.

Amendment No. 106, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 establishing the Committee of the Regions, shall make provision for the direct election of the members and alternate members of that Committee to represent Wales; that those voting in such direct elections shall be local authority elected members, Members representing Welsh constituencies and Members of the European Parliament representing Welsh constituencies; and that there shall be two separate elections the first of which shall provide for representation of the counties of South and Mid Glamorgan and Gwent, and the second for the counties of Gwynedd, Clwyd, Dyfed, Powys and West Glamorgan)'.

Amendment No. 107, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that in the implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 establishing the Committee of the Regions, the members of that Committee representing Wales and their alternates shall be directly elected by a vote of local authority elected members from Wales, Members elected from Welsh constituencies and Members of the European Parliament representing Welsh constituencies and by none other).'.

Amendment No. 111, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that on the implementation of Articles 198 (a) (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 establishing the Committee of the Regions, the members of that Committee shall include the eight members of the European Parliament representing Scottish constituencies).'.

Amendment No. 156, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130a'.

Amendment No. 157, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130b'.

Amendment No. 158, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130c'.

Amendment No. 187, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(j)'.

Amendment No. 198, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 4b on page 11 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 229, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 198e'.

Amendment No. 248, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130d'.

Amendment No. 249, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130e'.

Amendment No. 273, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that in the implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 concerning the Committee of the Regions, the 24 members and 24 alternate members of that Committee shall be drawn from elected local government representatives, and shall include representatives from each English Standard Planning Region as well as representation from Scotland and Wales.)'.

Amendment No. 332, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 198a on page 56 of Cm 1934)'.

Amendment No. 425, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'provided that United Kingdom members of the Committee of the Regions established under article 198 (a) on page 54 of Cm 1934, of whom at least nine shall be representatives of Wales, shall not be nominated until Parliament has had the opportunity of considering a Bill introduced by Her Majesty's Government to provide for an elected all-Wales forum to elect the representatives of Wales who shall reflect the political balance on the forum, and providing for a monthly report to be made by the representatives to the forum.'.

Amendment No. 431, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that implementation of Articles 198(a) (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934, establishing the Committee of the Regions, shall make provision for the direct election of the members and alternate members of that Committee to represent Wales and that those voting in such direct elections shall be local authority elected members).'.

Amendment No. 432, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(provided that in the implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934, establishing the Committee of the Regions, the members of that Committee representing Wales and their alternates shall be directly elected by a vote of local authority elected members from Wales.)'.

Amendment No. 438, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert ', except that articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 may only have effect if the nominated members and alternate members of the committee of regions are numerically and politically representative in proportion to the populations of the countries of the United Kingdom, and the Standard Economic Planning Regions of England,'.

Amendment No. 418, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert '(except Articles 166, 168 and 170 on pages 76 and 77 of Cm 1934).'.

[The Chairman]

Amendment No. 56, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 198 in Title II thereof'.

Amendment No. 62, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not the Protocol on the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.'.

Amendment No. 150, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 170 in Title IV thereof'.

Amendment No. 223, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'excluding Article 194 thereof'.

Amendment No. 226, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not the Protocol on Economic and Social Cohesion'.

New clause 26—*Committee of the regions*—

'In meeting its obligations under Article 198 (a) on page 54 of Cm 1934 Her Majesty's Government shall ensure that at least eight representatives of the Committee of the regions are from Scotland and that the Secretary of State for Scotland shall select such representatives from a list of candidates submitted to him by any organisation representative of Scottish local authorities.'.

New clause 41—*Regional representation*—

'In discharging its responsibilites under Article 198(a) on page 54 of Cm 1934 the Government shall ensure that those serving on the proposed Committee of the Regions shall reflect, on a proportional basis, votes cast for political parties in Scotland and Wales at the most recently held election for the European Parliament.'.

New clause 61—*Economic and Social Cohesion (No. 1)*—

'Her Majesty's Government shall report to Parliament annually on the implementation of their obligation under Article 130b to conduct their economic policy in such a way as in addition, to attain the objectives set out in Article 130a.'.

New clause 62—*Economic and Social Cohesion (No. 2)*—

'Her Majesty's Government shall report to Parliament on the European Commission report, provided for in Article 130b, on the progress made towards achieving economic and social cohesion; and no action may be taken by the Government in respect of any accompanying proposals, as provided for in Article 130b, without the Commission report first having been considered by the House of Commons.'.

New clause 63—*Committee of the regions*—

'In meeting its obligations under Article 198(a) on page 54 of Cm 1934 Her Majesty's Government shall ensure that at least eight representatives of the Committee of the regions are from Scotland and that they shall be elected Community, District or Regional councillors, elected by an electoral college or colleges of councillors under a system of proportional representation.'.

New clause 64—*Representation on Committee of Regions*—

'Before Her Majesty's Government discharge its responsibilities under Article 198(a) on page 54 of Cm 1934, Parliament shall have had the opportunity of considering a Bill to provide that at least four of the United Kingdom members nominated to the Committee of the Regions shall be from Wales and shall be directly elected by the people of Wales.'.

Dr. Cunningham: I say at the very beginning that amendment No. 13 is a probing amendment. It would remove title XIV from the treaty. Title XIV refers to economic and social cohesion in the Community. We are supporters of the principle of policies to move to economic and social cohesion, and it is exactly because of the importance and sensitivity of these issues that we have tabled this amendment to enable a debate to take place.

I share the point of view expressed by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble)—and others, for that matter—that, regardless of the number of amendments on the amendment paper, there is an important series of issues in this group of amendments. Far from there being any conspiracy—it is difficult for me to conceive of the ability to have a conspiracy with Ministers when we can barely believe a word they tell us about the proceedings on this Bill, and to construct a conspiracy in those circumstances is almost impossible—we are no more enlightened about the Government's intentions on closure motions or 10 o'clock rule motions than is anyone else. In case anyone is in any doubt, however, let me say that if the 10 o'clock motion is moved tonight we shall oppose it exactly because we believe that the House as a whole will want a significant amount of time to discuss the cohesion fund and the Committee of the Regions, which is the subject of amendment No. 28.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I will give way in a moment. This amendment, also tabled in my name and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends, refers to chapter 4 of the treaty which establishes the Committee of the Regions. It is to amendment No. 28 that I shall address myself in the course of what I hope will be a relatively brief contribution.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to learn that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) does not know when the Government are going to have their procedural motions, particularly as we all know that the Liberal party does know. The hon. Gentleman has said that he is in favour of the cohesion fund. Does he realise that we pay for it but that other people get the money?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, of course I realise that simple fact, but perhaps I can observe in response to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that if the Government he wholeheartedly supports in other policies continue to wreck the British economy in the way that they are currently doing, Britain will soon be able to benefit from the provisions of the cohesion fund. Indeed, in a technical sense, sad to say, because of high levels of unemployment in Merseyside, Tyneside and elsewhere, some regions or sub-regions of Britain would already qualify for benefit from the provisions of the fund.

I want to discuss the important principle set out in amendment No. 28, referring to chapter 4 of the treaty and the Committee of the Regions. Articles 198a, 198b and 198c set out the duties of the committee and its relationship to the Council of Ministers and to the Commission. The Maastricht treaty recognises in two key ways the increasing role for the regions of the Community: first, the establishment of this important committee, and, secondly, the subsidiarity principle included in the treaty. Subsidiarity, however, is the subject of a later debate in our proceedings.

It is a general observation and widely recognised throughout the European Community that decentralisation, devolution, the sharing of power and decision-taking have worked well for almost all the major countries of the Community and for their economies. Only in Britain has there been a blind drive towards greater and greater centralisation of decision-taking in the past decade or more. Only in Britain have we had a Government who, far from wanting to devolve power and share decision-taking,

have given Ministers more and more central and authoritarian powers, including powers over democratically elected local government. Only in Britain have we had a Government who, by Act of Parliament, have struck out what were existing important elected authorities such as the Greater London Council and the metropolitan authorities of England. Only in Britain do we have a capital city with no authority elected to represent its citizens and their views—and we see daily the damage that this has done to the interests of the city and people of London.

In Spain, autonomous provinces with varying powers have been an engine of Spain's economic growth. In France, economic revival has coincided with the abandonment of the traditional French attitude to central control. In Germany, the Länder have long been recognised as key ingredients of German success. In Belgium and elsewhere, devolved power operates beneficially and successfully in economic and social policy. In relation to other countries and the Committee of the Regions, there have been varying representations. Other countries have taken varying views, but only in Britain has there been the suggestion that the Committee of the Regions may perhaps comprise non-elected, non-representative ministerial appointees. Whatever the devolved arrangements, whatever the constitutional form, in all the other countries of the Community the principle, at least, has been established and accepted that nominations to the Committee of the Regions will be from some level of elected representatives.

We believe that it is very important that the same principle should apply for Scotland, for Wales and for England and that the same principle should apply for Northern Ireland, too.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is the hon. Member suggesting that Derek Hatton, for example, would be more capable of representing Liverpool than, say, Bishop Sheppard or Archbishop Worlock?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Lady could not have been listening carefully. I was talking about elected representatives. It is quite some time since Mr. Hatton enjoyed the status of elected representative. If the hon. Lady wishes to get into that kind of political approach to the debate today, she had better look a little closer to home and direct her attention to the stench which has been hanging around the Tory administration in the City of Westminster for a very long time indeed. She is in no position to make allegations about Labour when there are so many Tory authorities that I could name when it comes to matters of that kind.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Is my hon. Friend aware that West Wiltshire district council, a Tory-controlled council, has been involved in such corruption that the police have now been called in and Tory councillors have had to resign their seats because of the appalling administration of that particular Conservative council?

The Chairman: Order. That is one from both sides. I do not think that the Committee ought to get into local government difficulties now.

Dr. Cunningham: We had better decide to play a draw, Mr. Morris; otherwise, this could be an extended debate. Sadly, there are examples in all political parties of the kind that the hon. Lady wrongfully and unhelpfully introduced. That subject was not one that I intended to touch on.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Many of us believe that it is paramount that representatives are not nominated by central Government. As to the United Kingdom's representatives, has the Labour party come to a view as to how many of them should be allocated to the nations of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales?

Dr. Cunningham: We have not come to a view, but some of our representatives in local government have; in fact, I believe that they take several views—certainly more than one.

Today, we want to establish the agreement of the Committee to the principle that I described. We can discuss the details of allocation later. I have no doubt that those discussions may be heated within parties as well as between parties. I do not disguise that reality for a moment. The purpose of the amendment is to persuade the Government—I believe that all other parties in the Committee have done this—to accept the principle that the amendment seeks to establish.

Since the original signing of the treaty, Ministers have made some very odd statements. At one point, it seemed that the Secretary of State for Wales intended to appoint himself to the committee.

Mr. Garel-Jones: What a good idea.

Dr. Cunningham: That is a matter of opinion—as ever, when the Minister of State speaks.

If the Secretary of State were to represent the United Kingdom in the Council of Ministers—as he is entitled to do, as a Minister—he should not be entitled also to take a place on the Committee of the Regions. That would be contrary to the spirit and the letter of the treaty.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Can my hon. Friend say whether any other country is considering nominating a Minister to represent one of its regions?

Dr. Cunningham: As of now, we know of no such example. I am not saying that another member state may not make such a proposal, but we think it unlikely. All the indications from those countries which have declared their intentions rule out the appointment of national Ministers to the committee.

The Government again seem to have set off on the wrong road, as they so often do. It may be that they have drawn back from their earlier position and that common sense and persuasive argument have prevailed. There is always a first time, even with a Government as pig-headed and obstinate as the present Government. We hope that is the case. The Government, in the form not only of the Secretary of State for Wales but of the Secretary of State for Scotland, have made statements about Ministers putting their nominees on the Committee of the Regions. We reject that approach because, I repeat, it is contrary to the spirit and the letter of the treaty. We hope that the Minister of State will be able to assure the Committee that the Government have had second thoughts, and we hope even more strongly that he will indicate that they are prepared to accept our amendment.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his argument is even more true of Northern Ireland as not one Minister in the Northern

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

Ireland Office was elected by any Northern Ireland constituency, so such an appointment to the Committee of the Regions would in no way be representative of the people of Northern Ireland.

Dr. Cunningham: I accept absolutely the hon. Gentleman's point. I intended to make the same point about the Secretary of State for Wales, who has no personal mandate in Wales—certainly his party does not have one. The Secretary of State for Scotland has a personal mandate, but he cannot claim that his party has a mandate in Scotland. To make such appointments would fly in the face of the wishes and decisions of the electorates of Northern Ireland, the Principality, and Scotland. That is why we reject the approach that the Government are apparently taking to the Committee.

5.15 pm

Last week, I read with amusement a statement which was repeated at Prime Minister's Question Time today —that the Government are to have a bonfire of controls. They have already had at least two bonfires that I can recall during their tenure of office, so where are the other controls to come from? They will come from the legislation that the Government have heaped on our country over the years. If Ministers intend to follow that course of action, which is usually just a smokescreen to hide other difficulties—in this case, the disastrous state of the economy—I encourage them to apply the same bonfire principle to controls on local government as to controls on industry.

No aspect of our national life has been more subject to a tidal wave of legislation and controls than local government the length and breadth of our country. It has suffered 60 Acts of Parliament which have hedged around and circumscribed local authorities with more and more authoritarianism. The Community and local government associations in Britain, regardless of political control, are almost unanimously in favour of accepting the principle embodied in the amendment applying to the Committee of the Regions—that it should be made up of members of elected local authorities.

Those in favour of that principle include the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Consultative Council of Regional and Local Authorities in Europe, and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe—which is a Council of Europe body. Britain will be in an anomalous situation if Ministers do not accept our amendment.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): My hon. Friend's powerful case is, I am sure, strongly supported by right hon. and hon. Members from the regions. If the Government do not accept the amendment, does my hon. Friend intend to press it to a Division?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Poor man.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Lady is apparently amused. I do not know whether she is surprised or astonished, but we have every intention of pressing the amendment to a Division. I dare say that the smile will be wiped off the hon. Lady's face because we expect that, if the Government do not accept the amendment, a great number of hon. Members from minority parties will vote with us and against the Government. For someone who is a self-professed, pro-European, and anxious to get to Europe, the hon. Lady displays a disarmingly candid view —one that is in opposition to that which is widely shared in the Community.

Mr. Radice: My hon. Friend might care to ask whether the so-called pro-Maastricht Conservative Members will support this important part of the Maastricht treaty with their votes tonight.

Dr. Cunningham: We shall not be voting on the substance of the amendment tonight, but the hon. Members to whom my hon. Friend refers could join us in opposing the motion to suspend the 10 o'clock rule, thus ensuring the widest possible debate on this important nexus of issues.

Local government in Britain has made various proposals. This relates to the point made a few moments ago by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). I am not here to adjudicate between those detailed submissions, but I know that the Government have received one such submission on behalf of the local authorities, to which, so far as I am aware, they have made no response—certainly no public response.

We should value the regional and local democratic mandate of those who are to comprise the committee. We should recognise their knowledge and expertise in regional and local government. We should acknowledge that local authorities of all political persuasions have a duty to implement European Community directives, and to monitor and supervise other aspects of European Community decisions. To use a well-worn if not hackneyed phrase, locally elected members are at the sharp end of the implementation of the overwhelming majority of European Community directives and other decisions in their own communities and localities. They therefore have a firm grasp of the implications of European Community legislation and EC decisions generally—for instance, in regard to the environment—and will bring a powerful voice to deliberations on the Community's future, including the nature and content of its legislation.

The Committee of the Regions is intended to introduce such a new dimension to the Community's affairs, and it is a very welcome aspect of the treaty. Acceptance of the amendment would mean that the House and the Government had agreed the principle that I have sought to highlight. I repeat that discussions on the allocation of places between Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland could subsequently take place.

I commend the amendment to the Committee.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I hope that it will be convenient if I make some opening remarks at this stage. I dare say that the debate will run for a number of hours, and, if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Morris, I shall try to answer the points that have been raised in the intervening time.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—as, I am sure, are other hon. Members —for telling the Committee that he does not intend to press amendment No. 13 to a Division. That has yet again given us an opportunity to discuss not only the whole subject of cohesion, which the hon. Gentleman did not mention, but the Committee of the Regions. I hope that it

is in order for me to make a few remarks about amendment No. 13, although the hon. Gentleman did not refer to it. I suspect that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee may wish to touch on it.

The Committee will probably recall that the Community's commitment to assist the less-developed regions dates back to 1975, and the creation of the European regional development fund. The specific objective of reducing economic disparities between regions of the Community—which, in Eurospeak, is known as "economic and social cohesion"—first appeared in the treaty with the Single European Act 1986, which added five new articles to the treaty of Rome: articles 130a to 130e. Those articles specified that the main instruments of cohesion would be the structural funds and the European investment bank.

The Maastricht treaty seeks to build on the articles in the Single European Act, first, by stating that European Community policies and actions must take cohesion into account—although that is not a sweeping provision designed to ensure that all EC actions are subordinated to the objective of cohesion; other treaty provisions must be taken in their context. The cohesion fund legislation must be agreed unanimously by member states, after obtaining the assent of the European Parliament.

Secondly, the Maastricht treaty allows the Commission to propose specific actions outside the funds if necessary, although such proposals would have to be agreed on their merits by the Council, again by unanimity. There is no question of the United Kingdom, or indeed any other Government, being forced to accept proposals that they find unacceptable.

Thirdly, the treaty provides for the establishment, by the end of 1993—again, by unanimity in the Council—of a cohesion fund, which will seek to target assistance on the four poorest member states, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece, for projects relating to environment and trans-European networks. Finally, it is provided in the cohesion protocol annexed to the treaty that assistance from the cohesion fund will be made available only to member states which have a per capita income less than 90 per cent. of the Community average, and which are implementing sound macro-economic policies designed to attain the targets agreed in their convergence programmes with the Community.

I hope that the Committee will agree that the Maastricht treaty does indeed strengthen and improve the existing cohesion articles in the original treaty—above all, by targeting the Community's cohesion effort where it is most needed.

The Committee will not need reminding that the Maastricht treaty says nothing about the level of cohesion spending; that was for decision in the future financing review, which we concluded at the Edinburgh European Council meeting in December. Hon. Members will recall that the overall settlement agreed at Edinburgh was rather restrictive, raising the own-resources ceiling by less than half the increase originally asked for by the Commission. Despite that, the increases in cohesion spending were in our view generous, reflecting the new emphasis that the Community is placing on this objective.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has said, effectively, that we have a lock on it, because it depends on unanimity, and we can be very careful about how the fund is established and what it is spent on. I remind him that article 130a states that the aim of economic and social cohesion is, as he said, to reduce disparities. If we ratify this particular part of the treaty, we shall commit ourselves to attaining the objectives set out in article 130a, and the Community's policies and actions must follow that. We are actually committing ourselves, if we accept this, to reducing disparities through a cohesion fund which will obviously take up a lot of money.

My right hon. Friend will be aware that the draft regulation put out by the Commission, on behalf of the Commission, wants the Commission to control the funds without any further intervention from the Council. May I suggest that we would be better off without the cohesion fund? It will cost our taxpayers money, and provide nothing for them. I suggest that my right hon. Friend's Conservative colleagues would do well to support the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not agree. Cohesion is one of the instruments available to the Community in the pursuit of its objectives, and cohesion is one of the Community's objectives. I remind my hon. Friend, however, that the Maastricht treaty is littered with new references to the importance of markets and sound economic policies. My hon. Friend has asked what Britain will get out of the arrangement. I am sure that he needs no reminding that, with the single market now available to us, we in Britain have the good fortune of having more major international and transnational companies than any other country in the Community. Our international insurance and chemical companies are moving into European markets on a much larger scale than any other country in the Community, which is proving enormously beneficial to the United Kingdom. It is part of the whole single market package.

5.30 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the change to the cohesion fund made in the Maastricht treaty is the inclusion of rural areas? It is an extremely good thing, and would it not be rather strange if the Opposition wanted to delete rural areas from the cohesion fund package merely because they might not obtain many votes there?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree, but I must say that the hon. Member for Copeland has made it clear that he does not intend to press the amendment so we cannot accuse the Opposition of wishing to remove rural areas from the fund. They are providing an opportunity for us to debate these matters.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *rose*——

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). One of the reasons I want to be brief is that a number of hon. Members from Northern Ireland and other parts of the country will want to catch your eye as early as possible, Mr. Lofthouse. I want to ensure that I do not detain the Committee for too long so that they may do so.

Mr. Shore: I am very much in favour of regional funds, provided that they are spent and targeted sensibly. Can the Minister explain why the criterion for the new cohesion fund was a percentage of the Community's average GDP

[Mr. Shore]

instead of the fund targeting particular regions which fell below the 90 per cent. threshold? Surely that would have been a more intelligent way to proceed. I should be grateful for the Minister's explanation of why the national measure was adopted.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Community has two instruments for that purpose. One is the structural funds which are specially aimed at regions and from which the United Kingdom benefits. The new cohesion fund relates to per capita income, meaning that it is devoted specifically to the four poorest countries in the Community. It was part of the bargain struck at Maastricht that the funds should be devoted—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it was a bargain. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will be aware that sensible bargains, arrived at by consensus between grown-up people, happen to be part of the profession to which she and I belong. That is what we do as politicians. I do not think that any Government in the Community, whether those at the top or bottom of the per capita income scale, need to apologise for arriving at sensible bargains between nation states.

Mr. John D. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I must make progress. May I finish this point?

I repeat that the four poorest member states in the Community argue with some fairness that certain member states, largely those in the north of Europe—we are an example of this—which have highly developed world-beating multinational companies, are taking enormous advantage of the single market by investing in their countries and by buying into the insurance, food and chemical industries in their countries. The trans-European networks, for example, which seek to improve communications—in Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal in the case of the cohesion fund—are of enormous benefit to countries that are fortunate enough to have such enterprises. Therefore, the bargains work both ways. It is not a crude case, as some hon. Members have implied, of British taxpayers pouring money into roads in Greece with no benefit to Britain. That is a travesty of reality.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The Minister was right to express some satisfaction at the outcome of the Edinburgh summit where, as he said, the increase in the budget ceiling was not as great as had originally been requested. It was only about half of that. However, will he define more clearly how much of that increase is being allocated to the cohesion fund as it has not been made very clear?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think I am right in saying—although if I am lucky enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Lofthouse, I can correct this if necessary—that the cohesion fund which, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, applies only to the four poorest countries is likely in 1993 to represent about 7 per cent. of the total cohesion effort. That would include the regional funds in which he is especially interested. By 1999 the total cohesion effort, including the structural funds, will represent about 8·7 per cent. of the total spent.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool) *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way to both hon. Members but then I must make some progress.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way because I know that he wants to make progress. He is perfectly correct to check the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—and the more he does so the better in my view—but does he agree that it is not merely a question of Britain deriving commercial advantage from the cohesion and structural funds? We are also accepting the principle that all in the Community have some responsibility for the deprived areas, wherever they may be.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I very much agree. I should have said that about the structural funds in my reply to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor): For last year the United Kingdom will receive about £1 billion from the structural funds. Northern Ireland is a substantial and wholly proper beneficiary of that money.

Mr. Mandelson: I do not want to disappoint some of my hon. Friends but I also want to express support for an important principle of the cohesion fund—that of solidarity with countries poorer than us. The basis of the deal that the right hon. Gentleman described includes both funds. Under the Delors 2 proposals there is to be an increase in the structural funds in support of objective 2 regions, those which have old industries which need restructuring. That support, including some for the north of England, is proposed to increase by two thirds by 1997. Will the British Government support those proposals, which are central to the operation of the structural fund and the deal struck between Governments?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, of course, but we are now entering the stage where member states bid for the structural funds. We are at the moment in the process of putting together the bids that we shall be making for the various regions. That will take place this year. Naturally, the British Government intend that the regions in Britain which now benefit from a particular status will continue to do so, and we shall be trying to achieve a better status for some areas—for example, the highlands and islands.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I wish to make progress so that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is able to speak later. I want to talk about the Committee of the Regions on which the hon. Member for Copeland concentrated.

The Government welcome the establishment of the Committee of the Regions. There is a wide range of Community policies which attract regional and local interest, either directly or indirectly. We therefore think it absolutely right that there should be an input into the Community's decision-making process from the regions.

The treaty establishes that the Committee of the Regions will have an advisory status. It must be consulted on new proposals on matters such as education, culture, public health, cohesion and trans-European networks. It may also be consulted in any other instance which is considered appropriate or—this is important, too—it may issue an opinion on its own authority where regional interests are involved.

The treaty provides that the committee will be made up of representatives of regional and local bodies appointed

to serve for four years. The treaty makes it clear that it is for the Governments of member states to nominate their national candidates to the committee. It is left to the member states to decide how their seats should be allocated between their regions and what representatives should be nominated. The amendment would commit the Government to ensure that all United Kingdom nominees to the Committee of the Regions will be elected local government representatives.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I represent the part of the north-west that is very far from the centre. We would be most apprehensive if the major part of representation on such a regional body were to come, as it inevitably would, from Liverpool and Manchester. We would not trust our fate in their hands.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend makes a point that I shall seek to develop in a moment.

There are many reasons why I shall invite the Committee to reject the amendment. Among those reasons is that the hon. Member for Copeland implied that it was within the spirit of the treaty that every representative should be an elected local government representative and that the United Kingdom would in some way be failing in its duty and not living up to the spirit of the treaty if every member were not an elected member.

So far, two countries have nominated their candidates for the committee—Greece and the Netherlands—and they are good examples because they are two completely different countries. One is a southern Mediterranean cohesion country and the other is a northern, rather rich, sophisticated country. The Greeks have nominated eight elected mayors and four non-elected regional secretaries, and five elected and seven non-elected representatives is what the Netherlands has done. I make that point because I do not think that it is necessary that there be an obligation on any Government to ensure that all the nominees are from local government.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: Let me finish developing this point and I shall give way.

We have 24 seats and 24 alternates. In order properly to reflect and represent all the various subtle interests, not just local government interests——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Is the right hon. Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am taking careful note. If I may develop my point, I shall then give way.

There are a range of national, regional and cultural interests of some importance and consequence that would not necessarily be adequately represented if we chose to go down the rather crude route that the hon. Member for Copeland is suggesting—a route which, so far, every member state that has chosen its members has not chosen to go down.

Dr. Cunningham: The Minister is giving a completely different interpretation to the meaning of the treaty from that which Mr. Delors gave. In a letter in December, on behalf of the Commission, he said:

"The Commission is of the opinion that, considering the functions attributed to the Committee of the Regions, the Committee should consist of elected representatives."

Mr. Garel-Jones: I remind the hon. Gentleman that Mr. Delors is not a party to the treaty. It is a treaty between member states. He is perfectly entitled to his opinion, and it is not an unimportant opinion. So far, two member states, not noted for their lack of solidarity or for their lack of commitment to the Community, have decided not to go down the route that the hon. Gentleman is recommending.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Once again, does it not appear that we have a clash between what the Government claim to be the intention of the Committee of the Regions in having those clauses in the treaty and what the real architects of the European union conceived? We are building yet another treaty basis for Brussels to have direct access, bypassing national Parliaments, just as happened with citizenship and other bits of the treaty.

5.45 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, Sir.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Even if the Minister is not prepared to say exactly what the representations should be from the United Kingdom, will he at least concede the principle that in the case of Scotland, Wales or the northern region of England, where a clear majority voted against the Government, representatives will reflect the political majority and not just be nominees from the Government's ranks?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall refer to that point in a minute.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I be allowed to answer the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

I am trying to establish that there is no obligation whatever on the United Kingdom Government, or indeed on any other Government, to fulfil what is set out in the amendment, that is that all members should automatically be elected members of a local authority. Not only is there no obligation to that but no member state that has so far made its nominations to the Committee of the Regions has done so. Two countries have made their nominations, and not one of them has so far nominated only elected local government people.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The Minister tells the Committee that only Greece and the Netherlands have made a nomination. On 2 December, the Bundestag agreed to allocate at least three seats of its delegation to local authorities, all others to go to the Lander, therefore all elected representatives from Germany. The Danish Government have now made their nominations by agreement with the Association of Local and County Authorities and the city of Copenhagen, with four each of the counties and the municipalities and one of the city of Copenhagen. In Luxembourg, all nominees are to be elected members of local authorities. What is the position?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am simply telling the Committee that, so far, two member states have nominated—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is telling me that the Lander will have certain nominations in respect of the Committee of the Regions. Is the hon. Gentleman aware who they will nominate? Perhaps he had better wait. Let us wait and see whom they nominate. It is perfectly within the bounds of possibility

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

that a Land in the Federal Republic might decide to send one of their Ministers to the Committee of the Regions or to nominate someone else. The statement that I have made to the Committee remains the case.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I am not going to give way. Two member states have nominated their members to the Committee of the Regions, and those member states have not nominated exclusively democratically elected people. That is a statement of fact.

Mr. George Robertson: That is all slightly disingenuous. We know that the Minister is dancing on a fine point. The United Kingdom is in the process of ratifying the treaty and is the second to last country to do so. Clearly, no one will make final decisions about the nominees and the individuals who will sit on a committee which has not yet been established under a treaty which has not yet been ratified or implemented.

The Minister should address the point that EC countries, other than the two which he has mentioned, have clearly set out the principle which they will follow when they make their nominations. Why is the Minister dodging the issue by concentrating on two countries and not on the other three countries which I mentioned earlier?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Let me spell it out in capital letters. I am not prepared to commit Her Majesty's Government to a guarantee that the 24 members appointed to the Committee of the Regions will be elected local government councillors. Is that clear enough for the hon. Member for Hamilton. Does he understand it?

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I will not give way to my hon. Friend but I will give way to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The democratic principle underpinning the nominations of people to the Committee of the Regions is critical to all of us so we want proportionality and elected accountability. The Minister said that he will not commit the Government to ensuring that all the United Kingdom nominees will be local councillors. Will a proportion of the nominees be local councillors?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government will listen carefully to representations from political parties, local government and other regional interests in the United Kingdom before coming to their decision. We will listen carefully and constructively. The point which I am trying to make in the debate—which is a fair one—is that we do not want to tie ourselves to having only locally-elected councillors, as the amendment seeks to do. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will be aware of the defects which such a system could impart to Britain's representatives on what may turn out to be an important Community institution in the future.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend is right to say that one cannot specify who will be on the committee. After all, the regional development fund has been going since 1973, and experience has shown that it is important to get people with some expertise, whether they are politicians or engineers. We must get people who know about road transport and shipping so that we can tie together the whole regional planning infrastructure.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend makes an important point and it is one of the many considerations which the Government will have to take into account when they consider the matter.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make a little more progress. I intervened early because I want to listen to the whole debate for a good reason: I expect that a number of hon. Members from different regions in the United Kingdom who represent different interests in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will make important points. The Government intend to listen carefully to those points.

It is not wise for the Committee to accept the amendment. I do not accept that the amendment will lead the Committee to produce a system of nomination which will do adequate justice to the interests of all the regions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Radice: Does the Minister think that the majority of members on the Committee of the Regions should be elected local government representatives?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think that I have already answered that question.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: As one who represents a rural area, I hope that, for example, the President of the National Farmers Union will be a welcome member of the regional committee.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The Government must listen to such representations. I give way to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and then I must bring my remarks to a conclusion.

Mr. Salmond: It is reasonable for the Minister to say that he is not happy with the amendment. However, it is unreasonable for him not to give the Committee an indication of the Government's thinking on who should be nominated. It will be surprising if the Committee makes progress on this part of the Bill before the Minister gives us some illustration of that point.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As I have said, I expect the debate to run for some time. I intend to listen to most, if not all, of the debate and to hear the points which undoubtedly hon. Labour Members will make.

Two considerations underlie the debate: first, I am not convinced that it will be wise to commit the United Kingdom to nominating only elected councillors to the Committee of the Regions and, secondly, the proposed distribution of numbers will not have escaped the notice of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan.

There will be strong competing claims on a proportional basis, and a substantial number of the committee members should go to England. Most English hon. Members accept that there must be—and it is right that there should be—some sort of weighting towards Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That is also a matter for careful consideration. I have detained the Committee for long enough, and I will now allow hon. Members to make their speeches.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I have followed the debate with great interest. Perhaps we should start by asking ourselves what function the Committee of the Regions will play. What part will the committee play in the structure and development of the treaty? As the Minister and others have said, the implication and assumption is that the role of the Committee of the Regions will be an important buttress of the decentralising tendency.

One claim is that the treaty represents a fundamental arrest of the movement towards the centralising process—subsidiarity and the development of alternative pillars to the inter-governmental processes. On top of that, it is considered that the Committee of the Regions is a practical gesture, if not a symbol, in favour of decentralisation.

The trouble with the treaty is that its structure is so inherently unstable that it can be interpreted in two contradictory ways. The measures can be interpreted as acting as a decentralising force and therefore arresting what previously seemed to be the development towards a centralised Europe. Evidence which the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs received from many expert witnesses shows that the treaty is equally capable of being interpreted as a centralising force.

The role of the treaty in not only monetary union, but the other institutions being created will result in a more centralised union or centralised European federal state, rather than a decentralised union. In that context, the Committee of the Regions would have a different function and have a different connotation.

Earlier, I think that the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) made the point that, if the role of the Committee of the Regions is developed, the committee could become part of a triad—the Commission, the European union, and the Committee of the Regions —acting jointly to erode, subvert or go round national Governments, national Parliaments and the European Council. There is no doubt that the Commission had a different structure at heart in many of its preparatory documents which led to the Maastricht treaty. The Commission did not get its way, and we should be thankful for that.

The gist and drive behind the Commissioners' ideas of what Maastricht should eventually lead to was a concept of a centralised executive Commission working in close harmony with the European Parliament but at the same time breaking what it saw as the obstacle to a federal European union structure—national Parliaments and national Governments represented by the European Council. If the Maastricht route also makes possible that alternative strategy, we must certainly ask ourselves about the function and role of the Committee of the Regions.

My fundamental objection to the treaty is not that one can be altogether dogmatic about where Maastricht will lead us but that it is capable of taking us to a different destination from the one which is often presented to us by the Government. They suggest that it is leading us to a stage at which we shall have arrested the ever more powerful centralising tendency of the European union and European Community.

6 pm

Mr. Hoon: I do not wish to disagree with my hon. Friend's interpretation of the Maastricht treaty. He has his view, and I have a rather different one. However, I should be interested to know where he sees any evidence in chapter 4, which establishes the Committee of the Regions, for the centralising tendency to which he refers.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend is correct: it is neutral. That is my point. The question is not so much what is written into the provisions—I shall make the point later that the provisions which establish the Committee of the Regions are rather scrappy—as what is the fundamental drift, structural aim and objective of not only Maastricht but the review conference in 1996. Is it to take further the new bridgeheads which have been established? After 1996, will the alternative scenario be developed and created? I do not suggest that it will happen, but one must interpret a perfectly neutral article and decide which way Maastricht is leading us.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend's argument is a persuasive one. We can all recall the vision of a Europe of the regions, as distinct from a Europe of nation states, of which some people on the European continent and especially in the Commission have always been in favour. But in the context of regional policy, surely the point is that a double process is taking place. One is the transfer of regional policy decision-making and funds to the European Commission. That is a centralising process. The other is the phasing out, control and diminution of national regional policy. It is, indeed, a transfer of power and a centralising process.

Mr. Rowlands: My right hon. Friend raises some fundamental central points. One of the sadnesses is that we have been forced to debate a huge portmanteau of amendments on regional and cohesion funds and the appointment of a separate institution, a Committee of the Regions.

If one is to devise a process of convergence which will lead to monetary union by any other method than the monetarist one—which is in my view at the heart of the treaty—the development of regional and cohesion funds is vital. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said in an earlier debate, very large funds are necessary to develop any form of cohesion within a meaningful time scale.

The very nature of accumulating such huge funds is itself a centralising process. Funds of that size will have to be administered, organised and distributed from the centre. If one is to achieve convergence and monetary union by the socially and economically acceptable route of redistributing large funds, a European Government is necessary to do it.

It is a perfectly reasonable proposition, but nevertheless the Government pretend that it is not one which is presented to us in the Maastricht treaty. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, such a scenario might be proposed in 1996. We are entitled to ask whether the Committee of the Regions will be part and parcel of a genuine process of decentralisation, of the arresting process which others claim is socially acceptable and of the creation of subsidiarity and the intergovernmental pillars of the

[Mr. Rowlands]

treaty. Or is it possible that the other route of a Europe of the regions and a growingly centralised European executive will be pursued?

I am exercising a neutral view, but it is a perfectly reasonable interpretation of the processes that are likely to flow from Maastricht. It is as reasonable as the Government's interpretation. They suggest that the Maastricht treaty is essentially a decentralising measure.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Does my hon. Friend agree that a reasonable definition of subsidiarity does not conflict with the paradox which is apparently laid before us? A reasonable definition is that government should occur at the lowest level at which it can be effective. On some matters, it can be effective only at a transnational level. Examples include a single currency and environmental legislation. Other forms of government can be far more effective at a much lower level. So that apparent paradox is not in fact contradictory.

Mr. Rowlands: No, I do not believe it is. My hon. Friend rightly says that subsidiarity is a two-way process. Just as much as it could be a decentralising process, it could be the confirmation of a large movement of power from local or decentralised structures to the centre.

I do not wish to dwell on subsidiarity, Mr. Lofthouse, because we shall have a separate debate on it. I draw the attention of the Committee to the voluminous evidence on subsidiarity which we took in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. I warn any of my hon. Friends or any hon. Members who think that they have cast-iron guarantees about the success of subsidiarity—I have been as diligent as possible in going through the evidence—not to buy a simplistic view of it or its potential effectiveness.

My proposition is simple. It is possible to interpret the potential role of a future Committee of the Regions in the context of a rather different European structure from that which is presented to us by Ministers and some of those who want to pretend that Maastricht does not contain at least the potential for centralisation and a larger European executive.

The Maastricht treaty could be a first step on the road to a Europe of the regions. The irony about that for me as a Welshman is that, if the House and the British people decided that they wanted to turn Westminster into a glorified Lander, that might be their decision. We would then have a most powerful and overwhelming case to establish our own Länd, in the form of an elected assembly for Wales. I believe that we have a case for such an assembly now, but as Maastricht could lead towards the transformation of Westminster into a glorified Länd, I cannot see why I should come to Westminster. I should do far better trying to represent my communities in a Welsh elected assembly.

I have been a keen supporter of a Welsh elected assembly. Regional assemblies are the alternative scenario for future constitutional development. Not one Minister or Member of Parliament who campaigns for the treaty claims that that is the destination to which Maastricht might eventually lead. If they were honest and accepted that that was a perfectly acceptable option, I as a Welshman could happily accept the joy and privilege of representing my communities in a Welsh elected assembly. Its powers and responsibilities would be on a par with a glorified Westminster Länd.

Is that the way in which the Government and the British people want to go? They have not to date expressed their views in those terms, but the potential is there, offered by Maastricht, and with that potential comes the possibility of a major new powerful European executive.

That is why the members of nationalist parties in this Parliament have embraced the concept of Europe and have been voting with the Government on most of the treaty. They believe that the potential exists here to achieve their goal. I think I see some of them indicating assent at that. That scenario has not been presented to us. In other words, they are voting for a model even though the Government are pretending that the model does not exist or is not potentially possible under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman will agree that the cohesion funds are designed to reduce disparities between the levels of development of various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured areas, including rural areas. Does he accept that all areas of this country, whether or not represented by those with separatist tendencies, are already losing out in the EC in vital and fundamental industries such as textiles and paper and board, whereas countries such as Portugal and Spain are obtaining huge additional funds from the Community, resulting in our losing jobs in Scotland, Wales and virtually every region of the United Kingdom? Does he further agree that that is just a sample of what is likely to happen if we ratify Maastricht?

Mr. Rowlands: I was coming to that very subject, which is the potential—or perhaps the lack of it—resulting from the role of the Committee of the Regions. What are we buying? We are told that, at least to start with, the committee will be potentially an important expression of the voice of the regions—in the case of the area I represent, the national regions.

I have searched studiously through the treaty, because the article with which we are dealing does not specify the duties of the Committee of the Regions. We are told that its duties are given in the treaty, but it is difficult to work out what they will be. For example, the committee could play an invaluable role if, as some witnesses who gave evidence before the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs suggested, it will be the champion voice for greater structural, regional and cohesion funds to be directed to poorer regions and nations on the periphery of the new European union.

If that were to be the function of the Committee of the Regions, I could support it, but it is difficult to discover a meaningful definition of the powers, responsibilities and duties that it will have. I would be happier if the treaty spelled out its role, albeit consultative. After all, we are speaking only of an advisory body. We may argue about who should be on it, but we would feel happier if the treaty showed a clearly defined role for it, perhaps saying that it must be advised on all issues relating to the cohesion fund, the structural fund and various other funds in a way that might lead to a redistribution of wealth in the Community.

We need such a body, because our only voice in Brussels now is the Secretary of State for Wales, and by any standard, his has been a poor voice, which has delivered remarkably little in terms of regional and

structural support to the communities that I represent. He has even failed to make sure that we are a part of the operation. I remind the Committee that no part of the areas I represent will get a penny from the cohesion fund.

6.15 pm

It has been suggested that, as good socialists, we should support the poorest. Mid Glamorgan's GDP is only 70 per cent. of the average of that of the United Kingdom. By any calculation of GDP per capita—by any formula; most formulae are fixed to deliver the results that are wanted—whether purchasing power, parity or rates of exchange, Mid Glamorgan and the communities I represent qualify as much as Spain, Greece and, I am sorry to say, Ireland. But there is no suggestion that cohesion fund money should come to my communities.

The Minister talked about targeting. We are talking about a poorly targeted cohesion fund, because it has been crudely decided that the money shall go to four of the Twelve. The funds will not go to regions, areas or communities in the Community. They will go to four member states, irrespective of whether there are in those states areas much wealthier than any of the communities I represent.

Mr John D. Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Maastricht is inconsistent and contradicts itself, in that, although it stresses the importance of regions, the cohesion fund dismisses entirely the importance of regions and sticks strictly to the importance of national states?

Mr. Rowlands: That is the point that I am making. The Minister agreed, frankly, that what had occurred was a bargain. It was a fix. It was a way to achieve the support of four of the Twelve—for a variety of other developments within the concept of Maastricht—and was therefore a way to buy support. The cohesion fund is not based on any rigorous assessment of need.

We talk much about cohesion and convergence. My community is at present suffering not from convergence but from divergence, even within the United Kingdom economy. As I say, Mid Glamorgan has only 70 per cent. of the United Kingdom's average GDP. That has come about as a result of Conservative policies. That position has not been addressed or redressed by the Secretary of State for Wales campaigning for the redistribution of funds in the EC on behalf of communities such as mine, which, by any criteria, qualify for cohesion and other types of regional funding.

Mr. Marlow: I take fully the hon. Gentleman's point that the money is targeted purely at four countries—Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal. It is not targeted where the need exists or to rural areas but to those four countries. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Commission wants to manage the fund itself, in alliance with those four countries. So effectively the Commission wants the money not to overcome the problems of poverty in parts of the Community; it wants four client states that will agree in future with its agenda.

Mr. Rowlands: I would not push the conspiratorial view that far, although I believe that a deal, a fix, has occurred. It was an arrangement.

We are told that the cohesion fund is a special new fund to be devoted to those four countries, and a formula has been devised to make the arrangement look rational. That means that we must direct our attention next to the structural fund because that is where the larger proportion of the money lies. Hence, on behalf of a community with a GDP per capita in the band of the four cohesion fund countries, I do just that and turn to the structural fund.

On doing so, I discover that the first objective, relating to the largest part of the fund—it was about four fifths of the total; I am having difficulty working out whether Edinburgh shifted the proportion somewhat—names the only qualifying community in the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland.

Mid Glamorgans's GDP is lower than that of Northern Ireland. It is saddening when one hears the self-deluding statements of the Secretary of State for Wales telling us that our economy has been transformed. The transformation of the south Wales economy has meant that Mid Glamorgan, in GDP terms, is in a lower state, I am sorry to say in the presence of Northern Ireland Members, than that of Northern Ireland. That is the marvellous miracle of transformation that the Secretary of State and his predecessor have wrought with his valleys initiative. That is the truth about our economy currently, and we still do not qualify for objective 1 funding. Not only are we outside cohesion funding; we are also outside objective 1 funding.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Our constituencies share much the same problem, so I have a great deal of sympathy for what my hon. Friend is saying, but he will accept, I am sure, that one of the reasons that our areas are so poor and deprived is that they have been choked off from European funds under the present system. This Government have not fulfilled their commitment under present arrangements; that is why, with Commissioner Millan, the problem of additionality reared its head and there was a major conflict between the Commissioner and the present Government.

When I was a Member of the European Parliament, I found that Welsh local authorities like Llanelli, Merthyr, Rhymney Valley and Blaenau Gwent approached members of the European Parliament to go direct to the Commission because this Government were blocking European funds.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend expresses the frustration of so many communities under Rechar and all the other arrangements. We fought hard to get some scraps out of the system for communities and societies which, as I have demonstrated, by any objective criteria, sadly qualify.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend is making a very important point. The plain truth is that ever since the two categories, 1 and 2, were introduced three or four years ago, the effect on the United Kingdom has been disastrous. We received less money in 1991, the last complete year available, than we did in 1986. Meanwhile, the regional fund has trebled.

Mr. Rowlands: That is the point, and it is the ultimate condemnation of a Government who have failed to fight for us, and of the categories—it is a bit of both, I think. The Government could have fought for different categorisation of our communities.

There is no reason why an objective 1 category should not cover communities like mine, because by any GDP per capita figure they ought to be part of it but are not. That is part of the funding under the structural fund.

[Mr. Rowlands]

The voice of the United Kingdom in Brussels, the voice we had, that of the Secretary of State, has been sorely inadequate and has failed us completely in fighting for the proper redistribution of funds to achieve development and growth and to achieve a breakthrough in growth, to break through the cycle of deprivation and the cycle of disappointing achievement which is so much of the character and nature of the communities I represent.

I ask myself, do I go back to Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and say that there is an alternative called the Committee of the Regions with sufficient power and voice to be able to redress the balance in Europe? I fear that I cannot. I am worried and concerned that it will be a sop rather than an effective alternative regional voice within the structures of the new Europe of the European union.

I hope that I am wrong, because we desperately need a much more effective and radical voice speaking for the communities I represent, not only at Westminster, in the form of an alternative Government, and a change of heart, but also in Brussels and Europe from where we now know that some of these funds should be coming to break our cycle of deprivation but are not reaching us. That is our case. My concern is that we are not over-sold—not sold something which turns out to be another talking shop.

The Minister talked about subtlety of the appointments. There has been nothing subtle about the appointments made by the Secretary of State for Wales. Time and time again, he has appointed Conservative party chairpersons of one kind or another into a host of positions, wholly unrepresentative, even reaching to the heart of our health service, bringing services out of the Community, and now they are utterly unrepresentative of the spirit, feelings and wishes of the people of Wales.

It is little wonder that we treat these appointments with great scepticism, and demand a more rigorous and statutory basis for these appointments, because we shall be left by the Secretary of State with a group of yes-persons of the character we have seen in the quangos that have been established in the past 10 years in Wales, fixed and filled with overtly party political appointments.

While I support the drift and the principle of the amendments that have been moved to prevent that, I ask the Committee seriously to consider whether the character and nature of this committee is, in the longer term, the route we wish to pursue.

Mr. Hill: It is an interesting but not, so far, a constructive debate. We have been talking around the regional fund but most Members have so far been discussing how to pack the Committee of the Regions with some of their friends. I put it no higher than that because this argument often comes up when a new institution is formed. The spokesman for the Liberal Democrat party on European matters and I were probably the only two hon. Members here who were members of the European regional policy committee in Brussels in 1973. These well displayed arguments, beautifully formed, with high indignation—"I am not going to get anything out of it" —are the sort of thing we have gone through time after time. The question is whether the regional development fund has become better over the past few years. We are talking about a period of 20 years.

I remember clearly, as I am sure does the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), that we realised at the time that the regional development fund, which was under-funded, did practically nothing. A regional fund for which every application has to be dealt with from central Governments would be very undemocratic. That had to be. In those days, when only Germany and the United Kingdom, perhaps, had the money to fund the development fund, we were delighted to find that we got 1,200 million ecu for a year. That lasted for one year. Then it went down to 450 million ecu. That is the way the fund can go. When one talks about a strategic fund which has to fulfil the expectations of everyone from the United Kingdom right down to Greece, Spain and Portugal, one realises that this is not a very sensible approach.

Much of the idea in this case, too, is that the money will be targeted on the four poorest countries. We have always had this argument with regional development, about where the money should go. There was even a study at one time, which I took up myself, about the bridges and tunnels from Denmark to Sweden. We could have spent the whole of the regional development fund for many years on that, but the idea of this fund is that one does what the Committee of the Regions declares is essential; one starts from there.

In the days that I am talking about there was no representation of the type envisaged in article 130b. There was no representation on that scale, although there were the heads of regional development. My old chum Christopher Chataway was a Minister at the time and every application had to go through his Department. The Committee of the Regions is the start of a bit of democracy, but we do not seem to want to recognise that or to congratulate the Prime Minister. The committee will have 24 representatives from the United Kingdom, who will be taken from all classes. I am not talking about politicians, as the average politician is a poor administrator—local councils are a good example of that and are poorly administered—and one cannot give them all the seats on the committee.

6.30 pm

When the committee is working, each region will have to put its case through its representatives. The committee will not be like the old closed shop. The only difficulty that I can envisage is that the committee has to submit a report to the European Parliament once in every three years. That time scale is too long.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The hon. Gentleman used the words "representatives of the regions", but does he accept that they cannot be true representatives of their locality if they are appointed by national Government rather than by local or regional government? The Minister responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the system in Germany. The Länder can appoint people who are not representatives in the Länder, but the important thing is that, rather than the German Government, Länder will do the appointing. That is crucial and no Conservative Member has dealt with that issue.

Mr. Hill: I do not know where that argument is going. The committee must be formed and each national Government will have its own way of submitting names. The mere fact that Germany or any other country—Greece, for example—has a different system is not at issue. Our system will be plain. We want people with great

expertise and we do not want a lot of time servers or a mass of people who have been on local councils for 50 years. We certainly do not want a lot of Back Benchers, who are only in the European argument to knock it to the ground.

Mr. Randall: Many Opposition Members are concerned because we believe that the Government do not have a regional policy. The Committee of the Regions will be able to do what it likes—the scope of its responsibility is open. If people on the committee represent their regions, they will want to change regional policy. Since the Government do not want that to happen, they will put their Tory cronies in to block the whole system. That would be negative and would make the committee ineffective.

Mr. Hill: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be able to refute that later. The hon. Gentleman mentioned "Tory cronies." There are socialist cronies, too.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I apologise to the Committee for not having said in my remarks that I hoped that Members would deal in their contributions with membership of the committee. It is probable that the Committee of the Regions will have a plenary meeting, but we estimate that about two days work each week will be required from those nominated to represent the United Kingdom. I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that an elected councillor might find two days each week rather burdensome. The two countries which have nominated representatives have not chosen to nominate only elected councillors. That is another argument in favour of not doing so.

Mr. Hill: The main argument is to get rid of political points. My next remarks will probably raise more hackles on the Opposition Benches.

Advisers from the European investment bank will have to deal with the regional development fund and it would not be a bad idea to appoint someone who knows the banking industry. The same argument applies to practically everything that the committee will do. It will not want any time servers, and from what my right hon. Friend has said I am sure that it will not get them.

There has always been an argument about peripherals. We have always had to plough more money in, and transborder money was always bespoken. Everyone, whether from Wales, Scotland, Ireland or anywhere else, was always at risk because they were not getting a sufficient slice of the cake. That is an odd way to approach the matter. The committee is just beginning. One will find that because of the quality of the people appointed to the Committee—people from throughout the United Kingdom—they will be approachable. They will not say, "You're only a Welshman—I'm not going to have anything to do with you because you have nothing to do with my region." When the committee is in place, 24 people will be working as a team to highlight some of the problems of the regions.

I have long thought that the regional development fund did not get enough publicity for the fact that it provided millions of ecus to build the M25. Much of the funding came from the fund, but no one seemed to know about it. It was assumed that it was taxpayers' money—[HON. MEMBERS: "It was."] I suppose that in a roundabout way it was. However, people who have become interested in European affairs in the past two years would never have known that the M25 was financed by the regional development fund.

I must make a plea for a contribution from the Committee of the Regions. As soon as it sits, I should like it to study the construction of a southern counties expressway, made up of a route from Dover, along the south coast to Southampton. What better way is there to spend money? The expressway could also upgrade the A34 to Oxford and then turn eastwards, to Aylesbury and the east coast ports. One would stress to the committee that the expressway would be of motorway standard, and would provide an alternative to the M25. The concept is designed to cater for the ever-growing European dimension of trade within the Communiy.

If we are a trading nation, we cannot ignore Europe. I cannot think that any hon. Member supposes that we could go back to being an island, trading only with ourselves and once in a while with America. Most hon. Members are politically wise and they must know that we cannot stay in isolation. A famous Labour Member said some years ago that we will be an island—I think that he is still saying it—and that we will trade where we can. He did not say "if" we can, and he did not dismiss all those people in Europe who are looking to us as trading partners. He did not say, "Let us throw them all out with the bath water." He said, "We will trade where we can."

When the members of the committee are studying what they wish to improve on the periphery of Europe, they will obviously look at trading matters. It is no use setting up a motorway, a seaport an airport or any great transport infrastructure if industry is not put at the end of the road. That will be one of the biggest problems. They may even think of Wales or Scotland for these industrial estates.

If one could only get beyond the idea of having three Labour councillors, three Conservative councillors, and perhaps poor old Bloggs who went to the other place some years ago, and think of the opportunities——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hill: Certainly not to him. *[Interruption.]* I am not giving way to any of them. Everyone can speak this evening. I do not want to be critical of some of my colleagues, but they have more or less had their 10-minute speeches already. They have been interrupting each other or interrupting sympathisers across the Chamber. I will not aid and abet them in this deceit, because, as you rightly said, Mr. Lofthouse, everyone can speak in this debate for 10 or 15 minutes, if he or she wishes.

I am waiting anxiously to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on regional development. Certainly, no one here knows the slightest thing about how the original regional development fund was started. I am waiting to hear some really good information. I have tried to say very little, because so many hon. Members are waiting to speak.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hill: There is a quavering voice at the back of me, but I am not going to give way. The poor quavering old chap must sit back in his seat and wait until he catches your eye, Mr. Lofthouse.

I feel that we are getting to the heart of the argument now. I admire the amendments that have been put down

[Mr. Hill]

—not that I shall vote for them, of course—because they have just one theme and they say exactly the same thing over and over again: let us see how we can pack the Committee of the Regions with our cronies. Ours will not be Tory cronies—they will be Tory experts.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): How refreshing it has been to hear the real voice of the Tory party. It was certainly amusing. Unfortunately, I did not understand one word of what the hon. Gentleman was getting at, and I do not think that the Minister did either, because I noticed that he was keeping his head very low during the hon. Member's speech.

This debate is naturally of interest to us in Northern Ireland, as one of the regions in the European Community. The Maastricht agreement is something that, as I said on Second Reading, we in the Ulster Unionist party oppose, because, at the end of the day, it is a treaty for the union of Europe, basically moving away from a Europe of sovereign states co-operating into a Europe of European regions. It is a shift in that direction. That is the real thrust of the Maastricht agreement: slowly, step by step, to undermine the sovereignty of the 12 nations and establish in their place the regions.

6.45 pm

I do not agree with that, but, if it is taking place and if it is to happen, I have to come down in favour of the Committee of the Regions. To that extent, and with that qualification, I support the proposal for such a committee.

We in Northern Ireland have been very badly governed since 1972. We have never had a representative elected in Northern Ireland governing us; it has always been an elected representative from England, and perhaps once or twice from Scotland. We therefore have little say in our own affairs, and certainly in the European Community we have no voice other than through the three Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In Brussels, the Northern Ireland Office is hardly ever heard; it is not represented by Ministers in the Council of Ministers on fisheries, agriculture or any of the other important issues that affect us in Northern Ireland.

I well remember from my 10 years in the European Parliament, most of which I served as a member of the European regional committee, that it was one of the more useful committees in the Parliament, within which the regions had a voice. I remember that there was a lady called Beatta Brookes who certainly spoke up for Wales. It is perhaps not popular to mention her on this side of the Committee——*[Interruption.]* I am certainly not going to embarrass the other side of the Committee.

Certainly, the European regional committee was one of the more influential committees in the European Parliament. Because of the weakness of the Northern Ireland Office, it was possible for the elected Members of the European Parliament to correct the mistakes which the Northern Ireland Office was making. I will give an example.

A scheme was devised under the European regional development programme for cross-border tourist projects for the border regions. That was a good idea on both the Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland sides of the border. When the proposed map of the areas of tourism was produced to the regional committee of the European Parliament, Donegal was naturally recommended, and Sligo and Leitrim as very good tourist areas on the southern side of the border. And what did the Northern Ireland Office recommend for our side? It recommended Crossmaglen and South Armagh—for tourist projects. That was a mistake, Mr. Lofthouse, as you will recognise.

When the scheme came before the regional committee of the European Parliament, I got my Communist colleagues, my Labour colleagues from Wales, my Social Democrat, Conservative and Christian Democrat colleagues to support me in an amendment to change the boundaries. We finally got the mountains of Mourne and Newcastle included as principal tourist areas near the border. I managed to slip in part of my own constituency as well while I was at it.

That was accepted, and we immediately became the first places in Northern Ireland to benefit from this scheme. We got a £1 million tourist project in the village of Millisle. This shows how an elected representative from an area can influence the regional development policy to help his own region.

That is why I welcome this proposal in principle. If we are to have a Europe of the regions, which we are moving towards—although, as I say, I am not very happy with that drift in European political thinking—I believe that the European Committee for the Regions is a good idea, and the people on it should be locally elected representatives of the regions.

I do not accept what the Minister has told the Committee this afternoon—that only two countries have so far decided the basis of their representation on the committee. If he looks into it more carefully, or is advised better by his officials, I think that he will find that most of the countries are coming down in favour of locally elected representatives on the committee.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course, three member states, as mentioned by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), have indicated how they intend, broadly speaking, to appoint their members. I am simply making the point, which I believe to be a fair one, that two member states have so far not gone entirely down that road.

There is a case for a mix—a case that I hope the Committee will address. I am open-minded about this matter. The Government have not made any decisions. However, I should like the right hon. Gentleman to consider his own part of the kingdom and make his own judgment about the number of people who might be available, as that is an important aspect of the matter. He should consider whether the election of a representative —or two, or whatever number might be allocated—would be the proper route. I am genuinely interested in hearing the right hon. Gentleman's views.

Mr. Taylor: I am glad to detect a shift of emphasis in what the Minister has said. In his opening speech, he said that only two nations had made recommendations about their representatives on the Committee of the Regions. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that there were a further three. I note that the Minister no longer rejects what the Opposition spokesman has suggested.

Our own research paper mentions one of those three. It says:

"Denmark—number of seats, nine.

> The Danish Government has now made its nominations by agreement with the Association of Local and County Authorities and the city of Copenhagen: four seats to counties and municipalities, and one to the city of Copenhagen."

So, in Denmark, the representatives are being selected in co-operation with the locally elected authorities. I could quote what is happening in the other countries, and I stand by my contention that most countries are clearly going for locally elected representatives on the Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The only point that I am seeking to establish is that it would not be against the spirit or the letter of the treaty not to have locally elected representatives. Clearly, that is one of the options available to us, but the Government have not made any decision. We shall listen carefully to the points that are made. The reason for my rejection of the Opposition's amendment is that it seeks to establish that all members of the Committee of the Regions must be locally elected councillors. That is not necessarily the answer.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister is right to say that he is under no obligation to appoint locally elected representatives to the new Committee of the Regions. The other 11 countries of the European Communities will concentrate on having elected representatives from the regions, and that is what we would prefer for the United Kingdom.

I gave as an example my experience in the European Parliament, on whose regional committee I was able to exercise influence when the Northern Ireland Office had failed to do so. I fear that, if it is left to the Welsh Office, the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office to send representatives to this committee, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will not have a truly representative voice. That is bound to be so in the case of Wales, which has an Englishman as Secretary of State.

Mr. Salmond: But there is a grave weakness even in the terms of the amendment. It uses the words

> "shall be drawn from elected local government representatives."

If it is left to the Government to choose the elected local representatives, they will still have the whip hand and the power of discretion. They will be able to select any local representatives who are amenable.

Mr. Taylor: Fortunately, they will not find any Conservative elected representatives in Northern Ireland. That will not be a major problem for us. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

Rev. Ian Paisley: There are Tory councillors, and they could well be chosen. Indeed, three of them could be picked.

Mr. Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, most of those Conservatives have announced that they will join the Ulster Unionist party. The Tory candidate in the constituency of Belfast, East at the last general election has said that he intends to stand as an Ulster Unionist candidate in the forthcoming local elections.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the point that my right hon. Friend is making. Does he agree that, in the case of Northern Ireland, Ministers are appointing tame people who will do their bidding rather than represent the wishes of the people—especially when councils suggest people?

Mr. Taylor: This is a common problem throughout Northern Ireland, and the more one listens to this debate the more one realises that it is shared in Wales and in Scotland. More and more quangos and other such bodies are being created in our parts of the United Kingdom. We are getting placemen rather than people who are truly representative of the local community.

The Minister asked whether I would like to have on this Committee an elected representative from Northern Ireland. The answer is yes. There is in Northern Ireland an association of local authorities. I should like to see on the Committee of the Regions some representation through that body. There should be at least two members from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Salmond: Only two?

Mr. Taylor: Two will be sufficient. If Scotland gets one, we shall take two.

I should like to refer to the cohesion fund, as I am very concerned about it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, earlier in the day, the Minister was very cruel in referring to conspiracies on the Back Benches. As the Minister is now on the Opposition Front Bench, can we take it that there is a conspiracy there?

Mr. Taylor: I have already mentioned the transfer of several Conservatives to the Ulster Unionist party. I am glad that the Minister is moving closer to us.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I was simply doing my best to ascertain what had been arranged with my hon. Friends on the Back Benches. Collusion rages on all sides.

Mr. Taylor: I know that the Minister is an authority on collusion.

The cohesion fund is a matter of great concern throughout the United Kingdom. This is not a Northern Ireland issue. The regional fund was quite properly intended to assist the regions in greatest need. We heard, for example, about Mid Glamorgan. That is the sort of region that should qualify under the European regional development fund. But there are similar regions throughout the 12 countries of the European Communities.

The problem with the cohension fund is that it is not related to regions at all, that it is related to states—and to four states only. Although the whole emphasis of the Maastricht agreement is on giving more power to the regions and on the creation of a European union of the regions, it contains a contradiction, in that it creates a cohesion fund for four states only. That will damage the interests of some regions in states that are poorer than the four that are to benefit.

The Minister will have to explain more carefully the reason for this additional cohesion fund. Will it be able to do anything that the existing European development fund cannot do, or does not have the facilities to do? It seems to me that the European regional development fund is quite adequate. Indeed, it is better formulated to assist the really needy regions. It seems to me that the cohesion fund is simply a means of allocating money, through another institution, to discriminate in favour of four nations and to damage the interests of more needy regions.

I should like from the Minister a response to my earlier interjection about the Edinburgh decisions. The

[Mr. Taylor]

Government deserve some praise for the way in which they secured an agreement on the budget. That agreement should be contrasted with the claims of some countries and, of course, of M. Delors himself. The compromise was reasonable in the circumstances. But there is a matter in respect of which I have not seen the figures and would like an explanation. When we are agreeing on the raised ceiling of the European budget, how will the cohesion fund fare?

What is the separate figure for the entire cohesion fund? When the Minister answered my earlier intervention he included the funding for the European regional development fund in the cohesion fund. We need to know the amount of the cohesion fund on its own. How much is to be allocated to the four sovereign states that are to benefit from it?

7 pm

The cohesion fund is a mistake. We should stick to the European regional development fund and help the needier regions in the Community. The cohesion fund presents a further problem for us in the United Kingdom. Some members of the Committee have spoken as though the cohesion fund would benefit the United Kingdom. They do not seem to realise that the United Kingdom will not receive one penny from the cohesion fund. The United Kingdom is fully excluded from the benefits of the cohesion fund.

However, one way in which we are not excluded from it is that we shall be one of its main financiers. The United Kingdom and Germany will have to provide most of the money for the European cohesion fund.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I must correct the right hon. Gentleman. Due to Britain's abatement, the Federal Republic of Germany and France are the main contributors to the cohesion fund. The Federal Republic contributes, I think, 30 per cent. and the French about 20 per cent. The rest of the money comes from the other richer countries, and Britain contributes 5 per cent. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman was not quite correct.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, but our European partners consider the abatement a temporary arrangement. As the Minister well knows, they are trying to get it removed.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It will last until the end of this century, and even then can be changed only by unanimity.

Mr. Taylor: That was not the view of those who attended the European Council. Some of them were arguing to have it changed at once. That is the problem —the abatement is being challenged.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Some countries wanted the system changed, but it can be changed only by unanimity—it will need our assent—and cannot even come up for discussion until the end of the century.

Mr. Taylor: As the Minister has said, the problem of financing the cohesion fund rests mainly with France, Germany and the United Kingdom—even with our abatement. The position will be worse if the abatement disappears.

Mr. Jenkin: Is it not absolutely obvious that our European partners, which are desperate for us to ratify the treaty, are hardly likely to commit the grievous political error of clobbering us by taking away our abatement? When they have obtained their treaty, it may be a different story.

Mr. Taylor: I fully understand that. The Minister understands collusion, and I think that he will understand what the hon. Gentleman is getting at. In Europe, things are done step by step. I think that the Minister said that the cohesion fund was part of a deal.

Mrs. Dunwoody: A bargain.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, a bargain. We bargained with four countries that they, and they alone, would receive money from the cohesion fund as long as they took certain actions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall not intervene in the right hon. Gentleman's speech again, I promise. The arrangements made at Edinburgh—which constituted a deal—set the financing of the European Community until 1999. The British abatement will not be discussed again until 1999, and can be altered only by unanimity.

Mr. Taylor: That does not change the main thrust of my argument. Even the Minister has confirmed that Germany, France and the United Kingdom will be the three main financiers of the cohesion fund. That must mean that we will have to find funds from our own national budget, which will probably lead to an increase in value added tax in the United Kingdom, in order to help finance the cohesion fund so that money can be given to the four other countries.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The right hon. Gentleman may recall that, at the Edinburgh summit, special provisions relating to the eastern part of Germany were made to the cohesion fund. Those provisions were not well publicised, but I think that the figure was about 18 billion ecu—it may have been £18 billion, I am not sure. It was a substantial sum, which was kept very much under wraps.

Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that the fact that the Germans are making a contribution is offset by that additional amount? Bearing in mind the formula for the qualification for the cohesion fund—which is, I think, 90 per cent. of the average of the gross national product of the Community—how is Germany to make any contribution at all?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue of eastern Germany's special position, which I had totally forgotten. It helps to undercut the argument of the Minister when we realise that Germany may be making a major contribution, but some of it will come back to eastern Germany.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have now checked, and the figures are even better than those that I gave the right hon. Gentleman earlier. He started by saying that Britain and Germany were paying for the cohesion fund. That is not correct. Germany and France are paying substantially more than the United Kingdom, as is Italy. Although I do not have the figures to hand, I would not be surprised if other countries were doing so as well. We are paying 5 per cent. of the cohesion fund.

Mr. Taylor: The United Kingdom is one of the main financiers of the European Community budget, of which the cohesion fund will be a part.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We can discuss the budget under other groups of amendments, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman will admit that his original point was entirely inaccurate.

Mr. Taylor: No, it was not. The Minister is confirming it. He is saying that France, Germany and the United Kingdom—and he has just added Italy—are some of the main contributors to the cohesion fund.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Gentleman opened his remarks, as *Hansard* will show, by saying that the United Kingdom and Germany financed the cohesion fund—they were the biggest contributors. I see that hon. Members are assenting to that proposition. From memory, I was able to say that Germany paid 30 per cent., France 20 per cent. and the United Kingdom—because of its abatement—only 5 per cent. I have now been told by my advisors that Italy contributes substantially more than the United Kingdom. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to discuss the budget, that is another matter, but it is important to nail the fact that he commenced by saying that the United Kingdom and Germany were the biggest contributors to the cohesion fund. That is not correct.

Mr. Taylor: It will be once the abatement disappears, and the thrust in Europe is to get the abatement removed, which will happen step by step. The thrust in Europe is to remove, in time, the British abatement which was negotiated by Mrs. Thatcher.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think that the Committee should allow the right hon. Gentleman to get away with that. It was agreed at Edinburgh that the British abatement should remain unchanged. It will come up for discussion at the end of the century. Of course, the right hon. Gentleman will say that, at the end of the century, it will be changed. However, it is fixed until the end of the century—a substantial achievement by the Government and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman must produce better arguments to underpin what he is trying to say than those that he is presently giving the Committee.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister thinks that six years is a long time, but the arrangements will not necessarily last for six years. Those who follow the debate in Europe will know that most European nations are actively campaigning for the abatement to be withdrawn. They will not wait for six years. They may have agreed to that as part of the deal at Edinburgh to which the Minister referred, but once the Maastricht treaty is ratified, they will not hold back six years. The thrust to get rid of the abatement will increase and gain momentum.

Mr. Jenkin: The question is not whether we change the budget in 1999 but what budget there is, because the current budget provisions run out in 1999. It may be true that we cannot approve a new budget except by unanimity, but it will start with a blank sheet of paper.

Mr. Taylor: I intend to pursue the hon. Gentleman's point about the budget. The cohesion fund is only part of the overall European Community budget and the United Kingdom is one of the main contributors to that budget. Germany contributes even more. As expenditure increases on agriculture, the European regional development fund and the new cohesion fund, it will place a greater burden on United Kingdom taxpayers. Our Government will have to find additional funds to help finance the European community.

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the financial perspective issued at the Edinburgh summit showed that the cohesion fund spending up to 1999 would amount to some 15 billion ecu? The Minister has told us that Britain will contribute 5 per cent. of that, so the United Kingdom will contribute £750 million into the cohesion fund and we will never get a single penny of it back.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman put that in very straightforward terms. We will have to contribute £125 million a year for the next six years.

The money going into the cohesion fund and towards the increased expenditure of the European Community, which will increase further because of the cohesion fund, will mean that the Treasury will have to find more funds in forthcoming years—£125 million simply as our contribution to the cohesion fund. That must mean additional taxes in the United Kingdom. I suspect that it will mean an increase in VAT throughout the United Kingdom to help finance the increased budget requirements of the European Community.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will the right hon. Gentleman please put his argument in context? He should remember that, despite the abatement we already have, the total controlled expenditure of the United Kingdom Government next year is £244·5 billion, so the sums of money that he mentions are not as critical to the overall budget as he makes out—and indeed many of us think they are going to a rather good cause.

Mr. John D. Taylor: That is an extremely interesting argument from a Conservative Member. He suggests that £150 million here or there is not terribly important to the national budget of the United Kingdom at a time when we are embarrassed by our public borrowing requirement. I fear for the future of the nation if the Conservative party thinks in that way. Now is the time to control public expenditure and not to dismiss £150 million here or there as if it were of no consequence.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman cannot abuse my argument in that way. I said that that was a controlled total, so by definition it is controlled and the money is allocated within it. I was attempting to show the proportionality.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Proportionality is control, and I hope that the Government will stand over those controls in the forthcoming year as they prepare their budget. If it is controlled, the Government will have to decrease expenditure here in the United Kingdom in order to find extra funding to allocate to Europe.

I suspect that we will have increased taxes and VAT in the United Kingdom because of the increased budget of the European Community, partly because of the new cohesion fund. It hurts us in Northern Ireland to think that VAT may be increased to pay for the new cohesion fund which will to to Greece, Spain, Portugal—and, of course, our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.

Sir Russell Johnston: As far as I can see, the right hon. Gentleman has produced no evidence whatsoever that the measure will result in VAT and tax increases. He should

[Sir Russell Johnston]

also note the second point raised by the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor)—that the money was going to a good cause. Is he not at all interested in benefiting the poorer areas of the Community? If he is not, other people might not be interested in helping him with his problems.

Mr. Taylor: It all depends on what one understands by a good cause. I believe that the more needy regions of the United Kingdom would be a good cause. However, instead of getting money from the European Community for the regions within the United Kingdom that need support, the Government have decided, as part of a deal, to use the Minister's words, to give it to four particular nations. We are being asked to help finance that.

Finance has to be found somewhere. It comes from taxes, and no Conservative Member can run away from the fact that the cohesion fund and the increased budget requirements of the European Community will mean that extra money will have to be found in the United Kingdom to help finance those four beneficiaries of the cohesion fund. That will lead to increased taxes throughout the United Kingdom, and I suspect that VAT will also increase. It will be resented throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom that we are being asked to increase taxation to help finance four countries which in some respect are much better off than some of the regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

7.15 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Committee is getting more and more interesting because rules are coming into operation as our debate proceeds. Earlier today, the Minister would not let me intervene in his speech. I thought that that was what Committee work was all about—not for making Second Reading speeches but for the Minister to help us to understand what he was doing. He said that he would not let me get in because I was going to make a speech. He then allowed all and sundry to get in, but I was not allowed to intervene because I was going to make a speech. I know that the Minister is anxious to explain now. He may lower his glasses almost to the tip of his nose and smile with the bedside manner of an old village doctor telling his patient that all is well, that heaven is in front of him and he will escape purgatory, but those are the facts.

Even the Chairman told us at the beginning of the debate that he would be absolutely fair to all sections of the United Kingdom. I have attended all the debates except one and only now am I able to speak. The other night when I tried to speak, the Minister contrived to close the debate; now he is about to tell us how much he loves Northern Ireland and how much he hates me.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think that the hon. Gentleman understood the point that I was making. An hon. Member representing Northern Ireland has said on a point of order that Northern Ireland Members had a particular interest in the debate, and as they wished to return to the Province later in the day were keen to get in quickly. The only point that I was seeking to make to the hon. Gentleman in all friendliness was that I did not want to take up the Committee's time in such a way as to cause inconvenience to hon. Members such as himself.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I find it strange that the Minister is now dividing the House into the nations which make up the United Kingdom. If a Labour Member from Scotland said that many people from Scotland wanted to speak, he could not rule out Conservative Members but allow all other hon. Members from Scotland to speak.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that he has a very special and important position in the House and is in general given a justified preference, particularly over run-of-the-mill English Conservative Members. He is frustrated and angered at the way in which he has not been able to speak, but let him consider for a moment the frustration and anger of those of us who have sat here day after day, constantly excluded, finding it possible only to make an intervention. He should understand the sense of resentment which permeates the Committee.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I certainly appreciate how all hon. Members feel about the debate because the ramifications and the influence of what we are doing now will affect every part of the United Kingdom. I fail to understand why we cannot have more time to debate these matters. The House does not do itself justice when people throughout the country are asking why, if the Government have an unassailable position, they are so afraid to have a debate.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point. He now has the floor and the opportunity to discuss the group of amendments under consideration.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Thank you, Dame Janet. If I had not been led on to By-path Meadow by the Minister, I would not have been in the delectable country that I wanted to traverse, so I shall come back to the straight and narrow way and talk about the cohesion fund, which I think is in order.

The Minister has made some amazing statements which do not go with the forecasts that even the Treasury put to us about the fund. I have a copy of the report of a Treasury committee on the perspective that was agreed on the basis of Edinburgh. The Minister talks about the cohesion fund being 5 per cent. but the perspective from the Treasury committee said that in 1993 it would be 2·2 per cent., in 1994 2·5 per cent., in 1995 2·8 per cent., in 1996 3·0 per cent., in 1997 3·2 per cent., in 1998 3·1 per cent. and in 1999 3·1 per cent. The figures that I shall put are not on the Minister's basis of 5 per cent., so we can almost double the amount when we talk about what we shall be contributing to this fund.

As the Minister is in such good answering form at present, can he tell me the basis of the proportion that we shall have to give to the cohesion fund? Is it a percentage of our overall European Community contribution? That, of course, includes the rebate, so the rebate cannot be used in the argument. Is it a percentage of the total overall contribution that we make? I see the Minister nodding.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As I have indicated to the Committee, Dame Janet, I will seek to catch your eye at a later point in the debate, and I will reply then.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As this is a Committee, there is no point in my building an argument on something that you now disagree on. You have nodded your head. I take it that you agree with what I have said. You do not agree? Then tell us why.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he should address me in the Chair rather than the Minister directly.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am very sorry, Dame Janet, that the Minister will not give me an answer on this. The fact is that the United Kingdom contributes to the cohesion fund in proportion to what it contributes to the overall European Community budget. One would like to know the specific figures, the amount of money, that we have to give to the fund.

Let us first look at what the fund is about. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) talked about good causes. I think that by that he means the poorer regions of Europe. There is no difference between poor regions, whether they are in Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Scotland or Northern Ireland, but the European Commission and Mr. Delors did not think about the regions and did not deal with the regions: Mr. Delors dealt with the countries that he desired to bribe or buy into the Maastricht treaty.

We heard this from the southern Irish politicians when they were selling Maastricht. They told their people that they were getting £3 million a day from Europe and that if the people voted for Maastricht the figure would go up to £6 million. That was their message, with Garret FitzGerald at the head of a European crusade in his own country. If the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), could offer the people of Scotland £3 million a day and tell them that if they voted for Strasbourg it would go up, he might possibly be on a winner. Or perhaps the Scottish people are different and feel that there are more valuable things than £6 million a day. I hope that that would be true of many of the Scots people, especially in the islands.

This was a buy-out settlement for those people. They were told that this would happen. The rage generated against Denmark and the rage generated against this House and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was all about the cohesion fund and the fact that they would lose out. We have heard a lot about helping one another, about the great European ideal and the great unity that we should have in Europe. Why cannot the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament unite to help all the poor regions and spend this money in all the poor regions?

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully, but I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is arguing against cohesion funds or in favour of cohesion funds applying to more countries than they currently do.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am arguing that if one has a cohesion fund and one tells people that it is for the poor regions, it should be for all the poor regions if one is a European. If one is a nationalist from the south of Ireland or from Portugal or Spain or Greece, then one would argue for giving nothing to Northern Ireland or to Scotland and for giving all the cohesion money to one's own country. I totally oppose that, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman opposes it, too. He would like to see a fair share of the cake for Scotland——

Several hon. Members: Wales.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sorry—Wales. He is a Celt, anyway, and we in Ulster have a bit of that in us, too. Perhaps we have some collusion—I think that that is the word.

If we have this cohesion fund, Britain will be a large contributor. I have heard that challenged by the Government Front Bench as well. It is important to note that the contributions each year are taken on the basis of the overall money that a particular country pays to Europe that year. Sometimes France, for example, does not make any real payment to Europe. The French contribution has gone up and down like a yo-yo. We want to see what the scale will be because that is what decides it.

Why does the Minister not stand up and tell us exactly how much money we shall have to give to the fund? He says that it is 5 per cent. On the figures that I have quoted from the Treasury document, over the first five years the cohesion fund will be 10 billion ecu—£8 billion—and the United Kingdom will contribute £144 million for the first year, with the figure rising each year thereafter. That is on the figure of 2·2 per cent., but the Minister says that it is 5 per cent.—so we can double it, making it nearly £300 million. The 5 per cent. is the Minister's figure, not mine.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) replied to an hon. Member on the Government side who said it is all right to say that we can give so many million here, so many million there and so many million somewhere else, but from all over the House I hear cries for hospitals, roads, schools, nurses, and so on. We do not have the money to hand out in this way. If this money is handed out to the south of Ireland, it will do down the economy of Northern Ireland. The House should remember that. Under this fund there will be a special emphasis on transport—and transport is the key to the economy of the south and to the economy of the north of Ireland. When the channel tunnel opens, it will be all important to the people of Northern Ireland and of the south of Ireland. Money will be poured in by the people of Northern Ireland to create a transport structure which will help the economy of the south of Ireland while the people of Northern Ireland will not enjoy that benefit.

7.30 pm

Mr. Cash: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one of the other criteria for obtaining cohesion funds is compliance with the convergence conditions? Does he appreciate that in the existing climate it is highly improbable, from all that we can tell, that there will be compliance with those conditions? It is therefore not just a question of bribery on a massive scale. Far more dangerous even than that, perhaps, is the raising of expectations that will be unfulfilled, as a result of which there will be a complete reversal of attitudes towards the Community. That will help to destroy the benefits of the Community's existing arrangements rather than enhance them. That is an extremely dangerous situation, given the uncertainty of the political landscape in Europe as a whole.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Mr. Bangemann, a former German Finance Minister and a vice-president of the Commission, is well known to members of the Committee, and I have sat with him in all the elected Parliaments of Europe. I asked him what would happen and he replied, "As a matter of fact, we have a problem with eastern Germany. The people here think that we are to be the paymaster. They will get a

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shock. We have to achieve convergence between eastern and western Germany before we can achieve convergence with the rest of Europe." That will be costly, and does anyone think that Germany will finance it—or that the British public will be prepared to wear other countries getting the things that Britain needs?

I am sure that the people of Scotland and Wales are worried about their transport infrastructure. Their worry is justifiable, because transport will be all-important in the future business and economy of the United Kingdom. Why must we give to others that which we need for ourselves? We must consider that very realistically.

I do not know what will happen when the Minister stands at the Dispatch Box in the future and announces cuts here and cuts there in this country's spending on the necessities of life, while the cohesion fund goes on and on.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Reference was made to good causes. I follow the hon. Gentleman's argument about money for the regions. Is he aware that the Republic of Ireland boasted recently about the higher rate of social benefits that it pays to pensioners and others compared with our nation? Also, at a time when our industrial base is being eroded, Spain has a record of enjoying the fastest industrial growth in Europe. Is it not strange that those two countries should be earmarked to benefit from the cohesion fund rather than regions in our own nation where there is tremendous need?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am trying to put that argument to the Committee. It is a solemn matter, and one that we must all consider. Certain nations are boasting of their prosperity and how well they are doing, while this country has suffered a series of cutbacks. No matter how optimistic one may be, no one imagines that the future will be rosy. Those of us who are close to the people know something of the agony of unemployment and its effect on our country.

The British people, no matter from which part of the nation they come, would be happy if a fair playing field existed, so that all regions with the same difficulties received the same amount from the cohesion fund. Then there would be an argument for the fund. But that is not happening—the fund discriminates against countries outside a group of four nations, although they share the same problems, sometimes to a greater degree.

We should have been given time tonight thoroughly to debate that matter. I should like to see the Minister of State in his place, ready to answer those questions. If the figures that I gave are not correct, this is the time freely to debate them. Instead, this is being changed into a Second Reading debate, with the Minister replying at the end—though because of lack of time, he will probably say, "I am sorry, I cannot answer."

I should like to know how much this country is to contribute to the cohesion fund. Is the Treasury committee document right or wrong? Will the figure be 2·2 per cent. or 5 per cent.? Do we pay a proportion of our entire EEC contribution or not? If we do, what is the proportion? The Committee should concern itself with those questions.

As to countries which will benefit from the cohesion fund, mention has been made of their presence in other activities. Let us take Spain as an example. Anyone who knows about the fishing industry knows of the rage against Spain. Northern Ireland has a small but able fishing fleet, and one which makes a valuable contribution to Northern Ireland's economy. Spanish boats can come in and poach —lawfully, their owners say—in our waters and take away our fishermen's livelihoods. The fishermen say to me, "Why is it that the British Government are giving them special grants? Why do we have to pay, by way of taxes, into their special fund?" How does one answer that? How does the Minister answer that?

Mr. Cash: If the hon. Gentleman does not receive a reply from my right hon. Friend the Minister, perhaps he would care to reflect on remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in January 1991, when he said that the consequences of going down that route, including a single currency, would create difficulties. He said:

"A programme of transfers—potentially huge—would be very difficult for the more prosperous countries to take. Even on present policies"—

and that does not include the deal that has just been concluded—

"by 1993 we will be funding a structural policy costing between £11 billion and £12 billion each year."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 478.]

That was my right hon. Friend the Chancellor taking a fairly effective potshot at the arrangements, which have been made considerably worse as a result of the Edinburgh deal.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That brings us to the balance between the cohesion fund and the structural fund. I noticed that the Minister tried to tie them together, so that we would not have a clear perspective of the cohesion fund apart from the structural fund. However, we also pay a large slice of the structural fund. Figures from the Treasury committee show that the United Kingdom's contribution will be 30·8 per cent. in 1993; 31·3 per cent. in 1994; 32·4 per cent. in 1995; 33·2 per cent. in 1996; 34 per cent. in 1997; 34·9 per cent. in 1998; and 35·7 per cent. in 1999. That is the extent of our contribution to the structural fund, over and above that to the cohesion fund.

Let me say a bit about the Committee of the Regions. There is a social committee in Europe. I am a Member of the European Parliament, but I have never met the Northern Ireland members of that committee, and I do not know what they do; I should like to know.

What we are setting up is not a national quango, but a European quango. The Government seem to be resisting the idea of elected representatives being on the Committee of the Regions. Why is that? The Government say that this or that section of the people should be represented, but elected representatives represent all sections of the people, and hope to obtain votes from all sections of the people. If we argue that the commitee must have an agricultural representative, and representatives from medicine and education, for instance, where will it all end? Who will be left out, and how will the choice be made?

I differ from the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), who comes from my own part of the United Kingdom. I do not think that all the Tories are joining the Unionists, or that the majority are doing so. Of course, some Unionists joined the Tory party; now they are returning to their first love, which may be deemed a good thing or a bad thing. But there will still be Tories in Northern Ireland—and, if even one were elected to represent a Northern Ireland constituency, he might be an appropriate member of the committee. If members are

chosen in the same way as members of other quangos, those who have too many votes will not be in; only those who have fewer votes succeed, and they usually lose the seats that they have gained at a subsequent election. They have a consolation prize, at least.

We should take a strong line on this: we should ask for elected representatives, and we should require their representation to be in proportion to the representation of their parties in the areas that they represent. I also believe that there should be three members from Northern Ireland.

Ms. Quin: Earlier, a Conservative Member made a suggestion about the National Farmers Union, and another mentioned a banking representative. If we followed such advice, would we not simply duplicate the work of the economic and social committee, which already represents business, trade union and other interests? I agree with the hon. Gentleman that elected representatives would be far more appropriate.

Rev. Ian Paisley: This is, indeed, a time when we should have elected representatives on the committee. They know what the people are thinking, and they have to go back to the people. Surely some sort of accountability should govern the arrangements. To whom will the committee be accountable, if not the people whom it is supposed to represent?

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Is not this the key factor? We are debating crucial funds, and much of the control over them lies with the Commission. The whole point is that the Commission will be empowered to look at those whom they wish to favour and those whom they do not. I believe that the funding will become retrospective.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Those who are in favour of Mr. Delors and Europe will move forward; those who happen to be against them will not move forward. I am the only Member of Parliament who sits on the enlarged bureau, and I have seen the shenanigans that go on between parties. Even Mr. Delors is a member of that distinguished gathering, as it is called, and I have seen the way in which he manipulates it to get his way. After all, Mr. Delors is the man sitting in the Commission who will eventually say how the funds will be used.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman describes Mr. Delors as "manipulating people to get his own way". Has he never manipulated anyone for that purpose?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I submit myself to the electorate, and I happen to get a larger vote than any other Member of the European Parliament. I do that by telling the people what I stand for, and they like that. The hon. Gentleman stood for membership of the European Parliament, but the electorate did not like him. He was not able to manipulate people. I was not trying to do so; I believe in fair, honest representation, and I believe that there should be no buy-off.

7.45 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is tremendous suspicion in Northern Ireland at present? It is suspected that, should cohesion funds go to the Irish Republic because of shenanigans, scheming, manipulation and deals made in various places, they might just be used to get new ships to compete against Northern Ireland's existing transport arrangements.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is possible. The Government of the Republic has made such a proposal twice; it was turned down both times, and is now being considered for a third time.

The hon. Gentleman represents an area that I used to represent before the redistribution of seats. He knows how valuable the port of Larne is to the economy of Northern Ireland. He also knows that an effort is now being made to make those who travel from the south stop using the Larne ferries. Yet the money given by Europe was intended to establish that port and help it, so that it could aid both north and south. Now, money is to be given to the south to destroy what Larne was funded to do. I have asked the Transport Commissioner about this. What is the use of spending money in that way when the port has been helpful to the whole of Ireland? Fleets come to the south and use it, but now the aim is to divert that traffic.

When I was in Europe recently, I was shown a map on which the ferry service was not even marked. There was a little circle over the Holyhead route, indicating that the availability of funds was being discussed. I believe that everyone has the right of access to a port in their country, but I do not believe that it is right to try to develop a port in the south of Ireland which will take traffic away from Larne, which has been established with the help of EC money.

The south of Ireland received special funding for culverting roads, which was not made available in the north. That was for the preparation of the road network for strengthening in the south to take traffic away from the north. If there is competition, we can have it; but I do not believe that European funds should be used to help one part of the Community to the detriment of another. That is my objection to the cohesion fund, and to the whole proposal.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I wish to deal specifically with amendments Nos. 102 and 103, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) and I have put our names.

Both the debate and the amendments are important. This area of policy bridges the gap between the constitutional and economic arguments for democratic reform of the European Community. I concede that the treaty undoubtedly makes some advance in that respect. For example, the protocol on the cohesion fund provides for financial transfers to improve the infrastructure of the four poorest countries—Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland. The protocol also specifies an enhanced role for the EC structural funds, principally the European regional development fund and the European social fund. Between 1989 and 1992, the structural funds doubled in size to 14 billion ecu and have since increased to 19·7 billion ecu for 1993. They are due to rise to 27·4 billion ecu by 1999.

Article 198a of the treaty establishes the Committee of the Regions which will consist of

"representatives of regional and local bodies".

Although it is a purely consultative body, it would be an important voice for the regions. That is very welcome, but it will be a toothless committee. The treaty's fatal flaw is the absence of a coherent and credible EC economic and

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industrial strategy. It echoes the failures of Britain's Thatcherite obsession with monetarism in the early 1980s and, indeed, throughout most of the 1980s.

Last year unemployment in the European Community was driven up to nearly 17 million, or 9 per cent., which is significantly higher than the 7 per cent. average for the 24 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In the 1970s, by contrast, EC unemployment rates were lower than the average for the OECD. This year, we are looking to 20 million unemployed. According to the OECD, under the present monetarist policies enshrined in the Maastricht treaty, we can anticipate average unemployment across the Community increasing still further to 16 per cent., or 30 million, by the end of the decade—nearly double the figure for last year.

That total is absolutely horrifying. I believe that it will result in the social disintegration of Europe unless there is a radical change in the economic policy and economic perspective of the Community. Unless there is such a radical change, the whole European project will collapse. The regional dimension is absolutely critical in developing and pressing for that change.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is pursuing an argument which is absolutely central to the direction in which the exercise and enterprise of Maastrict is going. Underlying the treaty there is a deliberate policy to create unemployment and to cut public expenditure. Whatever party one belongs to, the hon. Gentleman's arguments must be answered, not only by Ministers but by people outside, namely the trade unionists and others who support the Opposition. To what extent are they listening to the arguments of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues?

Mr. Hain: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comment and I also welcome him to the stable of supporters of public expenditure and government directed at that objective. I hope that the trade unionists and others who have backed the Maastricht treaty because it brings the social chapter, if not in Britain, elsewhere will consider the economic arguments more seriously, especially as they affect the so-called peripheral regions.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I want to take up the point made by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The 3 per cent. budget deficit is likely to result in public expenditure cuts of about £12,000 million. Will my hon. Friend hazard a guess at the effect on the valley communities in south Wales which have traditionally relied on a high level of public expenditure? Can he explain how people, including members of our Front Bench, can vote for £12,000 million of public expenditure cuts when they vote for the treaty?

Mr. Hain: I think that the figure of £12 billion expenditure cuts is probably on the low side. However, I shall not pursue that idea for fear of being reprimanded, Dame Janet. My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

Part of the problem is that the otherwise worthy objective of monetary union is being pursued without a coherent policy for growth or reflation and without any policy for full employment. In fact, the monetarist policy backed by rigid fiscal controls, notably on public sector debt and deficit, is imposing such a narrow economic framework on the whole of Europe that without any serious offsetting policies, which are not offered in the treaty, unemployment will increase savagely in the less competitive regions. Wales is an example of where that will happen.

Within the existing nation states, changing levels of competitiveness have a different impact on different regions. They mostly result in changing levels of employment and unemployment. Within the context of an EC regime of monetary union, a worsening of member countries' competitive position will inevitably lead to rising unemployment unless there are offsetting interventionist policies directed especially at the weaker regions of those member states.

In the absence of such interventionist policies, we have clearly seen how even the ERM's limited monetary union contributed to the deflation of the United Kingdom economy and a hike in unemployment towards 3 million in the past two years of membership. In existing nation states' monetary unions there is substantial Government intervention of one type or another. It often takes the form of supply-side policies such as active regional and industrial programmes and redistributive budgets. Even if, as we have regrettably seen in Britain in the past 14 years, such policies are not pursued with the necessary vigour, national Governments still appropriate and spend about 40 per cent. of national income. Therefore, to some extent, fiscal policy redistributes income between the most prosperous and the less prosperous regions.

How does it do that? Regions with rising unemployment automatically receive a fiscal stimulus through a boost in benefit payments and a reduction in tax revenues. That is a type of automatic stabilising mechanism. Of course, in some cases, much more formal redistributive mechanisms operate, such as those between the states in Germany.

The implications are clear. If we support monetary union, the inescapable logic is to argue for much larger centralised European budgets and/or—preferably both—automatic redistributive mechanisms as well as highly interventionist regional and industrial policies. Without them, monetary union will be a reactionary step. We are already seeing the effect.

That is one of the central problems of the Maastricht treaty. It provides neither the redistributive nor the supply-side mechanisms to counter the harmful effects of monetary union and its impact on the less competitive regions.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but will he acknowledge that nothing in the treaty rules out such a supply-side policy should it be decided by the Community collectively? The Commission, notably, the President of the Commission, has proposed exactly such a reflationary policy to get the whole European economy going and to tackle the problem of unemployment. Nothing in the treaty rules that out; it is a matter for the Governments of the Community to pursue such a policy.

Mr. Hain: On the contrary. With all due respect to my hon. Friend, everything in the treaty rules that out. The economic deficit constraints, the monetarist regime and the 3 per cent. limit on budget deficit are driving us towards meeting the convergence criteria for monetary

union which will block any hope of the redistributive supply-side mechanism which he appears to support. The crucial point is that monetary union in the European Community will be expected to operate without a central European budget of any significant size.

Even under the recent settlement, itself substantially reduced from Jacques Delors' original proposals, the EC budget will be only 1·15 per cent. of total Community gross national product. Frankly, that is petty cash. It provides no basis for regenerating the economies of the deprived peripheral and less competitive regions. Most studies suggest that at least a fourfold increase in the European Community's budget would be required to meet the scale of the challenge. Even if we ignore how the existing budget is allocated, for example the totally inadequate amount that is devoted to reducing regional imbalances and the hugely wasteful agricultural subsidies, it is totally inadequate to provide the effective redistributive mechanisms that we need at the level of the Community.

8 pm

Mr. Macdonald: Will my hon. Friend take on board the fact that the 3 per cent. deficit levels are not absolutely fixed? Community Governments can decide whether to apply them in the light of prevailing economic circumstances. Obviously, when they are as my hon. Friend describes, it would be sensible for those Governments to take a flexible view. Even in terms of pursuing national policies, national Governments will inevitably run into constraints in trying to run large-scale deficits year upon year. Such problems need to be tackled collectively across the Community rather than by individual nation states.

Mr. Hain: Again, I do not want to pursue that point too far, but I need to answer my hon. Friend's point. If the 3 per cent. limit and the 60 per cent. limit and so on are meaningless, why are they in the treaty? If they do not add up to a row of beans, why are they set in concrete in the treaty? Indeed, they are set down so explicitly that, if one does not meet them, one is fined. There is actually a provision in the treaty to fine defaulting member states for not meeting them. I do not accept my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Llew Smith: Will my hon. Friend confirm that we are discussing a legal document, not just a statement that was made by a politician on a wet Sunday afternoon?

Mr. Hain: Indeed, we are discussing a legally binding document which binds all member states, if they are to meet the criteria for acceptance into the final stage of monetary union, precisely to meet those convergence criteria, with all the horrendous consequences for areas such as the south Wales valleys in terms of cuts in public expenditure on a colossal scale. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) probably underestimated when he mentioned the figure of £12 billion. The figure is more likely to be £25 billion at the current level of budget deficit.

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend draw to the attention of the Committee the fact that the protocol is not only in the treaty but in the Bill? We will actually write it into our legislation as well.

Mr. Hain: My hon. Friend makes a valid, valuable point which enthusiastic and somewhat blinkered supporters of the treaty ignore at their peril, and certainly at the peril of my constituents.

Mr. Cash: On the hon. Gentleman's point about the amount of payments that are being made into the European Community and the remark by the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on the fact that this is a legal framework, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the whole arrangement is highly centralising and fundamentally undemocratic and authoritarian, as a result of which, the greater the competencies become, the more money will be sucked into the centre, with corresponding decline in the democratic quality for those who, for example, might become involved in the Committee of the Regions or whatever, precisely because the main power will lie with those who run the system? That is the absolute acme of all parliamentary arrangements that have taken place over the century. At the bottom line, the authority and the power go where the money is, and it will be an undemocratic and authoritarian system.

Mr. Hain: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point to which I shall return, but I wish to develop the point that I was making.

In the absence of a central budget and redistributive supply side mechanisms and a highly interventionist policy from the European level, monetary union will have a deflationary impact on less competitive regions, leading to increased unemployment, especially for regions such as Wales which, in EC parlance, are regarded as being on the periphery. On top of that, the transitional terms for monetary union require policies that will impose deflationary——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now straying rather wide of the amendments. I have given him some latitude, and I think that he recognised that in some of his earlier comments, but I ask him to address the amendments.

Mr. Hain: I am grateful for your guidance, Dame Janet. All that I plead in mitigation is that I was led astray by hon. Members taking me down certain byways.

The Chairman: That is a well-used argument, but it is not accepted by the Chair.

Mr. Hain: Indeed, Dame Janet.

I am sure that you, Dame Janet, will accept that my next point is absolutely crucial in the context of regional funds and regional policy generally. There is a real danger of European Community growth and wealth being concentrated at its hub—that meets the point made by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)—the hub being western Germany, France, the Benelux countries, perhaps northern Italy and perhaps the south-east of England if we are lucky. Meanwhile, the periphery, including areas such as Wales, will decline. Unless there are very strong and heavily funded EC regional investment policies, vast areas of the European Community will become poorer. Following capital to the hub, political power will be increasingly centralised, as sure as night follows day. Those economic imperatives undermine the importance that the modern European Community rightly ascribes in theory to the regions. In one sense, the political thrust of European Community evolution focuses on the centre and

[Mr. Hain]

the regions, with the national level receding in influence. Links between Brussels, for example, and Catalonia or Wales, if we are lucky, might override links with Madrid or London. EC structural funds are geared towards such redistribution or compensation at the regional level. The problem is that the economic imperatives that I have described mean that we have an enormously centralising force which is winning over the regionalising tendency which is in the heart of the Community. The centrifugal forces at work in the Community are triumphing over the centripetal forces and dwarfing them completely.

Mr. Jenkin: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will allow me to amplify his point about the economic effects of the monetary union that he has described in relation to the regional policies that we are discussing. The regional policy that he describes and would espouse is largely practised in Germany, where there is a monetarist central bank. I am in favour of monetarism—perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not—but he is absolutely right to point out the effect of a monetarist central policy if it is not answerable in some way to the economic demands. That has been demonstrated in the failure of the exchange rate mechanism.

Unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, which was caused by German monetary policy being imposed on south Wales, is perhaps a portent. I am surprised that Opposition Front-Bench Members espouse that policy.

Mr. Hain: I do not think that the unemployment that has been imposed on south Wales is entirely to do with the European Community. Much of it is to do with the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supports. I take the hon. Gentleman's point about the importance of having a regional banking system. We do not have one in Britain. Again, we could address that topic on another occasion. If we are to have regions that are autonomous, powerful and viable in their own right, we need to decentralise our financial structures as well. It is important also that member states have structures of government which mesh into the regionalised Europe. It is significant that, until now at least, the most successful EC country, Germany, has had a federal structure, with significant autonomy delegated to the Lander.

The case for decentralisation is as much democratic as economic. We should insist on an active regional policy for the European Community and democratic methods to facilitate it, including devolution to Scotland, Wales and the English regions. We should press for a strengthening of the Committee of the Regions. They are not optional extras; they are the vital means of ensuring that the regional dimension is not a one-way conduit for hand-outs from the centre but an active channel for empowering outlying areas and nations.

We should also insist on a highly interventionist European investment bank. The aims of such a bank are described in articles 198d and 198e on page 55 of the treaty. While the treaty sets up the structure for the bank, there is no real content to it. There is no indication of the powers that such a bank would have or what its potential could realise.

In Britain in the 1980s, we have seen beyond dispute that investment decisions are much too important to be left to the market. The market has palpably failed to modernise the manufacturing infrastructure. We need a powerful investment bank at the British and European levels, otherwise poorer regions will be left behind. Against that desperate need, regional support and aid has been cut massively in Britain, especially in assisted areas where such support and aid have been slashed.

Since revision of the assisted areas map in 1984, regional financial assistance has fallen from £518 million to £265 million—a cut of 50 per cent. That cut has had an enormous impact on areas such as south Wales, especially the deprived and neglected valleys. Given the size of the planned cuts in the Department of Trade and Industry's expenditure over the next three years, it is expected that the Government's record on regional assisted areas cuts will deepen.

It is important to place this debate in the context of an active regional policy at not simply the European but the British level. For example, what do we find in Wales? Wales has had massive cuts in regional aid since 1979. In the decade to 1991, regional assistance to industry in Wales declined by 58·3 per cent. The valleys in south Wales have been subject to savage job cuts following colliery closures and the collapse of local manufacturing industry. Regional policy expenditure in those valleys fell by 44 per cent. between 1988-89 and 1991-92. That period coincided with the much vaunted valleys initiative programme. Over the same period, regional development grants to the valleys were cut by 86·8 per cent.

When we examine the European dimension to answer the question of what extent the Committee of the Regions, its structural funds or whatever, addressed the glaring shortcomings in British policy, we find that they do not address the shortcomings at any serious level. Partly because of those shortcomings, adult male unemployment in the valleys increased by 11·2 per cent. between October 1988 and October 1992 and now stands at 19 per cent., compared with 13·5 per cent. for the whole of Wales and 13·6 per cent. in the United Kingdom. Yet, against that desperate background, we find that the economic consequences of the Maastricht treaty will make the situation worse.

8.15 pm

I concede that the establishment of the Committee of the Regions is a step forward. It will have advisory status. It will have more than 200 members, 24 of whom will be from the United Kingdom, and it will also have substitute or alternate members. All the members will be appointed—not elected—for four years by the European Council acting unanimously on proposals from the member states. The term of office is renewable, so it could be a jobs-for-life syndrome if we are not careful.

The committee will elect its own chair and officers for two-year terms, but the rules and procedure will go to the Council for approval. Everything will be done on the say-so of the European Council or the Council of Ministers. The Committee of the Regions will be shepherded by the Council but it will be able to meet on its own initiative.

All that the Committee will do is offer opinions; it will not have any powers to speak of. Effectively, it will be a talking shop. One could call it the organ grinder's monkey's monkey in the European context. We need a Committee of the Regions which is powerful.

When we examine the impact of the committee's regional policy on Wales, we find that it does not meet the scale of the challenge or the needs of our community. When we specifically examine the opportunities for Wales under the committee's proposals, we find that, despite the fact that the Maastricht treaty suggested that membership should comprise elected representatives of local and regional authorities, the Secretary of State for Wales intends that the Welsh places will be filled by unelected nominees.

The Secretary of State suggested that he might be one of the members. He is flying in the face of the clear precedent which was established, for example, at the consultative standing conference of regional and local authorities in Europe. It has been the case for many years that elected representatives take their seats at that conference. The European Commission has made it clear that the treaty should be applied uniformly across Europe and that Britain should nominate delegates in line with other countries. In a letter sent to Thomas Megahy in October, the President of the Commission said:

"The Commission is of the opinion that considering the functions attributed to the Committee of the Regions, the said Committee should consist of elected representatives."

That is the reason why it is important for local authority representatives at county and district levels in Wales to elect their representatives to the Committee of the Regions.

It is important to remind ourselves that, if the British Government persist in nominating their own sectarian appointees, they will renege on a ministerial promise made to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) in a discussion in the House on 6 December 1991:

"**Mr. Caborn:** Can we take it that elected members will be representing the United Kingdom on that body, but the formal distribution of that representation has not yet been worked out?

Mr. Key: That is how I understand it."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 562.]

In other words, the Minister was saying that he accepted that elected representatives would be members of the Committee of the Regions. We are now invited to accept that that was never the Government's policy.

The Committee of the Regions is supposed to correct the democratic deficit in the European Community. However, if the Secretary of State nominates his placement from Wales, that will make a complete mockery of correcting the democratic deficit. It is neither democratic nor does it correct the deficit. What could happen? The Secretary of State could nominate people from Wales such as the businessman who reportedly acted as his chauffeur during the general election campaign and then was appointed to two Welsh quangos as a result.

In Wales, the British Government has spurned the democratic rights of local people and put Conservative stooges on many of the 80 or so quangos which now exist in Wales. That process is likely to continue unless we have a complete change of policy and the Government accept that they should conform to the rest of the Community's practices.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister was a little one-sided in the examples he chose to illustrate the question of representation? Shortly after I attended the assembly of European regions, the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) suggested that he would represent Wales. The suggestion was greeted with derision by not only the Welsh members but by all members who were present. Members from France, Spain, Italy and Germany took the view that it was a completely nonsensical interpretation of the Committee of the Regions. The Minister was selective in the countries which he chose to use as examples because the countries which I mentioned will have elected representatives from the regions.

Mr. Hain: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point. I remind the Committee that Wales is entitled to at least two representatives on that committee. We should have a ballot of all Welsh district and county councillors so that we have representation from mid and north Wales and not just from the industrial south.

Above all, we should address the democratic deficit problem not just in Europe but in Wales, with a Welsh assembly acting as a focus for contact between the EC and local government. That would ensure that the needs of Wales, in terms of the opportunities offered by EC regional and structural funds, were taken up. That would give us programmes for economic development, investment in infrastructure and in education, training, health, housing and so on, which would genuinely ensure that Wales did not fall behind as a forgotten area of Europe.

While the Committee of the Regions is welcome as a regional voice in the EC, we should go much further. We should create a bicameral European Parliament with a second chamber consisting of members of national Parliaments and regional assemblies such as a Wales assembly. They should not be national government appointees so as to ensure that they represented their domestic electorates.

The second chamber should have consultative rights and be able to scrutinise legislation from the European Parliament and suggest amendments to it before it was finally agreed through the process of co-decision with the Council of Ministers. The advantage of such a second chamber would be to build in a checking mechanism of elected members from the nations and regions of Europe. That is probably more important for the regions, to help exert a countervailing force on the enormously powerful centralising tendencies of the EC. That argument is supported by the increasingly influential assembly of European regions, which represents over 200 regions throughout Europe, and not just in the EC.

Maastricht puts economics before politics, monetary union before democracy. It puts the cart before the horse and, in that context, areas such as Wales and other outlying regions will be forgotten and left far behind as the rush towards monetary union and centralised economic power remains the dominant force.

Mr. Cash: It is an interesting experience for me to speak following the thoughtful speech of the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), because, while he and I come to our politics from a completely different philosophy, much of what he said—on the central question of the direction in which the Community is going, the centralising tendencies, the undemocratic and authoritarian nature of the central banking arrangements, the impact that all of that has on the poor and the way in which the whole system is being constructed—struck a chord across the party divide.

For those reasons, the arrangements prescribed in the Maastricht treaty have been found wanting. That has become clear in our debates. Precisely because there is a convergence of view in all parts of the Committee,

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mitigated only by the collusion between the two Front Benches, the truth is being revealed. I said in a recent book that the truth is available to all if only people would listen to what was being said.

Yet again, the Press Gallery is almost empty. I appreciate that the journalists need a meal, but I hope that at least some of them will read the speech of the hon. Member for Neath, in the knowledge that his views and those of many of my hon. Friends are of great importance to their constituents and the readership of the newspapers.

I commend an article by Dr. Jeremy Leaman in *The Guardian*, in which he pointed out the dangers. That newspaper is not noted for its enthusiasm for policies that might be promoted on the Government Benches. *The Guardian* has had the guts to state in its columns the truth about what is going on and the way in which a monolithic structure is being created, with cosmetic ploys such as the Committee of the Regions being thrown into the pot to divert attention from what is really happening.

On 1 July 1991, at a critical stage in the movement towards the signing of the Maastricht treaty, the Prime Minister said that he did not believe that it was a practical proposition to proceed immediately to monetary union throughout the Community. He want on:

"Given the differing economic performances of the countries of the Community, monetary union would lead to massive regional unemployment, a massive collapse in asset values, a massive amount of unemployment generally, a massive population movement and huge demands for an increase in structural funds to deal with those problems. It is not a practical proposition until there have been various convergences."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 32.]

If ever a case was made for abandoning this dud product of a Maastricht treaty, that was it. The case could not have been put better. On every one of those tests, since 1 July 1991 every aspect has been brought not just to fruition but exacerbated by the policies that have been pursued in pursuance of the treaty. As a result of what happened at Edinburgh, for example, the situation has been made worse.

I will not go into all the details. We need consider only some of what has happened. On unemployment, there are projections of at least 25 million unemployed in Europe in the next few years, with increases in the United Kingdom and with massive reductions in asset values, and since 1 July 1991 they have been plummeting. On every criterion given by the Prime Minister, there is every reason to abandon what is proposed. That applies even to those who were well-intentioned in the first place and believed that Maastricht was a good idea. We should abandon the whole futile exercise, because it is diverting attention from the real problems of the United Kingdom and of the EC, which is beset in all directions with massive dislocation.

That applies, too, to eastern Europe, where terrible problems confront those trying to rebuild their democracies. In any event, they would not get the benefit of the cohesion funds, should they ever be introduced. We face terrible problems in Bosnia and Yugoslavia from the military and foreign affairs point of view.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps my hon. Friend will say a kind word to the sad and unfortunate people of Denmark, whose currency is under attack, whose interest rates have had to be increased and who will be realising that they, too, are about to pay a yet higher price to achieve convergence? They will be joining the French, who are also paying a high price to achieve convergence. The peoples of Europe have had visited on them a terrible deflationary plague which the united establishments of their countries have told them that they must bear, and they are beginning to suffer grievously.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend could not have put it better. As I said in an earlier intervention, the treaty represents a deliberate policy of creating unemployment, and must lead to massive cuts in public expenditure. Some may think that that is a good idea. I cannot believe that the people of Denmark are thinking that. Nor can the people of France, who are equally affected by what is going on in the markets, be looking forward to the prospect of their situation getting worse. None of that will be compensated for by the cohesion funds. They will not get the money promised to them, because it is not there. Nor is there even the will or ability to make the payments.

While we are considering the exchange rate mechanism and its impact on countries affected by the chain reaction that is occurring throughout the markets, let us not overlook the fact that we experienced dreadful deflationary results, which eventually led to our having to come out of the ERM.

The lessons to be learned from trying to engage in the kind of engineering that this cohesion fund proposal represents will not make a ha'p'orth of difference to the people of Europe who will be so badly affected by the mega changes being made and by the authorisation of undemocratic manipulation of funds throughout Europe and through the proposals contained in the central banking arrangements.

8.30 pm

That brings me to the European investment bank. I discovered to my considerable surprise from the international affairs and defence section of the Library that the bank has not been referred to in debates in either the House of Lords or the House of Commons over the past two years; nor has it found any recent press releases by United Kingdom Government Departments about the bank. Indeed, it went on to say that a search for some consideration of the bank by any Select Committee yielded a similar negative response. There was no information about the bank in the House of Lords, the House of Commons, Select Committees or, apparently, Government Departments.

I make reference to this because the European investment bank is not a tiddly little bank. Its equity base is approximately as that of Barclays or the Deutschebank. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a governor of this bank, and the United Kingdom owns 19·15 per cent. of its capital—the same for Germany, France and Italy. Its outstanding loans to customers are £50 billion, and the United Kingdom is committed to subscribing not only its share of the equity, which is in its capital and accumulating reserves about £1·5 billion—no inconsiderable sum—but also £7·24 billion more capital by 1998.

That represents about £10 billion invested in this bank, so we may well be interested to know what has been going on and to what extent the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a governor of this bank, has been watching what has been happening and what is likely to happen in the immediate future.

Sir Richard Body: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the forecast for public sector borrowing requirement, there seems to be no allowance for that appalling figure? Is it to be added to our PSBR requirement, or is there to be some creative accounting whereby it will not be included? If it is to be included in the PSBR, it will have the most catastrophic effect on our fiscal policies, and that will cause a great deal of inflation.

Mr. Cash: As ever, my hon. Friend has an unerring way of hitting a very good target, because the question I wanted to put to the Minister of State was just that—whether this further £7·24 billion which is committed to the European investment bank by 1998 has been included in the Treasury's PSBR forecast. If so—I look at him because I hope that he will be able to answer this question—under what heading will it come? We are entitled to ask that question, and we are entitled to a proper answer.

Mr. Macdonald: The hon. Member's sense of shock at discovering that about the European investment bank rather goes against his concern previously about uplifting the more backward regions of the Community. Surely he should be delighted at the scale of investment undertaken by the European investment bank and by its commitment to its charter of contributing to development, integration and social cohesion of all the member states. Perhaps he can draw a parallel between the concept behind the bank and the plans put forward by the Labour party at the last election for a national investment bank which would carry out a similar task in the United Kingdom. Is not what he describes——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I understand that the hon. Gentleman hopes to catch my eye. I hope that he is not making a speech already.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman has shown why he, one who is taking such a proactive part in promoting the Maastricht treaty on his side of the Committee, is falling out so badly with so many colleagues in this argument. I have to say——

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend agree that this is a very good example of the tremendously exciting prospect for socialism which is to be found in the Mastricht treaty? This is a very good example of a state investment bank which is specifically set up to provide a quasi-political alternative to the harsh and disagreeable logic of the market. There is no doubt that those hon. Gentlemen in the Labour party who do not regard sovereignty as important and who have abandoned the working-class patriotism which many of us had so much admired in the Labour party were quite right in saying that this is an important socialist measure, which ought to give more control and more domination to socialist civil servants and middle-class interferers.

Mr. Cash: As ever, I am indebted to the intervention of my hon. Friend, because he too hits the target unerringly. Following what was said by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), I should also like to know whether the Minister of State, who is sitting here but may not be listening, is aware that, as well as being the biggest single net contributor to the Community budget, we are also subsidising the industries of Italy, for example. That is a country with a GDP per head greater than our own through the European investment bank. These are the realities.

Mr. Winnick: Is the hon. Member aware that, if the treaty was anything like a socialist programme, no one would be more enthusiastic about it than I? Will he accept that, like many socialists, we consider national sovereignty to be extremely important, and do not intend to retreat from that in any way, but the Bill and the treaty are also deeply deflationary and the articles which set out the limits on public spending and the rest would mean that, no matter what cosmetic covering is given to the regions and the rest, there will be far less money and far more pain and hardship, as well as continuing mass unemployment.

Mr. Cash: It is a remarkable state of affairs that there is across the Floor of the House a pattern of practical common sense that emerges to show that there is a genuine national and European interest in this. I would have thought that nobody would want to have massive unemployment or provisions that lead to difficulties for many people who are worse off. The tradition of the Conservative party has always been to try to strike the right balance between provision for the less well-off and the generation of wealth. What is contained in the treaty and the arrangements will produce exactly the opposite results of what is claimed for it.

The Maastricht treaty is like a hall of mirrors. Every time they put forward one version, one can guarantee that the distortion in the mirror will throw up the opposite response. It is based upon a whole tissue of deceit and lies, and will lead, unfortunately, to a serious dislocation of the Community which those like me, who genuinely want it to work effectively, will find will come to nothing.

How, for example, can it be that we are subsidising Italian industry through the European investment bank? It is very simple. The United Kingdom contributes 19 per cent. of the bank's capital, but Italy takes a staggering 40 per cent. of its intra-Community lending. That is how we are effectively subsidising Italian industry, and that must be borne in mind. I hope that the Minister is listening.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend keeps talking about Italian industry, but is he satisfied that all the money is going there? Where is it actually going? Some unkind people say that the Italian attitude to public finance is slightly different from our own. Unkind people—especially those from the Court of Auditors—have suggested that, if all the trees that are collecting subsidy in Italy were really there, there would not be room for a single road, playing field or open space in the whole of Italy. I do not know whether any of that is true, but we keep hearing——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech, not an intervention. He has great experience of the House and approached this evening in a more measured way. I hope that the initial harmony that he produced at the beginning of the sitting will continue. He must not make a speech.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend's remarks are borne out by the Court of Auditors' strictures on the European investment bank. Although my hon. Friend was on a bit of a fishing expedition, he is completely right. Grave reasons for an inquiry into the way that the bank has been operating and allocating its priorities have arisen from the

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Court of Auditors' reports. It is not merely that subsidy ends up in Italian industries, but it is well known that there is massive corruption in Italy, so we have every reason to be concerned that 40 per cent. of all that money goes into the Italian economy.

Perhaps the Minister, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—who is a governor of the bank—would seek an explanation for its apparent favouritism towards Italy. Is that what we regard as being at the heart of Europe? It does not seem to make a great deal of sense. Can the Minister also tell us whether the further £7·24 billion capital committed by the United Kingdom has been included in the public sector borrowing requirement forecasts?

Why are a Conservative Government, who believe in privatisation, committing billions of pounds of desperately needed taxpayers' money to a public sector bank whose activities could be better carried out by an ordinary private sector bank?

Sir Richard Body: Does my hon. Friend not detect some absurdity? We are carrying out a long privatisation programme. One of the arguments that we advance to our constituents is that it will help to reduce Government borrowing, and that it is to our advantage and that of the taxpayer to sell off some assets. Is it not the case that all the money that we claw in from the privatisation of British Rail, the prisons, or anything else, will go straight out to the European investment bank? If my hon. Friend is right —I am sure he is—that money will be passed on to Italy.

8.45 pm

Mr. Cash: Absolutely. As I said during the debates on trans-European networks and energy, I am deeply concerned about the way in which the moneys are being distributed throughout Europe. There is a direct inter-action between the subsidies paid, the structural funds, which have not been mentioned much today and are growing massively, the cohesion funds—to all intents and purposes they are the same thing—and the concept of a social wage, which is the other side of the equation. In addition, as I said in the debate on the Railways Bill money resolution, massive subsidies are going to French, German and other European railways.

I am not in favour of subsidies, but I am damned if we are going to be left high and dry when other countries are being subsidised to compete against us unfairly. That applies to the pit closures. Our miners are being driven out of work, while subsidies are pouring into the German coal industry. Our miners and our mines are being put at an impossible disadvantage—including Trentham colliery, which has 300 million tonnes of coal under my constituency. All that is being done in the name of benefiting the British people, through subscribing to and ratifying the treaty.

There is no point on the political spectrum where I can see any benefits to the United Kingdom from the treaty. The more one looks at it, the worse it becomes. The same applies to the treaty's omissions.

The cohesion and structural funds and the common agricultural policy must be seen as a whole. The day after the set-aside arrangements were announced as a great victory by our Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Court of Auditors said that it would be the biggest fraudulent honey pot ever devised. That is not a sensible way to run a whelk stall, let alone the European Community, and it is certainly not the way to run the United Kingdom. That is why I object profoundly to the treaty—not on theological or constitutional grounds, although I freely admit that that is one way to describe what is happening.

I am concerned about the practical considerations and the fact that we are pouring money down the drain, that there is no accountability for the moneys and that the bank and the arrangements devised for it are benefiting other countries at our expense. No deal in the treaty is of any use to the British people. It is all being done in aid of the so-called "one country" that I saw advertised when I went to the Berlaymont before it got asbestosis.

If the Government believe that the investment bank is doing useful work on a Community footing—I have difficulty in understanding how that can be—will they sell off their investments in it and reinvest the proceeds in a bank of the sort that has been mentioned by Opposition Members, which they say would benefit British industry? If we are not getting the benefit and the money is all going to benefit the Italians and others, let us at least make arrangements to ensure that it comes to us. Then the British taxpayer would at least get some value for money and British industry would get the help that it so badly needs.

I am not in favour of any of those socialist banks, but at least I see the merit of the argument of focusing upon the interests of our constituents rather than people in other parts of the Community.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: I call Sir Russell Johnston.

Mr. Cash: I was giving way.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman had sat down.

Mr. Cash: No, I was giving way.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman did not say, "I give way to the hon. Gentleman." I was listening attentively.

Mr. Cash: No, but I made this gesture.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has been making that gesture most of the evening, and it has little relevance to the Chair. I am sorry, but the rules of the House are clear. The hon. Gentleman did not say, "I give way." He sat down, and I called Sir Russell Johnston.

Sir Richard Body: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I often do not say, "I give way." Often I merely indicate.

The Chairman: Order. If the hon. Member for Stafford is genuinely saying that he did not give way, I accept that he may continue. However, he has been in the House for some years and he is using his notes copiously, so perhaps he is not totally concentrating on what he is saying. Therefore, I call Mr. William Cash, but I ask him to recognise that he sat down and that, frankly, I am being more than generous in allowing him to continue. I hope that he recognises that.

Mr. Cash: I am indeed most grateful to you, Mr. Morris.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. This is a genuine effort to seek understanding. Are you saying that we should know that in future, if we give way, we should use the words, "I give way to the hon. Member"?

The Chairman: That is the normal courtesy of the Committee. It is not a definitive rule that can be found in "Erskine May", but it is the normal courtesy from one colleague to another, and I hope that hon. Members will follow it.

Mr. Cash: I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Morris. That was a misunderstanding.

I want to take up one more point with regard to the European investment bank. We are told that the President of the Board of Trade has great enthusiasm for this treaty. He is the Minister responsible for small and medium-sized enterprises, and his Department's deputy secretary is a director of the investment bank.

Will the Minister ascertain from his right hon. Friend and explain how it is that, just as we have something verging on the scandalous with regard to the Italian situation, as I have just described, in 1991 one of the wealthiest countries in the Community—France—accounted for 62 per cent. by the number of loans and 23 per cent. by value of the investment bank lending to small and medium-sized enterprises in the European Community? The corresponding figures for the United Kingdom—I hope that the Minister will not only listen to this but also tell me how this can be—were a mere 1 per cent. by number of loans and 3 per cent. by value.

You may now understand, Mr. Morris, why I was concerned to be able to continue with what I have to say, because there are a number of questions that need to be answered here, particularly having regard to the dire position of the British economy at the present time. Furthermore, we are contributing 19 per cent. of the investment bank's capital and are committed to contributing a further £7·24 billion to the European investment bank by 1998.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Cash: If my hon. Friend wishes me to give way, I shall be only too delighted to do so.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is being a little harsh on the investment bank; he ought to be thankful for small mercies, by comparison with the cohesion funds, from which we will get absolutely nothing.

Mr. Cash: I agree with what my hon. Friend says about the cohesion funds, but I do not in any way agree that it is at all a satisfactory state of affairs in the light of the evidence that I have just presented to the Committee with regard to the investment bank.

The cohesion funds, of course, are essentially socialist in concept and character. I do not for one minute hold it against Opposition Members that, in a democratic country, they fight for what they believe in. However, I detect considerable enthusiasm on the other side of the Committee for a bit more of the socialism that brings benefits to the British people.

When so many of our regions have massive unemployment, which is increasing as a result of the policies with regard to such aberrations as the exchange rate mechanism, hon. Gentlemen are beginning to ask themselves some questions about the good sense of their Front-Bench colleagues in subscribing to this treaty.

Mr. Knapman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: I will indeed.

Mr. Knapman: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in a few weeks, we may be asked to vote for some increase in taxes, and that, of course, we must willingly do if it is necessary? Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the public realise that all this extra money is to be spent in Sicily and Sardinia rather than in Stroud and Stafford, the British public may not have such a happy view of cohesion funds?

Mr. Cash: I certainly believe that the British taxpayer will become increasingly concerned about this. Not only is the central concept collapsing, but it is becoming highly dangerous to raise people's expectations and then have them dashed. While one hopes, quite reasonably, to help people in other countries, to be bound into a legal framework with the requirement to make these payments irrespective of the conditions in one's own industries does not seem to make much sense.

It is for these practical reasons that so many people in the country, and so many of our hon. Friends, agree with us, irrespective sometimes of their voting record, and tell us behind the scenes that they see a great deal in what we are saying. We reckon that a significant number of hon. Members on both sides of the House agree with us, in line with the general population.

The cohesion fund concept involves the transfer of these funds to other countries, primarily to enable their businesses to compete with ours. We are having a quite difficult enough time already with the amount of unemployment and the problems facing British companies, which employ the British work force, without making these massive contributions and effectively helping to set up, through the subsidies that are siphoned off and then paid through the back door to, for example, some of the Spanish regions and companies—competitive enterprises. We have the example of the steel casting industry, which is effectively closing down companies in the United Kingdom. What kind of lunacy is this?

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: On the cohesion fund, I put a point to my right hon. Friend, and I know that he is thinking about it, and I hope that he will answer it later in the debate. Article 130b says most clearly:

> "Member States shall conduct their economic policies . . . to attain the objectives set out in Article 130a".

Article 130a is a key article. It comes under the heading "Economic and social cohesion" and says that we should all

> "aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions".

Effectively, this means that we must block our more efficient industries so that we can spend money to make the industries of other countries more competitive with ours. If we do not do that, we will not reduce the disparities. So we are committing ourselves to redundancies and closures of factories so that factories can be opened in Sardinia and Corsica.

Mr. Cash: That is absolutely right. If this were just a parlour game—Monopoly, or something of that kind—I could understand that people would not take it too seriously. But I sincerely hope that the people of this country will be given full information about the sort of situation that is being generated by these arrangements.

The cohesion fund arrangements, which are quite clearly set out in the articles to which my hon. Friend has referred, are creating deliberate disparities, which are avoidable if we do not ratify the treaty. I look to the Minister with some astonishment, but nevertheless ask him the question, as I have asked question after question with regard to the whole of this treaty. Will he please give us some answers?

We are not inventing all this. These are facts and figures: this is evidence—what a Committee stage is all about. We are putting simple, moderate questions. We are not trying to be awkward or difficult. We are simply looking at the evidence and asking for answers. But we are getting absolutely nothing. Thus, the democratic nature of these proceedings is being undermined. If we do not receive answers to our questions, people will be left wondering, after the treaty has been ratified, how on earth, and for what reason, this was ever done in the first place.

One of the objectives of Committee proceedings——

The Chairman: Order. I am well aware of the objective of Committee proceedings. This amendment is specifically about cohesion—a subject that the hon. Gentleman left some minutes ago.

9 pm

Mr. Cash: I was talking specifically about the impact on British business and about the significantly adverse effect that the cohesion funds will have on that business. Surely that matter is of interest not only to members of the Committee but also to people outside.

Mr. Hoon: Can the hon. Gentleman explain how the cohesion fund, which is limited to the fields of the environment and trans-European networks, will have an adverse effect on British business?

Mr. Cash: It is very simple. The arrangements for trans-European networks are based upon assumptions about the subsidies that are applicable in other countries but will not be so readily available here.

Mr. Horn *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I do not want to be taken too far down this road, as it was discussed in a previous debate. I need say only that the facts speak for themselves. In effect, we are being taken for a very substantial ride. That being the case, it is important that this part of the treaty should not be ratified.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sure that I shall be forgiven if I do not follow the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) with his various apocalyptic visions.

There is no doubt that this debate covers a central area of argument for those who, like me, believe very much in the Community, as well as those who distrust it and those who, like the hon. Member for Stafford, although he occasionally claims otherwise, oppose it. It is certainly untrue to say that the founding fathers were interested only in the wealth that could be generated by a large Common Market. They were all deeply wedded to the political concept of distributivism—the need to intervene in the market to prevent wealth concentrations and to act positively to ensure that the people on the periphery of the Community would share in the wealth that greater economic activity and efficiency created at the centre.

From the very outset, no one had any illusions about the way in which the golden triangle—London to Paris to Frankfurt—would evolve. People recognise the need to create countervailing forces and the fact that these would have to operate through the institutions of the Community. Likewise, it was recognised that, where technical progress created difficulties in industrial concentrations, the whole Community shared responsibility to help overcome them and to ease the transition to something else. Like the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), I was in the European Parliament in the years leading up to the establishment of the regional fund in March 1975.

Coming as I do from the highlands of Scotland, where there is a continual struggle against the problems created by population sparsity, I remember the excitement that greeted this development. The Highlands and Islands Development Board—an idea set out in very far-seeing detail in the Keynesian Liberal yellow book of 1928—was set up by the Labour Government in 1965 and put the highlands in a new context within the United Kingdom. Now the logic was extended to Europe, and there was enormously positive and optimistic feeling abroad. I believe that the feeling was shared in the regions of England and Wales.

However, the positiveness did not, in the end, quite work out as was hoped. Many things happened in the regions that would not otherwise have happened—I refer in particular to infrastructure projects, but fund allocation was limited, and funds were carved up in advance. The United Kingdom dragged its feet. In a way, it was a classic paradox. Very often people say that Britain must take a lead in this and that Britain must take a lead in that, but the other Community countries gave us the lead on regional policy. The Commissioner responsible was British —indeed, Scottish. He is now the Lord Thomson of Monifieth, was at that time a Labour supporter, and now takes the Liberal Democrat Whip in another place. The regional committee of the European Parliament was chaired by Brits—first, by the Conservative Member, the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), who, when he spoke, modestly failed to mention that, and later by the Labour Member, the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans). Both were active and vigorous. Speaking as an individual Liberal member of that committee, I found their approach both flexible and constructive. However, there were two forces at work at home which made things difficult—they still do to a degree, and still influence many hon. Members and appear in our debates.

The Labour approach has changed slightly—or more than slightly. Before 1979, there was enormous reluctance to be involved in any Community activity, certainly if there was a danger that it might lead to someone forming the conclusion that the Community was a good thing. Matching funds were sought, about which there was a great reluctance, and additionality was not applied. I wish to ask two or three questions of the Minister about additionality, as it is important.

At that time there was fierce resistance in the Labour party to direct contact between regions and Brussels as the

party was not yet in what might be called its devolutionary phase. Likewise, the Conservatives were embarking on their free market crusade and were extremely anti-devolutionary, not just with regard to Scotland and Wales, but local government generally. They were not keen on helping any policy that was state-directed or, worse still, came from Brussels bureaucrats. Secondly, they were adamantly opposed to a meaningful direct relationship being built up between regions and Brussels, and, not surprisingly, they resisted the additionality rule.

I cannot express the additionality problem more clearly or succinctly than by quoting from the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Community on the structural funds. The report, published on 18 May 1988, stated:

"Additionality was recognised"—

by the Government—

"as a difficult concept to enforce. This is the principle that projects or programmes receiving a grant from the Fund are to be given domestic government funding, in addition to—and not in substitution for—existing planned public expenditure. The United Kingdom Government apply additionality on a 'national' not 'local' basis. Although the Funds allocate money to the United Kingdom on the basis of schemes applying for aid, the money is given in a lump sum to the Government, and is not always passed on directly to the applicant. In the case of local government authority receipts from the ERDF, the local authority will receive the Fund grant directly but government departments will reduce the authority's approved capital borrowing programme by a corresponding amount."

That still continues. The report continued:

"In the case of aid to industrial projects, supported by the ERDF, the DTI will retain the Fund grant and not pass it on because it will have already disbursed a grant to the firm in the expectation of receiving an ERDF grant to cover the expenditure. Projections of national public expenditure are increased—in anticipation of Fund receipts . . . Member States can estimate future receipts because the 'quota system'"—

for a long time, we received 28 per cent.—

"where each Member State has been allocated . . . Thus grants are not directed specifically where they are most needed, but rather are seen by the Government as providing a supplement for the national budget in the fields eligible for Fund support."

That clearly expresses the issue. The report continues:

"This means that, up till now, 'the vast majority' of United Kingdom schemes applying for ERDF aid would have been implemented anyway, regardless or whether or not they received a grant".

There was an exception to which they referred and which related to the schemes in Belfast, under the urban renewal regulations, where the Commission and the European Parliament demanded more transparent additionality to ensure extra national support.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): That narrow, unhelpful interpretation of the concept of additionality is still damaging local communities. In my constituency, the Government's interpretation of additionality has harmed local projects such as the Nenaval programme which was set up to help those communities suffering because of decline in the traditional shipbuilding industry.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. It is certainly our view that the way in which successive British Governments have dealt with the regional fund and the concept of additionality has been disgraceful and harmful to many desirable projects.

However, it appears that this is all about to change. I am told that the change is entirely due to the tough approach taken by Bruce Millan, formerly Secretary of State for Scotland in the Labour Government, who in April 1991 blocked the RECHAR funds of £100 million for the coal mining areas because he rightly felt that the United Kingdom was using its regional fund money not as additional money but as substitute expenditure. I am told that new guidelines are due by 1 April and I would be most grateful if the Minister could comment on this and perhaps even give us some foretaste of them.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman and I do not have identical views on this and I am grateful to him for giving way. He was talking about substitution. It is true that we have additionality, but there are other aspects of substitution. Community countries can apply for regional funds and other funds from the Community. Obviously, they have to contribute some of their own money, but they can apply for a lot of projects and get large sums of Community money. They might have supported some of those projects anyhow with their own finances, so the money they receive releases within those Community countries funding which they can use on other aspects of policy, perhaps in building up their industrial strength, and that might be to the disadvantage of the hon. Gentleman's constituents. That is another aspect of substitution.

Sir Russell Johnston: There are other aspects, but I will not engage in a long argument with the hon. Gentleman about them. The object of regional fund money was to enable countries to do things that they were otherwise unable to do. In that regard the Government have treated it simply as substitute expenditure.

Mr. Salmond: It will not have escaped hon. Members' notice that we have just been joined by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. It strikes me as a good opportunity for the Minister to intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech to clarify the Scottish Office's position on the number of Scottish representatives on the Committee of the Regions.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman anticipates something I will refer to later. I am sure that if the Under-Secretary, who I certainly noticed with his magnificent Edwardian whiskers, wishes to intervene that is fine.

I would also be grateful if the Minister were able to give us some glimpse of the Government's thinking on how regional funding will be handled in future. There is a school of thought that there should be much more direct region-to-Commission contact and that the money should not be carved up nationally but should be dispensed by the Commission dealing directly with the regions according to criteria agreed by the European Parliament and the European Council, possibly even on a package basis with the regions being allocated a sum of money and allowed to decide themselves what to do with it. One could call that subsidiarity. The Government say that they favour that, and I should like some comment from the Minister.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I do not understand why we have to give large sums of our money to the Commission, or whoever is dispensing it in return

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

for the Commission giving us a little of it back for our regions. I cannot understand what the national interest is in that particular equation.

Sir Russell Johnston: Again, the hon. Gentleman is being impatient, and I do not blame him for that. What he says just precedes what I am about to say.

I want to look at the anti-Community argument, that this is not something that the Community should do at all and that it is nonsensical to pay money to the Community which it then decides, after passing it through various bureaucratic sieves, to give back to us. *[Interruption.]* I trust that the hon. Gentleman to whom I gave way will do me the courtesy of listening to me, since I did him the courtesy of giving way and am now answering his argument.

The Community regional policy can theoretically be an interference in a country's national regional policy, and I suppose that there are those who feel that no external agency should override national priorities. I understand this perfectly well. But is it an override? The money is additional, if it is treated additionally; it is intended to do what the individual state feels unable to undertake because of other pressures and priorities. Why, if the Government cannot help north Wales, Cornwall or the highlands, should they not benefit from our general wealth-creating Community membership to get the things that they want done? That seems a perfectly reasonable proposition.

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not listening to the first part of what he said, but I have been listening very carefully to what he has just said. My point is that if you want something called regional policy, why not give it to the regions direct? Why recycle it round the European institutions and get back less than you put in, since it is only the Germans and the British who are contributing in net terms anyway? And yet we get back less for our regions. Why not give it to them direct? Why put it through this recycling process by which we get back less than we put in?

Sir Russell Johnston: The problem was that the Government either did not want to give it, or did not give it or was unable to give it, one or the other. I would assert the whole thing much more positively. If we are to have a Community with a social purpose, we must all accept that we have responsibilities beyond our own borders.

That brings me to the cohesion fund because, like the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who opened the debate, we on this Bench are supportive of the cohesion fund and of the cohesion of the Community. Indeed, the proposals in the cohesion fund are more limited in many ways than one might have felt necessary, and they differ from the original propositions. Nevertheless what is proposed is useful and positive. One is providing assistance for environmental projects, and that benefits not only the region or country where it proceeds but Europe more widely. One is assisting trans-European transport links, something which benefits all of us and facilitates the flow of trade. But beyond that, the argument for regional aid within a state is the same more widely within the Community as a whole.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman is being courteous in giving way and we are all grateful to him. He said that we have responsibilities outside our own borders. Everyone would agree with that, and I know that many of my constituents care very deeply about some of the problems in the rest of the world and would wish us to be generous in our application of funds in that direction. But I think that they would rather spend their money in parts of East Africa or Ethiopia where there is starvation and real tragedy. What would the right hon. Gentleman say to them about our spending money in Greece and Ireland rather than in parts of the world which are really desperate and which really need our finances?

Sir Russell Johnston: I will certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman as long as he keeps on calling me a right hon. Gentleman. It is an incentive for me to do so.

The answer to the first part of his question is that the Community gives very generous development aid. In answer to the second, I doubt very much that he is able to interpret his constituents' views quite as specifically as he suggests. What he says is not really an argument against either the cohesion fund or regional policy.

Northern Ireland Members have made a number of references to the fact that the cohesion fund might in some way disadvantage them vis a vis the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland has certainly been a considerable recipient from the regional fund, although this, sadly, seems to have had very little impact on the ideological anti-Europeanism of the Unionists. It is not the purpose of the fund to disadvantage any region but to contribute to the correction of imbalances. I remind the Committee that money given to Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain—which have a per capita gross national product below 90 per cent. of the Community average—is conditional on the recipients having a programme leading to the fulfilment of the conditions of economic convergence set out in the treaty.

It is not only a question of helping particular countries to increase their economic well-being but of exercising a degree of control over the direction of their economies. That also ought to be borne in mind. Nevertheless, the Minister heard the allegations and I am sure that he will respond.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The hon. Gentleman said that convergence would have to accord with the Maastricht treaty. In fact, as he knows, the protocol specifically mentions that part of the treaty concerned with excess deficits. Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece will have to reduce their public borrowing to 3 per cent.—or at least produce programmes designed to reduce it—to get the money. Is that not a crazy way of going about things? Those countries will be required to cut public expenditure on roads, for example, to obtain money from the Commission to build roads.

Sir Russell Johnston: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right. One purpose of article c is to amend excessive budget deficits, but there is no fixed time frame for the programme leading to the fulfilment of the conditions. The right hon. Gentleman is right in that respect.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: Well——

Mr. Cran: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: I give way to this seducer.

Mr. Cran: How very kind. As I see the hon. Gentleman's argument, the purpose is to achieve convergence. Does he not agree that the classical tools of which he speaks have been used for the last 35 or 40 years within domestic economies to try to achieve convergence but have not succeeded? If one takes the United Kingdom's regional policy map for the 1930s and superimposes upon it today's map, or even that of five or 10 years ago, they are exactly the same. Classical mechanisms do not work.

Sir Russell Johnston: I dispute that, and would argue that the Highlands and Islands Development Board, for example—which was a regional development mechanism—enjoyed a great deal of success. It reduced the outflow of people from the area and increased its income to the extent that it rose above the leval at which the region could secure Community grant. Much of the regional policy followed during the last Labour Government was also successful.

Mr. Rogers: Is not the truth of the matter that classical mechanisms have helped substantially in Wales and Scotland, because they brought to a halt the deterioration of the situation that had been developing there? Without those mechanisms, regional disparities would have been far larger than they are today.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree. Such policies are central to the Community's political success. We cannot build a Community in which the weaker areas are seen to be neglected—a generous approach must be taken towards them.

The only strong point in the arguments made by hon. Members who have intervened is that there is a need for general budgetary revision, to bring contributions more in line with the GDP of the country concerned. That should be the determining criterion, rather than the complicated mesh of measures that we have now. That would overcome the problem of requiring a country to give, by whatever means, to another country that may be richer.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does not the hon. Gentleman appreciate that one of the sad effects of regional policy in this country has been the moving of jobs from successful, prosperous areas like the west midlands to other parts of the country?

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Gill: Regional policy has created no additional jobs and no additional wealth.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not simply carry on when I call him to order; he must resume his seat. What he is saying is entirely out of order in relation to the subject of cohesion funds. I hope that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) will not be tempted down the same route.

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall obey your ruling, Mr. Morris. I shall now deal with the Committee of the Regions—although my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) hopes to catch your eye later, so that she can speak on the matter, on which she has tabled an amendment.

The hon. Member for Copeland argued that nomination to the committee should be limited to elected members. I would agree with that if I knew that the election would be carried out by means of a fair election system. My hon. Friends and I tabled an amendment to the hon. Gentleman's amendment that made that point, but, sadly, it was not selected. Nevertheless, Mr. Morris, I am sure that a fleeting reference to it would be possible.

Earlier, there was an exchange between the two Front Benches about corruption. I believe that, in the main, corruption in councils has arisen from false majorities, and, sometimes, from tiny minority votes. I do not think that it would have arisen if the councils concerned had been elected according to a fair system, in which parties are represented in proportion to the size of the vote that they received.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: Italy, for instance, has not had a large majority in power since the second world war. Why does it not have a marvellous reputation for honesty and a lack of corruption, if corruption tends to follow from large majorities?

Sir Russell Johnston: I would not go so far as to claim that a particular electoral system will immediately produce greater honesty. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is what you said."] I would not say that that was always the case. We are faced with a difficult problem—difficult, that is, if we want the outcome to be fair politically, and fair geographically. We are dealing with only 24 members. It will not be difficult if the aim is simply to appoint placemen, as has been suggested; but I take some comfort from what the Minister has said. He seems to be trying to find a way of matching the requirements.

Personally, I do not exclude the possibility that that may necessitate a mixed system of some kind. If, however, the Minister is thinking of a replay of the Economic and Social Council, I hope that the House will want no part of it: that is the real resting place for cronies, left and right. Let me point out to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) that, in this context, there are no Conservatives and no Socialists; there are only trade unionists and members of the CBI, who are, of course, totally non-political.

Let me now deal with the geographical question, in the context of the treaty. People always talk about numbers when it comes to the Committee of the Regions. Article 130a says:

> "In particular, the Community shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least-favoured regions, including the rural areas."

Article 130c states:

> "The European Regional Development Fund is intended to help to redress the main regional imbalances in the Community through participation in the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind and in the conversion of declining industrial regions."

9.30 pm

That means that a simple allocation of seats in proportion to the population, which, incidentally, would give 20 to England, two to Scotland, one to Wales and one to Northern Ireland, would not accord with the reason for regional policy set out in the treaty. Therefore, to establish the committee on that basis would be a breach of the treaty.

Under such an arrangement, Greater London would have three seats and the rest of south-east of England would have four so that, taken together, they would have two more than Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland put together. I should not have thought that that was sensible or had anything to do with regional development. It would also create a further problem about having a simple United Kingdom-based election, direct or indirect.

Dr. Godman: I am given to understand that Scotland is to have six representatives on the Committee of the Regions. Is it not the case that the European Commission consults the consultative council of regional and local authorities and that with the creation of the Committee of the Regions, the council of local authorities is to disappear? Surely it makes good sense for the Committee of the Regions to be made up of local authority representatives.

Sir Russell Johnston: As to whether Scotland is getting six, I know not, and I doubt very much whether the hon. Gentleman knows. I do not think that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), knows but I could be wrong.

Mrs. Ewing: Is it right, Allan?

Mr. Salmond: Ask him to intervene.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister is always welcome to intervene but he shows no signs of doing so.

Mr. George Robertson: I noted the absence of an intervention by the Minister when there was a cry from a sedentary position of "Is it right, Allan?", which I can only assume is the Minister's Christian name. That was a passive indication of dissent from which we in Scotland will all draw conclusions.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe) *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston: One at a time.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must make a decision.

Sir Russell Johnston: I give way to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney).

Mr. Whitney: As a mere Sassenach I enter with trepidation into a debate north of the border. As I understood the arithmetic that the hon. Gentleman offered to the House, if the calculations were done strictly arithmetically, London and the south east would end up with seven representatives and Scotland with two. The hon. Gentleman objects to that proposition. I can understand the basis of his objection, but how can he square it with his and his party's complete devotion to proportional representation?

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been present for the beginning of my speech because I went over that, or perhaps I am getting short-sighted and did not see him. The figure was 20, not 17, for England. With respect, perhaps he could read *Hansard* tomorrow to save me stretching it out.

Mr. Salmond: One last time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman can seduce the Minister to intervene on this point because we have already been told by the Secretary of State for Scotland—have we not?—that he is aiming high in terms of Scottish places on the Committee of the Regions. Denmark, a country of 5 million people, has nine places on the Committee of the Regions, so it would be useful to know from the Minister whether aiming high is the equivalent of Denmark's nine.

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) wishes to seduce the Minister, all that I can say is chacun à son gout.

Then there is the political question. The Government's approach to elections to the European Parliament has certainly not so far produced any evidence that they support pluralism or fairness. The Committee of the Regions will be advisory. The European Parliament, for that matter, is mainly advisory, expressing political views on the broad policies of the Community. However, in the 1983 European election, the Government watched 20 per cent. of those who voted in that election voting for the Liberal Democrats and getting no representation at all. I do not really trust the Government on this matter, but it is important; it is about democracy, electoral justice, enabling people's views to be expressed, and accountability. I hope that, despite their record, the Government will listen.

To be acceptable, the outcome must take proper account of geography and politics. That is not easy. I accept that it is difficult to be specific about numbers. My hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute has very strong, definite views on that matter, but in, political terms, a proportional system would produce a fair outcome.

I certainly envisage the future of Europe as a Europe of the regions in which the old natural communities of Scotland, Bavaria, Brittany and Catalonia reassert themselves.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): And Yorkshire.

Sir Russell Johnston: Possibly even Yorkshire. At the time of the commission on the constitution, many surveys found that in Yorkshire there was a greater feeling of regional identification than existed in Wales. That caught many people in Wales by surprise.

The Committee of the Regions is a limited step in this direction, but it is nevertheless a step in the right direction.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), in a typically warm-hearted and good-tempered speech, had the wit to move from the stormy waters of regional policy and the cohesion fund—without any spillage of oil, I am glad to say—to the Committee of the Regions. He even managed to bring in Yorkshire as his parting shot. No Brer Rabbit he—he has covered the whole spectrum.

With my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), a fellow Yorkshire Member, I want to pursue the theme that the hon. Gentleman lighted upon in the concluding part of his speech—the Committee of the Regions. I want to take issue with the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in arguing, in amendment No. 28, for a monopoly on the Committee of the Regions for elected local authority representatives.

The Committee of the Regions is not a Community institution. It is, by definition, only an advisory and consultative body. For that reason, as a consultative body, it is not necessarily the best institutional terrain for elected

representatives to canter over. Elected representatives are elected to execute policy, so a consultative body is almost against nature for elected local government representatives —particularly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey will agree, elected representatives from Yorkshire.

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Mr. Alison: We now have a Yorkshire intervention, so I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Enright: Is not the right hon. Gentleman therefore asking for a duplication of EcoSoc? The Committee of the Regions is meant to be a quite different body altogether.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman is confusing us by introducing meaningless acronyms.

Mr. Enright: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I thought that he would understand that it is the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Alison: That made the intervention too long, so it would have been better not to mention it at all.

According to the draft treaty, the Committee of the Regions is appointed for a period of four years. That fits in awkwardly with the variations and permutations of the periods of tenure of office of many elected councillors, especially if they are appointed from county councils and district councils. After all, county council elections are often out of phase with district council elections.

We may find that a representative who is nominated to the Committee of the Regions from a county council will suddenly drop out for electoral reasons after a period of three years, which is entirely out of phase with the normal four-year life of the committee. If there is a by-election which affects one of the nominated members, that nominated member will serve on the committee for only one year because the three-yearly cycle elections will come one year after his election in the by-election. The permutations and complications——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alison: I shall give way in a moment.

The permutations and complications of fitting in district councillors and county councillors with out-of-phase elections, and with the possibility of by-elections —all district and county councillors must serve four years —makes it nonsensical. I am sure that the Minister will agree that having a fully local authority nominated Committee of the Regions would mean people popping up and down like figures in a Punch and Judy show, in one year, out in another, with absolutely no continuity in the four-year span.

Mr. Jones: I am following the right hon. Gentleman's argument carefully. Does he agree that there must be at least two crucial components for the selection of members to the Committee of the Regions? Does he accept the basic premise that the people nominated or selected for the committee, whether they are councillors or not, need some form of democratic legitimacy? Is it reasonable that the members should be chosen not by a Secretary of State in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales but by the people of the regions?

Mr. Alison: I wonder what the hon. Gentleman thinks about democratic legitimacy against the background of the provision of the unanimity rule in so many aspects of the treaty. With local government nominated members elected by a local poll of 25 per cent., which is common in local government elections, 75 per cent. of the electorate need not bother to vote. The democratic argument about minority-elected local councillors falls down, especially when the treaty is at such pains to have not simply majority voting in certain areas but unanimous voting in many areas. The basis of poorly elected local authority representatives fails on the democratic test which is inherent in the sort of specifications that we make as normal voting patterns in the treaty.

Mr. Salmond: Will the right hon. Gentleman turn his mind to whether it could be described as purely democratic if the Secretary of State for Scotland, commanding 25 per cent. of the vote north of the border, had untrammelled power to appoint the Scottish representatives to the Committee of the Regions? Would that be a democratic test which passed in the right hon. Gentleman's opinion?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman raises a different issue, although in doing so he underlines my point. If he is objecting to the status, validity and authority of the Secretary of State for Scotland, he must similarly endorse the fact that local authority representatives—nominated exclusively and to a monopoly degree, which is the point of amendment No. 28, by a 25 per cent. turnout at a local government election—have exactly the same detriment, and for the same reason, as the hon. Gentleman's lack of faith in the Secretary of State for Scotland.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): My right hon. Friend is developing an interesting point. Perhaps he and other hon. Members will consider the difficulty in having a body composed entirely of elected councillors, when our estimate is that the kind of people we would like to see on this body, who would work at it and take it seriously—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should have referred to the kind of people whom the Committee and hon. Members would like to see serving on the Committee of the Regions—people who would take their work seriously and make a contribution. Our best estimate is that it would involve about two days' work a week. I wonder whether a conscientious, locally elected councillor would be able to give that amount of time to the task.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will appreciate that, because of my enthusiasm for the progress of the Bill and my admiration for his debating skills, I was in the Committee earlier in the day and heard him make a similar intervention. I have not made in my speech the point that he made only because he made it convincingly and succinctly in that earlier intervention. I remind him of that simply to rassure him that I am constantly behind him and supporting him. Even when he may not notice me, I notice him and listen enthusiastically to every pearl of wisdom that drops from his lips.

Locally elected councillors in, for example, councils which my hon. Friend and I know well in Yorkshire, work hard. Many of them find it a genuine struggle to carry the dual burden of earning a living and attending local council meetings to give their services as volunteers. My right hon. Friend is right to wonder whether they could be expected to spend as much as an additional two days a week. It was

[Mr. Alison]

enlightening to hear him point out that, in addition to all their other activities, they would be expected to spend two days a week on that work. Clearly, the supporters of the amendment have not thought through its implications.

Mr. Gunnell: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that matters such as that are being considered by other countries and their representatives? How does he account for the fact that from France, Italy, Germany and Spain there will be regional representatives who will, of course, also be members of regional councils in those countries? They, too, will be occupying a dual role, which is common in continental Europe. Although he made an interesting intervention, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary short-changed us——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member's intervention is becoming a speech.

Mr. Alison: I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman's intervention. What I find heart warming is the sudden enthusiasm, which I believe is genuine, for the reality of democracy in some of our European neighbours. How recent it was that the Labour party wondered whether there was any real democracy in Germany, Spain or France, and how marvellous it is to find that all of a sudden we have France, Germany and Spain thrust upon us as models of the way the democratic system works. We rejoice in that new dawning of realisation on the Labour Benches, but I must tell Opposition Members that, despite their new-found enthusiasm for the realities of democracy among our European neighbours, there is still not quite the penetration of real down-to-earth representational democracy in France, Italy, Spain or Germany that we understand in our little local authorities, our district and county councils here at home.

The new-found enthusiasm for democracy which hon. Members locate in our European neighbours still does not make the case for their having a complete monopoly on the new Committee of the Regions or for us to have our own very much better representatives. *[Interruption.]* I want to get on, because I want to end on a positive note: that is to suggest that my right hon. Friend the Minister applies his formidable ingenuity to helping us in judging the kind of alternatives that there might be for finding nominated local authority members.

I am very disappointed that there is not an amendment on the Order Paper three or six pages long, listing all the different kinds of people who might be considered for nomination. *[Interruption.]* I shall not give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I have sat here for so long, I am so used to the dulcet tones of his voice, and I have heard it so frequently that I have almost reached the point of natural saturation. I shall therefore allow him to sit there smiling, with his teeth showing—the natural disposition of my hon. Friend—and allow my own voice to echo in my own ears for a little longer, denying myself the extraordinary privilege of yet a further intervention from my hon. Friend, of whom I am very fond, naturally, and in whose ordinary conversation in the Lobbies I rejoice in engaging.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister should pick among the representatives who might be nominated. I do not exclude, as I notice that in an earlier intervention he did not, local authority elected members from nomination, but we do not want them to have a monopoly, which is the point of amendment No. 28. What about representatives from some of the worthy and specialised voluntary organisations, from the churches, the trade associations, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress or the Institute of Directors? I hope that my right hon. Friend will take up the ball and run with it.

Mr. Hoon: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman did not give way. One question I would have liked to have asked him in his enthusiasm for the Minister's denunciation of local authority members was whether he felt that a conscientious—I think that was the word—Secretary of State for Wales or a conscientious Secretary of State for Scotland would have time to serve on the Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Let me try to make it clear to the hon. Member. I am not denouncing local authority representatives and I am not saying for one minute that there should not be local authority representation, but let me put forward another point which ought to be seriously considered. It is not an uncommon practice on the continent for what I suppose might be called senior political figures to be nominated for a committee, on the understanding that they will not take an active part, and for the alternate to do the active work. I doubt whether that is a route down which we would wish to go but it is not uncommon and these are the kinds of considerations on which I hope the Committee will give us their views. We genuinely want to listen to what the Committee has to say on this matter.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for that clarification, but it raises further questions. I shall avoid being tempted along that route at the moment except to say that if the argument against local authority representatives is that they might not have enough time to fulfil the two days a week that the right hon. Gentleman suggests might be required, that must apply equally to his colleagues on the Government Benches. One of them—the Secretary of State for Wales—has said that he would have liked the opportunity to be one of the representatives on the Committee of the Regions.

Mr. George Robertson: My hon. Friend's line of argument is interesting and valuable. Will he reflect, as should the Minister, on the fact that the debate is taking place a year and two months after the Maastricht treaty was agreed and the Minister agreed to the setting up of a Committee of the Regions? Tonight he told us what the Government are against, but in those 14 months they have not found a single idea that they favour.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for that observation. Earlier the Minister said that two member states had already reached the point of naming their representatives for the Committee of the Regions. I thought that it was odd for him to say that, when we have no idea of the basis on which selection will be made in the United Kingdom and we certainly have no idea of the names.

Mr. Garel-Jones: What does the hon. Gentleman propose?

Mr. Hoon: I shall try to make clear what I think would be appropriate as I develop my argument.

What I have found surprising about the debate on the Committee of the Regions is that some reservations have been expressed about what I would regard as a welcome development in the institutional relationship available to the European Community.

The Committee of the Regions will be the first formal institutional recognition by the European Community of the important role played by the regions and by local authorities. In recent months we have heard a great deal about the word subsidiarity, which has been used to describe the relationship between the European Community and national Governments. All too often the fact that it applies equally to the relationship between national and local government—and to the relationship between European, regional and local government—has been overlooked because the Government have so little regard for the important role played by local authorities.

Unlike any other Governments in the Community, this Government believe that power should be ever more centralised in the hands of the national Administration, in clear contrast to the overwhelming tendency throughout the Community to devolve power from the centre to the regions and to locally-based administrations. That is not done at the expense of democracy at the centre, but is in addition to it—a combination of democracy at local, regional, and national level, and I hope eventually at European level.

The Government's obsessive objection to local government has illustrated their attitude throughout the Maastricht treaty negotiations and the history of negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the treaty is significant in that respect. The original text of article 198a referred to regional and local authorities. The Government insisted on amending the word "authorities" to the word that is now found in the Maastricht treaty, "bodies". When asked why that change was made I believe that the Minister said that "authorities" had "too narrow a meaning". I understand that those were his words. It is clear what he meant by that explanation. The word "authorities" could refer only to the elected representatives of the people. The British Government's insistence that the word "authorities" should be written out of the original text has led to the present ambiguity.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that I may be able to help the hon. Gentleman. He is right to say that the word "authority" appeared in the text, but the original text was in the French language and the word that appeared in the original French text was "collectivité". The decision was not taken by the British Government, or at their insistence, but by that admirable body, the jurist-linguists, who are needed in a Community where nine different languages are washing around. They decided that the word "collectivité" was best translated in the way that now appears on the face of the treaty.

Mr. Hoon: I am a little confused by that explanation, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I take it that he is indicating that it was not the British Government's insistence, but some other civil service objection to that translation. But certainly the original text referred to local authorities, and that appears to me to suggest that what was being sought in other member states was something that we would understand in this country by reference to an elected member——

It being Ten o'clock, The CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LIVERPOOL HOUSING TRUST

That the draft Liverpool Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.

VETERINARY SURGEONS

That the draft Veterinary Surgeons Qualifications (EEC Recognition) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 18th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Hospice Movement

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I should first like to place on record my gratitude to Madam Speaker for selecting this important subject for the Adjournment debate this evening—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I should be grateful if hon. Members would leave quietly and allow the hon. Lady to have her Adjournment debate.

Mrs. Roe: I am honoured, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be the Chairman of the all-party hospice group—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is still far too much noise.

Mrs. Roe: I am honoured to be the Chairman of the all-party hospice group, and I much appreciate having this opportunity to speak of the highly valued and dedicated work of the hospice movement. Hospice is a philosophy, not a building. Hospice care covers in-patient care, day centres and home care. It is concerned with the relief of symptoms, such as pain, and with meeting the psychological, social and spiritual needs of people who are terminally ill.

The modern hospice movement started in 1967 with the founding of St. Christopher's in Sydenham by Dame Cicely Saunders. The British hospice movement has provided a model for countries overseas, and provides a gold standard for care of the dying in the United Kingdom.

Important though this work is, hospice care is about more than the care of the dying. Hospices offer a commitment to enhancing the quality of life that remains to terminally ill patients. It is about preparing and supporting in a very positive way not just the patients but also relatives and dependants. It is about excellence in nursing care, and I pay tribute to the outstanding work and devotion so often displayed by those nursing the terminally ill.

The experience given to the hospice movement means that much has been learned and understood about the control of symptoms, so that hospice care now offers a highly respected skill in pain management, often by a variety of different means. Moreover, the hospice movement provides desperately needed respite care facilities. The relief and comfort that this brings to the cared for and their carers cannot be overestimated.

Let me tell the House about one woman, a divorced teacher of 54 living with two of her five children and a grandson of five. She had an operation for cancer of the colon at the end of 1991 and was well for six months, but the cancer spread to her liver. She started chemotherapy, which made her feel very unwell. After four courses of this treatment, she had to arrange for her grandson to be fostered.

She attempted to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs on the day before she was due to have her next course of treatment. After treatment for the overdose, she was seen by psychiatrists, who felt that she was very depressed, but, because of her physical symptoms, they realised that a bed in a psychiatric hospital was not the place for her. She was assessed by the hospice doctor and was able to talk about her desperation and how she felt cheated at having been rescued. Given the opportunity, she would attempt suicide again.

She was transferred to the hospice, and good symptom control lessened the pain and nausea, and, with support from the hospice staff and with the anti-depressant tablets, she began to improve. She began to enjoy the various activities that the hospice offered, and, after a three-week stay, was well enough to visit her newly arrived twin granddaughters.

A week later, that lady was discharged and has been supported ever since by the day centre, where minor changes in her medicines have kept her symptoms under control, despite the fact that the disease is progressing. Because of her contact with the hospice, she is able to accept the situation and is making the most of her time with her grandson, who remains with foster parents. This is a true story of a woman helped by a hospice offering in-patient, day centre and home care. It shows how good symptom control can improve the quality of life of someone psychologically in despair.

Take also the case of the happily married woman of 58, whose family was grown up. Although she was confined to bed because of pain and was being visited by a nurse from the hospice, she felt unable to accept the idea of going into a hospice at all. As her pain increased and it became obvious that she was dying, she agreed to go into a hospice as an in-patient. It was found there that her hip was fractured. This partly explained her terrible pain. After an operation on her hip, she returned to the hospice. An epidural injection abolished the pain in her hip, and the pain in the abdomen was controlled with pain-killing medicines. For the first time in three months, she felt comfortable, free of pain and in peace. She died peacefully, with her family present, in the hospice a week later.

Hospice provision has grown rapidly in the last 25 years. Twenty-five years ago, there were only 15 voluntary hospices, compared to 199 now. There are now nearly 3,000 in-patient hospice beds—most of them in voluntary hospices, but about 500 in national health service units. In addition, there are 400 home-care teams, 150 attached to hospice in-patient units, and 200 day hospices. Some teams operate independently, and some are attached to hospitals.

This represents an enormous investment by local communities, who pioneered, raised funds and provided the essential voluntary help that enabled voluntary hospices to grow so rapidly. National bodies like Marie Curie Cancer Care, the Sue Ryder Foundation, the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund and Help the Hospices all play a major role in fund-raising, direct provision and education.

I recognise and acknowledge the importance of the Government ring-fenced hospice grant in the development of voluntary hospices. The importance of securing funding was recognised by the Government in 1990, when the first hospice grant was made. This helped the movement to plan ahead. Now, in 1993, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Health announced to the House in the debate on 26 January, £43 million of extra money is being made available to help the hospice movement this year. A ring-fenced amount of £32·3 million is allocated to the regions for distribution via district health authorities; there is a welcome £5·6 million extension of the drug scheme to give voluntary hospices access to drugs supplied by health authorities; and there is a further £5 million to help hospices with the changes in income support and

community care. I welcome this generous treatment of the voluntary hospice movement, but there remain some important questions that I should like to raise with the Minister.

First, Government policy is to match with statutory funds the value of voluntary contributions to the revenue costs of planned and agreed services. As ring-fenced money is to end in 1994, and as contracting with health authorities is to become the standard route for financial help to the voluntary hospice movement, I seek from the Minister information on the mechanism to be adopted to ensure that 50:50 funding is achieved.

Secondly, one in six hospice beds are in national health service units. I seek from the Minister reassurance that these services will be adequately funded in the future. Can the Minister give an assurance that purchasers in health authorities will be urged to maintain—indeed, increase—the funding of NHS hospice services?

Thirdly, for many hospices, income support payments provide a substantial part of revenue. The Department of Social Security is passing to the Department of Health £5 million to replace income support. How is that money to be distributed to ensure that the hospices, whose budgets depend on that money, will be fairly compensated so that their services are not adversely affected?

Fourthly, Government support of free drugs and dressings to hospice patients is welcome. However, because of the very advanced stages of cancer that hospices treat, many of the dressings desperately needed by patients nearing the end of their life are not available on the NHS. Will my hon. Friend the Minister add dressings, such as charcoal dressings and the larger sizes of available dressings such Jelonet and Actisorb, to the drug tariff, so that those vital dressings may become freely available to hospice patients and to people nursed at home?

Fifthly, to ensure that hospices and specialist palliative care services are given the priority that people who are terminally ill merit, will my hon. Friend ensure that regional health authorities are asked to consider those as priority services and that their commitment is regularly reviewed and monitored?

The hospice movement appreciates the Government's support, but the Government need to be reminded that the movement is left to raise over half its funds itself—amounting to £50 million annually. In a recession which is affecting individual and corporate charitable donations, as we are all aware, that is increasingly difficult—a difficulty made worse in some districts where there are fund-raising campaigns by NHS provider units and trusts.

The last question for which I seek an answer involves children's hospices. There are five children's hospices in the United Kingdom, with more planned. They currently rely virtually totally on voluntary fund-raising. Those children's hospices need a stable financial arrangement similar to that introduced by the Government for adult hospices. I seek guidance on the Government's plans to ensure that that happens and that all children with a life-threatening disease have access to a recognised children's hospice for both respite and terminal care.

The voluntary hospice movement is getting ready for the new culture in the NHS. It now speaks a coherent voice through the newly formed National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services, which has appreciated the warm support given it by Ministers. The council, supported financially by British Gas, is active in ensuring that those involved in the hospice movement as volunteers and staff are fully informed of new developments in the health and social services. Council publications include "Guidelines on Contracting" and a paper on introducing quality standards and audit to hospices. The council has just published "Care in the Community for People who are Terminally Ill: Guidelines for Health Authorities and Social Services Department", which is being circulated to social services departments and health authorities.

I draw attention to those guidelines because I know that many in the hospice world are concerned that the small group of people in the community who are terminally ill could be overlooked when community care reforms are introduced in April.

I congratulate the Government on inviting the Standing Medical Advisory Committee and the Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee to examine hospice and palliative care services. I welcome their report "The Principles and Provision of Palliative Care," and seek an assurance from the Minister that before the recommendations in that report are accepted by Government, the National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services, which is representative of all the professional groups involved in hospice and palliative care throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland, will be consulted.

Lastly, I shall remind the House once more why the hospice movement is such a valuable and important asset to the United Kingdom. A young man developed a brain tumour at 36. He and his wife had two children. At 40, he became weaker, had difficulty in speaking and was unable to work. Chemotherapy stabilised his condition for the next three years, but then he began to deteriorate. Modifications to the house were made, until his wife, a tiny woman looking after a large husband at home, installed a hoist to get him into bed and into the wheelchair which was necessary to get him to a commode. He became unable to feed or dress himself.

The hospice first admitted him for a three-week period to give the wife some time to relax with her family. She visited him in the hospice every day. Over the next four years, she looked after her husband, but with increasing admissions for respite care. At first it was every three months, and then, towards the end of his life, for two weeks out of every six. By this time, her husband was unable to communicate or swallow. He spent his last few weeks in the hospice, where he died peacefully and in comfort.

The hospice movement cares for families, including bereavement care, as well as caring for dying patients. The year before her husband's death, this devoted wife and mother lost one of their two children in a road accident. The skilled support of the hospice enabled her to cope with this bereavement and a year after her husband's death she continues to visit the hospice for meetings for bereaved relatives as she begins to rebuild a new life with her son.

Without the voluntary hospice movement and the devoted staff and volunteers, whose work includes voluntary bereavement counselling, acting as trustees, flower arranging and all-important fund raising, this wonderful movement of which Britain should be so proud could not continue. Government support is greatly appreciated, and the Government's continued commitment by giving firm answers to the questions I have raised is essential.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on winning the opportunity of the debate and on using it to describe with such eloquence the enormous benefit that the hospice movement brings to sick and dying people.

My hon. Friend was too modest in underplaying her own considerable role, not least through her involvement with the parliamentary all-party group on hospices as secretary and now as chairman. Despite her important and demanding role as chairman of the Select Committee on Health, she has continued to work to raise the profile of hospices in the House, not least through her recent initiative to encourage hon. Members to visit hospices and to see the good work that they do; I hope that there is a good response.

I echo the tribute paid to the excellence of the voluntary hospices since St. Christopher's hospice first blazed the trail 25 years ago. The enormous progress which has been made in the development of palliative care since then is a tribute to the dedication, hard work and love of thousands of people who have raised funds and devoted their time to help others. Their efforts have brought to dying people and their families support, peace and, above all, improvement in the quality of their lives.

The Government's determination to drive forward health improvements is clearly set down in our White Paper, "The Health of the Nation". Our policy is to add years to life and, no less importantly, to add life to years. However, the emphasis on the improved quality of life is not new; it is the path down which the hospice movement has been leading us for years.

As modern medicine has progressed, some doctors and nurses have come to see death as a failure, but death itself is not a failure; the tragedy comes when death is premature, unnecessary, painful, hidden away and, perhaps worst of all, lonely. Nowadays, death seems something almost to be ashamed of as well as feared, but the work of the hospice movement is doing much to change that by relieving pain and helping people to approach death more calmly. The voluntary hospice movement has led the way. The principles of good palliative care developed by the hospice movement—patient-centred, responsive to need, holistic, supporting the family—are spreading into the rest of health care provision and I am delighted to see that happening.

Three years ago the then Chief Medical Officer said in his annual report:

"a major challenge for the 1990s is to extend the principles of good palliative care to the treatment of all patients with a terminal illness, regardless of their underlying diagnosis, and to measure the effectiveness of care".

In all this, the voluntary sector have led the way, with the national health service following closely behind. The care of terminally ill people offers perhaps the best example of the voluntary and statutory sectors co-operating. The hospice movement has become an important part of the overall package of health care provision. In this, the work of the National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services has played an important role. The Government are anxious to encourage ever closer working and to that end have given substantial funding to health authorities in recent years to enable them to support the running costs of voluntary hospices.

In 1987, the Department of Health asked health authorities to plan and provide comprehensive services for terminally ill people in co-operation with the voluntary sector, and to agree with voluntary organisations a contribution towards the costs of any direct services which they provided and which formed part of the authorities' overall plans. Authorities gave £11·4 million to voluntary hospices in 1988-89, and they have gone on to give more every year since then. Health authorities' funds are limited, so the Government have provided specific funding to help those authorities to give more support to voluntary hospice services—£8 million in 1990-91—which meant that the national health service was able to provide 30 per cent. of the cost of voluntary hospice services. We have increased Government funding every year, giving £17 million in 1991-92 and £31 million this year. Next year it will be even more—£32·36 million—for the health authorities to help out with voluntary hospices' running costs.

That is not the end of the story. In 1988-89 we provided extra money to help hospices to bear the cost of the pay award for nurses. In 1991-92 we introduced a pilot scheme to enable hospices to obtain drugs for their in-patients free of charge, extending the scheme in 1992-93 to cover dressings and appliances. We extended this for a further year and are providing £5·6 million next year. We shall review the future of the scheme durng the course of the year. Last year, too, we announced a £5 million programme of funding specifically for children's hospices. We are giving health authorities £5 million next year to enable them to replace the funding which some hospices would previously have received from the higher rates of income support. All this brings the Government's total funding to voluntary hospices in England since 1991 to more than £105 million.,

We cannot, however, be complacent. Too many people die in hospital instead of in a hospice or at home with proper care and support. The challenge for the national health service is to respond more flexibly to the needs and interests of dying people in the community and in a full-time care setting. We are therefore working with health authorities to ensure that they bring voluntary hospices firmly into overall health planning and contracting, and that they continue to develop national health service facilities.

From 1994-95 we shall build money for hospices and similar organisations into health authorities' overall funding on a recurrent basis. This means that authorities will be better placed to plan longer-term funding with the relevant voluntary organisations. At present, authorities do not know how much funding for hospices they will have for the new financial year until shortly before the year begins. This can prevent them from planning long-term service developments with hospices. Building funding into general allocations will make it easier for health authorities and hospices to agree three-year contracts, thus giving hospices greater financial security and a firm foundation on which to plan ahead. It will also help to develop a more structured approach to developing national health service and voluntary sector services side by side.

We believe that this is the best way of ensuring that health authorities move towards our target, that public funding for hospices should match voluntary giving, while at the same time providing greater flexibility to plan long-term services. The Department of Health will

monitor health authorities closely to ensure that they agree contracts with hospices for future years and that they are making progress towards matched funding. In 1994-95 it will be an explicit priority for health authorities to agree firm service contracts with hospices and other organisations providing palliative care.

Our commitment to promoting palliative care is clear, but it is not just a matter of funding. We need to find out more about how to help dying people. We need to help people to understand death and disease more, to approach death with less fear, and to be more caring, compassionate and supportive towards terminally ill people. To that end, we have supported research at York university and stimulated the production of a distance learning programme at the Open University. We are also promoting and supporting conferences of professionals.

In addition, we asked the Standing Medical Advisory Committee and the Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee to look at the organisation of palliative care services and the measurement of their performance. Their report, "The Principles and Provision of Palliative Care", will be published soon. Pre-publication copies were sent to health authorities and other interested bodies and there have already been strong reactions to the report—favourable and otherwise. I have seen, for instance, the initial response from the National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services. That is very welcome because one of our key aims is to stimulate a debate about the organisation and scope of palliative care. We look forward to seeing further reactions to the report and to discussions about its implications. We also asked health authorities to consider the report's recommendations in drawing up plans for services for terminally ill people.

My hon. Friend asked about the distribution of the £5 million transferred from the Department of Social Security. I am aware of hospices' concern that they might suffer financially after 1 April this year as a result of changed eligibility for income support resulting from changes to community care arrangements. I take this opportunity to reassure them that we are taking steps to prevent hospices losing out.

Community care changes are aimed at enabling authorities to place vulnerable people in the care environment best suited to their needs, including support in their own home. As part of those changes, people going into a hospice after 1 April will no longer be able to claim income support payments to meet a charge for their care. Where hospices need funding in addition to that raised from voluntary giving in order to provide essential services, that should come from the NHS.

The £5 million transferred to enable health authorities to maintain levels of public funding available to hospices will mean that hospices will have a single source of public money instead of the present two sources—income support payments and health authority funding. Health authorities will use the £5 million to replace the funding that some hospices previously received from special higher rates of income support.

We shall very shortly be giving guidance to health authorities on the use of the £5 million, asking them to allocate it in a manner that is sensitive to the current reliance on income support of specialist voluntary in-patient palliative care facilities in their areas. Funding should be provided through contractual arrangements wherever possible. We believe that that will cushion the impact of the loss of income support and protect hospices from the financial problems which some feared. Further funding will be provided to health authorities in following years. We shall monitor closely the use of that funding and the relative support given to individual voluntary hospices. I welcome the national council's recent guidelines on community care for terminally ill people, and I am sure that they will prove valuable to hospices and authorities.

My hon. Friend asked about our plans for future funding of children's hospices. As with adult hospices, the objective now is to move towards health authorities determining the need for hospice care for children through contracts rather than persisting with central funding via top-slicing, as at present. We believe that hospices should form only one element of services for children with life-threatening illnesses, and that provision should be based primarily on domiciliary care in the child's home, wherever possible, with access to respite and palliative care as necessary.

I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that hospices and palliative care have come a long way. From a small, enthusiastic but essentially separate movement, it has become an integral part of the overall health care spectrum. In that, as in many other areas, we must acknowledge our substantial debt to the innovative work of the voluntary sector—and I particularly applaud the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne in drawing attention to all that it has done.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 February 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Caravan Sites (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am glad to have the opportunity to invite the House to consider the Bill to amend the Caravan Sites Act 1968, and I am grateful to colleagues for coming to participate in the debate because I know that the subject is of wide interest.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), whose Privatisation of Gipsy Sites Bill many hon. Members will recognise re-embodied in the Bill that I seek to bring before the House. I am especially grateful to him and to the Minister for all their help during the preparation of my Bill.

When I was fortunate enough to draw a place in the ballot for private Members' Bill, I did not find it difficult to choose the subject. The law relating to gipsy sites and the experiences of many people throughout the country need to be debated. The Conservative party recognised that at the last general election, when it included a commitment in its manifesto to reform the 1968 Act. That commitment was the result of discussion before the election.

Last autumn, the Government published a consultation paper on the subject, which I am sure we shall discuss in detail and which I shall take the House through, if I may.

I recognise that there may be difficulties in getting the Bill on to the statute book. When I chose the subject, I was conscious that, if I were to be successful, I should need the active endorsement of the Government and not merely of the House, because of the difficulties in getting private Members' Bills through, especially when the Standing Committees are already heavily loaded. Whether my Bill reaches the statute book or not, I hope that the House will value the chance to talk about the issues and to hear from the Government how matters are proceeding.

I remember that, in the early 1960s, when I was a local councillor on Dartford rural district council, we faced problems in Kent which were not so different from the problems experienced in my constituency and other parts of the country today. It is a long-standing problem. We must recognise that the social changes that have taken place during the post-war years have made the problem more intense.

This country has a long-established nomadic gipsy community, which has undergone great changes during the post-war years. The traditional and genuine gipsy, whom many of us remember from our childhood, is much rarer nowadays. One does not often find ladies in straw hats and long black skirts offering to sell one clothes pegs or bunches of violets that they have just picked from one's hedgerow. The pattern has changed. There are not so many opportunistic gentlemen offering to do a job and saying, "I've got half a load of tarmac, squire, and would be glad to do up your drive." Even that traditional gipsy activity seems to have diminished.

There are some genuine gipsies—I am glad to say that there are some in my constituency. But there are many other aspects of gipsy life that have brought the description of gipsy into greater conflict with the rest of society, which I regret. When we consider the matter today or on any other occasion, it should be our objective to harmonise and smooth the existence of gipsies in society, not to provoke confrontation. I certainly do not seek to do that today.

As change has taken place, many members of the gipsy community and many groups or clans of gipsies have become much more affluent and able to provide for themselves. I believe that many are much more anxious to do so. I hope that, in considering change, we can shed any idea of a dependency culture for the gipsies that may still permeate some people's approach to the subject. We must recognise that everyone has rights in the matter. There are undoubtedly rights that gipsies should enjoy, but communities and local residents also have rights, which it is our function to protect when they are threatened or infringed.

I shall interpolate one aim that my Bill does not have, and for lack of which it may be criticised. I do not set out to provide an answer to the problem of new age travellers, which has attracted so much attention and which causes so much concern in many parts of the country. My hon. Friends may suggest that my Bill should have covered that subject, and there may be an opportunity for them to make their views known on that important issue.

However, I did not believe at the outset that it would be possible in the compass of a private Member's Bill to bring before the House the sort of measures needed to deal with the serious problem presented by new age travellers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry) *indicated assent.*

Sir Cranley Onslow: I see that my hon. Friend the Minister is indicating assent—he may recognise that it is a proper subject for the Home Office rather than for his Department. However, I hope that both Departments will get the message that there is a need for amending legislation, even if I am not seeking to bring that legislation before the House today.

Mr John Marshall (Hendon, South): An urgent need.

Sir Cranley Onslow: Yes—as my hon. Friend says, there is an urgent need. Those of us who spend time in the west country or Wales know what a tremendous menace to rural life some aspects of the new age travellers can present.

I shall set out the background to the problem and take the House through parts of the Government's consultation paper, with which hon. Members are probably familiar, but which needs to be placed on record today. The need to reform the Caravan Sites Act 1968 was recognised in the

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Conservative manifesto, which contained an undertaking to review that Act, with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampments.

In 1965, before the then Eric Lubbock introduced his Bill to the House, it was estimated that there were 3,400 gipsy families—about 4,750 caravans in England and Wales. Even then, they presented problems that needed to be dealt with, and the result was the 1968 Act. The Act places on local authorities a duty to accommodate all those whom the Act defines as

"persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin",

who were residing in or resorting to the local authority area.

Once a local authority was deemed to have provided sufficient pitches, it could apply to become designated by the Secretary of State. The effect of designation was to make it a criminal offence for a gipsy to station a caravan within the designated area, and to enable the caravan to be removed. In that way, it was intended that there would be sufficient pitches for travellers across the country and that each local authority area would accept its fair share of travellers.

When he introduced the Bill, Eric Lubbock, now Lord Avebury, said that he expected it to

"help local authorities properly to control the unauthorised use of land. It will give relief to quiet neighbourhoods and beautiful countryside which have suffered from invasions of the travelling people while at the same time it will give those travelling people a recognised place in the community."—*[Official Report,* 1 March 1968; Vol. 759, c. 1930-31.]

The House knows that, in the years since the 1968 Act, those hopes have not been fulfilled; the problem has become worse, not better. In 1965, there were 3,400 gipsy caravans; in January 1992, the Government's latest count when they published their consultation document, local authorities counted almost 13,500 such caravans, and there were an estimated 9,900 gipsy families in England and Wales. Of those, more than 4,500 were on unauthorised sites—only 1 per cent. fewer than in 1981.

Only 38 per cent. of English local authorities have achieved designation under the Act in the 24 years that have elapsed, despite the fact that, since 1978, the Government have made available a 100 per cent. grant to meet the capital costs of gipsy sites and, so far, the cost to the Exchequer has been £56 million. That is an expensive and ineffective way of dealing with a problem that we cannot ignore.

I am sure that there is no disputing the need for reforming legislation—I hope that there will be agreement on both sides of the House on that. The site provision is not keeping pace with the growth in the number of caravans. In their consultation paper, the Government state that there is no reason why the need should automatically be met by public provision. That is one part of the consultation paper which my Bill brings before the House.

The Bill aims to open the way so that the provision of gipsy sites is no longer a local authority responsibility, but those who want to establish such sites—whether gipsies or operators seeking to provide sites for gipsies—are able to use the established planning process to obtain consent for what they want to do, like any other citizen. Equally, local residents and others who are affected by the planning application have and can enjoy the full rights of objection and the full opportunities of appeal and public inquiry which the process gives.

The Bill is not an attempt to deny gipsies their sites or to deprive them of the opportunity to establish themselves in permanent or semi-permanent encampments, but simply a recognition of the need to redress the balance by altering the answer to the problem.

If people doubt whether gipsies or others are willing or able to respond to a new set of circumstances, I can tell them that there are private gipsy sites up and down the country which are operated perfectly successfully. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford will be able to say something about the willingness in the gipsy community to recognise that they can and should make provision for themselves. It would not be taking dignity away from them; it might be giving them more dignity, if we gave them the opportunity to do just that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and neighbour. These are problems that we know about only too well in Surrey. Will he consider the difficulty in one part of my constituency, Elmbridge borough, where there is a private gipsy site? There are no planning problems, by and large, and no other local problems. The trouble is that the pitches on the private gipsy site, because of timing difficulties, were not counted in the borough's qualification for designation, and that has caused a great deal of local grievance.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I can well understand that that may be—the more so when there is competition between districts and boroughs for designation under the Act. That leads to applications being handled rather hastily by local authorities in a county such as Surrey, where local authorities often seem anxious to pass the parcel from one to another by seeking designation and by unloading their problems on to their neigbours.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, under the regime before the Caravan Sites Act 1968, it was quite difficult for gipsies to obtain planning permission? The ball was in their court to try to make provision for themselves. Does he think that, if the initiative were given back to them, there might have to be additional measures or guidance to ensure that we did not revert to the pre-1968 situation and that gipsies did not find it difficult, for all the reasons that we understand, to obtain planning permission?

Sir Cranley Onslow: That is a perfectly fair point. I am sure that the Minister recognises, as did the consultation paper, the need for planning guidance to prevent just such a situation from coming back to plague us. It will be necessary to give all planning applications full, fair and proper consideration. I do not believe that that is impossible. Some aspects of the present regime operate unfairly against those whose interests are affected. I am sure that my hon. Friends will want to point that out, based on their own experience.

Many of the sites that are chosen as official gipsy sites are not chosen because they are good sites, on planning grounds; they are merely chosen because they happen to be available. One hears people say, "There is an old tip over there; it would make a good gipsy site." People feel some sympathy for that argument. I do not advocate

taking any piece of wasteland, however unsuitable it may be, even if it is thought suitable for consent for planning a gipsy site. We must tackle the problem constructively. I hope that this meets the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst).

We must also recognise that, in practice, enforcing the provisions of the 1968 Act against illegal encampments is difficult. That Act, too, needs reviewing. As matters stand, and as the consultation paper points out:

"A landowner whose land is not in a designated area and who is aggrieved by unlawful camping can only seek redress by initiating a civil action at his own expense. Landowners can apply to the court for an order of possession if they believe their property is unlawfully occupied, and special procedures are available through both the high court and the county court to assist landowners to obtain relief as quickly as possible. But many landowners may find"——

I think "may" is the wrong word; many landowners will find—

"that these procedures consume time and money and, if the campers return later or simply camp again nearby, they may be ineffective."

That is civil service talk for saying that the Act is not working.

We all have experience of the difficulties and the distress that landowners may experience dealing with the problems with which they are suddenly confronted. They come under great pressure to protect not only their own interests but those of their neighbours by dealing with illegal camping. Such camping is a great nuisance in any given locality.

The consultation paper also points out that other pieces of legislation are in place—the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990—and that they, in theory, strengthen powers to act against illegal encampments. Both Acts, however, are relatively new and correspondingly untested. I do not know what the courts will make of them, but I believe that there is no alternative to giving greater powers to local authorities, landowners and the police to act swiftly and effectively against illegal encampments.

The Government set out in detail in the consultation paper their proposals to deal with illegal camping. I am glad to see that it notes:

"The Government considers that the existing powers . . . provide insufficient means to respond effectively and speedily to unlawful on illegal occupation of land. A straightforward and speedy remedy is needed."

We all endorse that. The proposals speak for themselves, but it would be interesting if the Minister told us what reaction his consultation process has produced on the part of local authorities and police forces.

It was notable that, when setting out the alternatives, the Government invited views on whether local or highway authorities should be empowered by magistrates courts to seize caravans whose removal was obstructed or resisted, or which returned in breach of a prohibition order. The Minister may already have been told that that might cause more problems than it solved. If a caravan were seized and its owner were taken away, the other members of this family would remain, needing a roof over their heads, and the social problems of physical restraint applied to vehicles are not to be ignored—even if some of the vehicles are not particularly roadworthy. That is another feature of the problem with which many colleagues, I am sure, are familiar.

The consultation paper also states:

"The number of caravans on private gipsy sites in England and Wales has increased by 114 per cent., from 1,400 in 1981 to nearly 3,000".

That goes to show that the private sector solution is recognised, and that the gipsy community has responded to it. The privatisation of sites, would bring a solution nearer. I am happy to leave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford to outline that to the House. I hope that he will have an early opportunity to contribute to our debate. It is a new and constructive idea, but it does not appear in the Government's consultation paper. I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend explain these worthy proposals in more detail.

I do not speak for myself alone when I say that we look forward to seeing many of these ideas embodied in legislation as soon as may be. As the concluding paragraph of the paper states:

"the present arrangements are satisfactory neither for local authorities, for local communities, for landowners, nor for gipsies and travellers. The public resents the unlawful or illegal occupation of land, however it arises."

We must deal with that.

I spoke about how the present handling of applications for gipsy sites makes matters worse rather than better. The consultation paper says that gipsies enjoy a privileged position, but I do not think that that is how they would see it. An application for a gipsy site does not follow the route of an ordinary planning application. The privilege—if that is the right word—is enjoyed by the local authority, not by the potential occupants of the site that the local authority is obliged to provide. It is no exaggeration to say that, under the present Act, local council powers are undemocratic and outdated. I shall illustrate that with two examples from my constituency.

In my constituency, there are two local authorities—Woking borough council, the whole of which is covered by my constituency, and Guildford borough council, part of which is in my constituency. Neither of those authorities can yet apply for designation, because, in the view of those who settle these matters, they do not have the requisite number of pitches. Each has one 1968 site, and both sites are in my constituency.

Both those councils are under pressure, as are other councils in Surrey, following the issue of a direction under section 9 of the Act by the Secretary of State which requires the local authority, in terms, to get on with it or suffer the consequences, whatever they may be. For some time, pressure has been building as neighbouring boroughs in Surrey have managed to become qualified for designation, and that pressure has increased on Woking and Guildford.

To my knowledge, since their establishment, neither of the existing sites has caused any trouble. The occupants conduct themselves perfectly peaceably, and I get no complaints from their neighbours. The arrangement is perfectly satisfactory, probably because both sites are in fairly isolated areas, although that does not necessarily conform to the Department's current guidance.

The search for new sites has caused the greatest concern among my constituents. There have been prolonged searches all over Guildford borough, which extends widely along the north downs, and there have been strong local objections to every identified site. Finally, about 18 months ago Surrey county council chose a piece of land that was to be left surplus by the construction of a major bypass in the Blackwater valley. That bypass was to go through an established mobile home settlement and would

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leave a slice of land enclosed by the new road and the Aldershot gasworks, some industrial development, and its Rushmoor council boundary. It was about as far from Surrey as one could get without actually going into Hampshire.

The mobile home owners had been perfectly happy to live on the site, and some of them wanted to return when the road was completed. However, I do not think that any hon. Member would be happy if he were consigned to live there. There are strong objections to it on social grounds, and certainly from the neighbouring borough council and residents of my parish of Ash. It is not an ideal site, but from the council's point of view it has the great merit of being available. The council did not need a public inquiry process and, because it owned the land, it did not need a compulsory purchase order, and the Act enabled it to apply to the Secretary of State for a grant.

The local parish council and the mobile home residents were not consulted before the decision in a way that I or they would recognise as consultation, and the local community felt, with some justice, that over time they had played a full part in helping to assimilate a gipsy community into their area.

When I first came to the constituency it had a large gipsy settlement called Surrey Borders which it has assimilated, mainly into council housing. That part of Surrey has had a gipsy community for a long time, but that factor in itself made matters worse, because many people said, "We have played our part. Why should we share a burden that could well be taken elsewhere in the Guildford borough? The other site in the borough is only two or three miles away. Why pick on us?" Whatever one's view of the argument, I firmly hold the opinion that people who object should be entitled to have their objections heard and fully considered. The matter should not be rushed through.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that far too many local authorities are looking for as many sites as possible in order to become designated so as to ensure that other people have to pass on? Does he also agree that there is little or no consultation with gipsies to find an area to which they would want to go? Some of the chosen sites are totally inappropriate for gipsy needs, and the site finally designated is the last place that they would want to go.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and my example is a perfect demonstration of what he identifies. The way in which the issue was handled made communal relations in the parish much worse, because it stimulated an antagonism between the settled gipsies and the rest of the community that had not been a feature of local life for many years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My right hon. Friend and I are neighbours and understand these problems only too well. Part of my constituency is also in the Guildford borough. and some of the alternative sites that he describes were in my constituency. The difficulty is that two communities in my constituency were concerned that they were on the list, and that sets one community in a borough against another. That is a matter of great local concern, which cannot properly be solved by the current legislation.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I agree with my hon. Friend. Without going more deeply into the matter, I can say that politics also comes into it. Often, and with some justice, there is a feeling that decisions about the location of gipsy sites are taken to plant a problem in an area that is not necessarily represented by a member of the majority party on the borough council, if I may put it delicately. I think that my hon. Friend recognises what I am talking about.

None of my constituents in Ash have any confidence in the workings of the 1968 Act, and I do not blame them. In the other part of my constituency in, the community of Knaphill in Woking borough, the situation is every bit as unsatisfactory. The pressures there have been similar, but there is one difference—whereas Guildford borough council ultimately agreed to go along with the chosen site at Ash bridge, Woking borough council vehemently disagreed and lodged a section 8 objection to the application, which has been forwarded by Surrey county council to the Secretary of State, for the establishment of a gipsy site on land at Barrs lane, Knaphill.

I do not expect any hon. Member to know Barrs lane. It is a pleasant piece of open woodland which has been enjoyed by the local community as an extension to the adjoining recreation area for many years. That is one of many reasons why there is particular opposition to the establishment of a gipsy encampment.

That site was first considered because it was thought to be available. It was in the ownership of a property development company that had failed to secure planning permission to build houses there—and quite right, too—and which thought that it could solve its problem by offering the land to Surrey county council on a free sale, so that it might then be able to buy it and use its ownership to establish a gipsy site. Again, that would have circumvented the public inquiry process that one would otherwise expect. That is another example of the privileged position enjoyed by a county council, which acts to the detriment of the communities that the local authority is supposed to represent.

I am conscious that this is a long story, and that I will have to condense it. I pay tribute to the local community for its responsible attitude in getting together and making its objections. The Knaphill action group is lively, and is 100 per cent. representative of the local community. It has conducted a skilful, persistent and, so far, successful campaign to ensure that the processes for which the present law provides—inadequate though they are—are fully used.

Thanks to the action group's representations, the site was eventually dropped from the short list. The local residents were so encouraged by that that they banded together to buy the land from the property company's receivers, so that they could dedicate it to the Woodland Trust and thus ensure that it would be enjoyed in perpetuity as a local amenity. That demonstrates the community's strength of feeling about the Barrs lane woodland.

Unfortunately, in circumstances not wholly clear to me, the site was returned to Surrey county council's short list without much notice and with virtually no discussion, and chosen as the preferred second site in Woking borough. It would be hard to exaggerate the strength of local disquiet at those events.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows of my strong belief that there should be a public inquiry, and the inspector ought to conclude that the site is wholly unsuitable for a

gipsy caravan encampment on general grounds of public amenity. The fact that the site is available has no bearing on its merits, but that is the way in which the 1968 Act works. I hope that those two examples show what is wrong with the Act, and that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that he is taking action in those cases that will in effect restore the balance of democratic decision-making.

The present position is intolerable. Repeated incursions by parties of travelling gipsies on to roadside verges or other areas of accessible open land—car parks, sites earmarked for redevelopment, public parks, and so on—is intolerable and must not be allowed to continue. The theoretical rights of removal from public or private land should not blind us to the fact that they are ineffective, expensive, and cumbersome and that something more effective is needed. There is great public anger in areas where incursions occur about the damage they cause and the nuisance they provoke—not to mention the trouble and expense of securing eviction and restoring the land to its former condition.

The 1968 Act, as it currently operates, leaves behind a mess. It is time that that mess was cleared up, and I am glad to give Parliament a opportunity to start doing so today.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I call Mr. Tony Baldry.

10.14 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): *rose——*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is usual and customary for the House to hear speakers from both sides of the House, and then for the Minister to intervene later. It is unfortunate that the Minister, instead of listening to the various points that are to be made, is intervening at this early stage.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is for the Minister to choose when he wants to intervene, and it is for the occupant of the Chair to decide whether or not the Minister has caught their eye.

Mr. Baldry: It may be helpful to the House for me to intervene at this stage to outline the Government's approach to the Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow), and the reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 more generally. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) can be assured that I will listen to everything that every right hon. and hon. Member says. I hope that he, likewise, will be present throughout the debate to hear everything that my right hon. and hon. Friends have to say. It is noteworthy that, on such an important matter, the Opposition Benches are marked by the scarcity of occupants.

I welcome also the involvement of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) in this issue. This Bill takes forward initiatives originally taken in my hon. Friend's ten-minute Bill of last November.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having brought forward this measure. The issues that it addresses are of concern not only to his constituents but to many others. The Government will not oppose the Bill, although clearly we shall need to examine closely in Committee the detail of its provisions.

The Caravan Sites Act 1968 was introduced 25 years ago with all-party support. It was a private Member's Bill introduced by the then Eric Lubbock, now Lord Avebury, with the support of the then Labour Government and the Conservative Opposition. It sought to respond to the need to provide sites for gipsies and to tackle the problem of illegal camping. The Act defines gipsies as

"persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, but does not include members of an organised group of travelling showmen"—

and so on. Not all gipsies are travellers, and not all travellers are gipsies.

Parliament was concerned with the people who had and have a recognisable identity in the social history of this country, who were of a nomadic habit of life, and who either resided in a particular area as their more or less permanent residence or regularly resorted to an area during the year for a particular purpose—such as those who went hop-picking in Kent or strawberry-picking in Somerset in the appropriate season. Before 1968, their rights, other than when moving from place to place, were questionable, and provision for them was negligible.

Lord Avebury's approach was straightforward. He estimated that there were 3,500 gipsy families in England and Wales. In the event, that figure appears to have been an underestimate, but it was clearly accepted by Lord Avebury and the Government as reliable at the time.

The intention was that each local authority should make a fair provision of gipsy sites reflecting the number of gipsies resorting to that area. Once such provision had been made, the local authority concerned could apply for designation—and once it was designated, it could take action against unauthorised camping by gipsies in its area, which became an offence. A magistrate could, on the complaint of any designated local authority, authorise that authority to take necessary steps to remove caravans. If a local authority failed to make proper provision of sites for gipsies in its area, the Secretary of State could issue a direction to that authority requiring it to provide an appropriate number of sites.

The Act was thus said to contain a carrot and a stick. The carrot was that authorities that made reasonable provision could become designated and thus have greater power to deal with unlawful camping, and the stick was that any authority that dragged its feed could have a direction issued to it by the Secretary of State.

As will be gathered from a reading of the report of the Bill's Second Reading, it was introduced on the basis of at least three rather important premises. First, it was assumed that the travelling gipsy population was unlikely to grow, as more and more gipsies moved of their own accord into more settled accommodation. The Minister, Arthur Skeffington, said at the time:

"with this legislation and the provision of permanent camps, the task of integration should become much easier, particularly for the children of gipsies."

Secondly, it was assumed that local authorities would be keen to make suitable provision, because that would enable them to achieve designation and thus be able more easily to deal with unlawful camping in their areas. The third premise was that the exercise could all be achieved by authorities in a cost-neutral way, in that the money that they spent in providing pitches could be recouped in rate and rent receipts. Lord Avebury said:

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"this will not constitute a new burden on the rates since a great deal will be recovered in the charges made for the use of facilities."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1968; Vol. 759, c. 1980, 1929.]

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking has observed, all those premises have proved wrong. Since 1968, the gipsy population has grown: In January last year, there were some 13,000 gipsy caravans in England.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that many of those so-called gipsies are not gipsies at all, but ne'er-do-wells who are anxious to move from one site to another, to avoid paying their community charge, to avoid sending their children to school and to live off social security? To call them gipsies is to misuse the term.

Mr. Baldry: I was going on to say that the 13,000 figure excludes nearly all those who are more commonly known as new age travellers. They do not fall within the statutory definition set out in the Caravan Sites Act. My hon. Friend is right: many other people are causing concern, but are not included in the statutory definition of a gipsy.

As for the second premise, depite the passage of a quarter of a century, only 38 per cent. of local authorities in England have made sufficient provision to enable them to become designated.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I agree with that figure of 38 per cent. Earlier, the Minister referred to the "carrot and stick" approach. How many times since the passage of the 1968 Act has the Department used the stick?

Mr. Baldry: I shall come to that shortly.

Many local authorities seem to have been incapable of identifying suitable sites in their areas, agreeing on acceptable sites or coping with local controversy over any proposed sites. My right hon. Friend's description of some of the difficulties that he has experienced in his constituency is evidence of that. The Secretary of State has now issued directions to three local authorities—Avon, Hertfordshire and Surrey. Indeed, so slow was the provision of sites by local authorities that the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 gave powers to the Secretary of State to make 100 per cent. grants to local authorities for the costs of site provision, thus confounding the third premise on which this legislation was based—that it would not result in greater public spending.

So far, £56 million has been spent direct by the Exchequer on funding gipsy site provision, and as a result there are now around 6,000 caravans on public gipsy sites. I can think of no comparable 100 per cent. open-ended, demand-led grant made available by my Department, or indeed by any other Department. Despite all that, there are still some 4,300 gipsy caravans parked illegally in England, and the number is growing.

The intention behind the original Caravan Sites Act was commendable. Introducing his Bill, Lord Avebury said that it would

"help local authorities properly to control the unauthorised use of land.

It will give relief to quiet neighbourhoods and beautiful countryside which have suffered from invasions of the travelling people while at the same time it will give those travelling people a recognised place in the community."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1968; Vol 759, c. 1930-31.]

We have no quarrel with those aspirations, which had the support of the entire House at the time. Sadly, however, the Caravan Sites Act has failed to deliver as envisaged. Action is now needed, and my right hon. Friend's Bill is a useful step in the right direction.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Minister mentioned the issue of an order against Surrey. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) and I are particularly interested in that. Does my hon. Friend recognise that, despite the availability of 100 per cent. grants, the difficulty lies in identifying the permanent site in a way that the local population can accept? That is a matter of grave concern. Although the Minister clearly has a duty to implement the terms of the 1968 Act, there is great local resentment at the insistence that such a requirement should be imposed local communities.

Mr. Baldry: I understand my hon. Friend's point, which illustrates the concern felt about the identification of suitable sites. That has been part of the problem experienced by many local authorities over the past quarter of a century as they have tried to provide sites in the way envisaged in the 1968 Act. As I have said, the premises on which the Act was based have all clearly failed: that is why action is now needed.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One of the principal problems of the 1968 Act was the fact that it diffused responsibility for site provision between district council, county council and, to a certain extent, central Government. It was also seen as unfair by many communities—particularly my community in Wyre Forest—because the more sites the council provided, the more it was expected to provide. A honey-pot effect was produced: as an area became known as a place where gipsies were accommodated, more came, and more was expected by both county and district councils in regard to determining designation by central Government.

Mr. Baldry: I am sure that all hon. Members accept that the original Bill was presented with all-party support and the best of intentions. For reasons that I have given, which I expect to be reinforced repeatedly today, the premises on which it was based have all been found wanting and, given the experience of the past quarter of a century, the legislation needs to be reformed and action needs to be taken.

We have made it clear that people who wish to adopt a nomadic existence should be free to do so, provided that they live within the law in the same way as their fellow citizens. We have no quarrel with people pursuing a nomadic life style, provided that they do not expect either a privileged position under the law or entitlement to more support from the taxpayer than is available to those who choose a more settled existence.

We believe that gipsies and travellers, like other citizens, should seek to provide their own accommodation, seeking planning permission where necessary like everyone else. Of course, the vast majority of gipsies have already gone a considerable way towards making their own provision. They have almost always bought their own caravans and trailers and, in those circumstances, it does not seem unreasonable that more gipsies should make a provision for their pitches. Three thousand caravans were accommodated on private pitches in England in January 1992.

Indeed, the National Gypsy Council, in its response to the Government's proposals to reform the Caravan Sites Act 1968—I hope that hon. Members will read the response—made it clear that it welcomes the concept of private site initiatives for gipsies. It states that, in its

"opinion, private sites are beneficial to all concerned: to gypsies because they offer them the security of a legal home and a base from which they can send their children to school, to local authorities and central government who are spared the expense of developing and managing sites, and to the local settled community by the reduction in numbers of unauthorised encampments".

It also says:

"private gipsy sites are in locations where the gipsies who live on them will want to be, they suffer none of the problems due to incompatibility which are sometimes found on local authority sites, and once private sites become established, families on it quickly prove themselves to be good neighbours".

The latter point was tellingly made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking, and I am sure that it will be echoed many times in the debate.

I appreciate, however, that many gipsies feel that the planning system is prejudiced against them and that when they make applications for planning permission, they are too often turned down by the local planning authorities as a result of local prejudice. I do not accept that the planning system is stacked against gipsies. I have to accept, however, that it is the gipsies' perception that it is.

I am determined to remove the suspicion and tension which frequently arise in relation to gipsy applications for sites. The planning system must not only be fair but be seen to be fair for gipsies and their neighbours. We shall issue fresh planning guidance as soon as possible on the factors to be taken into account in determining planning applications for the establishment of gipsy sites.

We shall require local authorities to include in their development plans policies for providing such sites. We shall seek to encourage authorities to look positively and impartially at planning applications. It is important that planning committees are not swayed by local opposition based on prejudice, which, of course, is not and must not be a planning consideration. I trust that, as a consequence, gipsies will have the confidence increasingly to make their own provision through the planning system.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am delighted that fresh planning guidance is to be issued, and I look forward to studying it, but will the Minister take the opportunity to say whether it will differ significantly from the present guidance?

Mr. Baldry: As the consultation paper makes clear, we believe that the planning system should be fair to the gipsy population, but that it should offer them no privileges. My right hon. Friend referred to such a privilege, which gives gipsy sites preferential treatment in the green belt. Way back in 1968, that was thought to make sense, but we do not believe that it makes sense now. Therefore, the new planning guidance will be fair, but will put gipsies on an equal footing with everyone else who makes a planning application. That will be in the best interests of the gipsy population and the community as a whole. The gipsy population will know that they are being treated fairly and impartially, as can everyone else.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I welcome the Minister's statement that no preferential treatment is to be given to gipsies. Gipsies may feel that they are being prejudiced against in planning applications, but that applies to almost everyone who makes a planning application these days. In my experience, when anyone applies for planning permission, the neighbours will almost automatically object, so gipsies should not believe that they are different from the general public in that respect.

Mr. Baldry: As a Minister with responsibility for planning, I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend's point, because many people who have had planning applications go against them feel that the system was stacked against them. However, the important point is that the system must operate fairly and impartially, and the gipsy community must have the confidence, through the planning system, increasingly to make their own provision. Incidentally, that is what the gipsy community has persistently asked for.

As long ago as 1982, in a paper entitled "Gypsies and the Planning Laws", the National Gypsy Council drew attention to the fact that

"there were and still are those families amongst us who are quite capable of finding, buying and developing their own sites. We said that, economically, this was more desirable than sites being provided for these families from Public funds"——

but then expressed concern about the planning system. It is imperative that the community is confident that the system will act impartially.

We also made clear last August our intention to adopt a fresh policy to guide the payment of Exchequer grants to cover the capital cost of providing gipsy caravan sites such that it should cease to be payable generally. In future, when considering applications from local authorities for Exchequer grant for the provision of gipsy caravan sites, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will take into account the policy that grant should cease to be payable generally and all other relevant factors to which he must have regard within the existing legislation.

By seeking to encourage the maximim number of gipsies who are not at present on local authority or private sites to seek to make their own provision, we are, of course, hoping substantially to reduce the incidence of illegal camping. Illegal camping by gipsies or other travellers can affect the lives of whole communities, and we are determined to tackle the problem.

Illegal camping can cover a wide range of situations, from a single caravan camping unlawfully without authorisation on someone else's land, without permission and perhaps for a period of weeks, to a very large number of people congregating and camping on land for a weekend as part of a rave.

Clearly, reforms of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 will not cover every eventuality of illegal and unlawful camping. There is clearly a distinction between the unlawful occupation of land by gipsies who wish to remain there for some time and the problem of a sudden, large-scale but short-term incursion by new age travellers. The consultation paper issued by my Department last August set out some clear and coherent proposals to tackle illegal camping by gipsies.

We have received nearly 1,000 formal responses to our consultation paper. I have made sure that a list of those who have responded is available in the Library. Generally, there is a clear recognition of the problems inherent in the existing legislation and an acknowledgment of the need to review and reform the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Reaction to individual proposals has been varied, some of it, I am bound to say, has verged on the hysterical. Some

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respondents have managed to work themselves up into a sufficient state to make their response in particularly strong language, and I do not believe that such commentators can have read seriously what we have proposed. I do not believe that, in a mature democratic society, it is unreasonable for the Government to try to ensure that, as far as possible, unlawful camping does not take place.

That, after all, was the firm intention of the legislation when it was first introduced with all-party support some 25 years ago. It would be surprising if, in the intervening period, there had been any waning of the commitment to the rule of law and to trying to ensure as far as possible that there should not be unauthorised use of land and that farmers, village communities and local neighbourhoods should not be afraid of, or have to experience, a sudden incursion into their community of gipsies camping illegally. Such action was not acceptable in 1968 and is not acceptable now. We are determined to take the necessary measures to ensure that communities are protected from unlawful camping.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend has kindly placed in the Library a list of all those who made representations, many of them somewhat excitable. Has he asked the Home Secretary whether he has placed in the Library a list of all the police authorities that have made representations? My hon. Friend will be aware that there is profound concern about the real powers of the police, both under the existing arrangements and under the proposed new arrangements.

Mr. Baldry: If my hon. Friend goes to the Library, he will see that the document lists police authorities as well as all the parish and other authorities that have made representations.

Given the range and number of responses that we have received from local authorities, county councils, police authorities, members of the public, farmers, landowners, parish councils and, not least, gipsies, travellers and travelling groups, it must be right for us to consider the responses carefully before introducing detailed proposals to bear down on unlawful camping.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking mentioned one proposal in our consultation paper that has clearly caused some concern. On the other hand, we need to consider how Parliament can make provision to prevent circumstances arising in which, if unlawful camping is prevented in place A, those who are moved do not simply go down the road to another field 200 yards away. Those are not easy issues.

We shall act as speedily as we can to ensure that we can introduce legislation consistent with our manifesto commitments as soon as parliamentary time can be made available. As part of that exercise, I shall listen carefully today to the views of hon. Members from all parties.

My right hon. Friend's Bill has provided the House with a first opportunity to debate these issues in detail since the general election and since the publication of our consultation paper. Given that the original Bill was introduced with all-party support back in 1968 and that this is the first opportunity that we have had to debate the present Bill, I find it particularly disappointing that not one representative of the Liberal Democrats is present. After all, it was a Liberal Member who introduced the 1968 private Member's Bill. I do not know whether we shall hear from an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman today. It would certainly be useful to know where Labour stands on these difficult issues.

In any event, we have the responsibility of government, and we are determined to take forward and tackle these difficult problems. We are determined to pursue the objective of the 1968 Act, which is to ensure proper provision of sites for gipsies, while bearing down on unlawful camping.

10.42 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The problem of illegal camping by gipsies will not in any way be solved by the Bill, which in my view will make the situation immeasurably worse.

I have always been concerned about illegal camping sites, which undoubtedly cause difficulties. Gipsies are an amalgam of various kinds of people; like all people, they defy ready classification. The idea that at one stage gipsies were all people in nicely painted caravans singing folk songs with guitars while a horse pulled them gently round meandering country lanes has never been accurate, even if it is a nice image to conjure up.

Gipsies do not fall into that category today. They sometimes cause a nuisance. They sometimes collect scrap and they sometimes burn scrap and tyres on sites. When they camp on illegal sites without any sanitation, they may cause offence and difficulties to those who live in the adjacent area. Concerns about those difficulties are properly communicated to local representatives—whether the local authority or the local Member of Parliament. Local people feel a sense of injustice when gipsies take over a bit of open land in a smoke-free zone and start burning rubbish. After all, if the rest of the community emitted smoke from their chimneys, the local environmental health officer would be round with the threat of prosecution. I fully recognise the sense of injustice and outrage that people feel about illegal camping.

As I have explained, my judgment of the Bill is not based on the rosy romantic view that travellers are guitar-strumming Romanies. I am examining the realities, and it is on them that I base my judgment of the Bill. I want illegal camping to be reduced, not increased, and I believe that illegal camping will increase as a consequence of the Bill.

Shortly before the general election of 1987—hon. Members will appreciate the sensitivity of the situation—a group of gipsies camped on a site in what was to become my constituency of Bradford, South. The site was a former railways goods yard which had been earmarked for a transport museum. All hell was let loose. Local people rightly objected very strongly when, in an area landscaped at a cost of £250,000, trees were torn up and vehicles driven over a recently reseeded and returfed area. Roses that had been planted by local people were picked by gipsy children, who had been allowed—indeed, encouraged, it was suspected—by a small group of councillors to do that. There were two sides: local residents and groups of gipsies encamped in the area. I suspect—I have no proof—that the gipsies were encouraged to camp on the site by councillors and officials. The designation of that area as a local transport museum was opposed because it had been promoted by West Yorkshire metropolitan county council, about which the local

authority in Bradford was less than enthusiastic. The gipsies were used as pawns and local residents were encouraged to react by saying, "Whatever you do with the land, get the gipsies off it: if you use it for industrial development, it will at least be occupied and our difficulties will not be repeated."

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in some instances local authorities designate and spend large sums of money on sites to which gipsies do not particularly want to go, and which they wreck simply because they are not interested in staying there?

Mr. Cryer: I have no experience of that. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt be able to elaborate on that view in his speech.

In the case to which I refer, the gipsies were being used as pawns. Fortunately, the outcome was positive. The gipsies were removed and transferred to other sites and the land remained designated for use as a transport museum. Instead of saying, "Now that we have got rid of the gipsies we can forget about it," the local community association in Low Moor in my constituency organised a number of transport galas on the site to emphasise that it would have a good public use. I am happy to say that we have had a grant from the Government to develop the site, although not in quite the way that I had expected. I should have preferred a stronger emphasis on transport rather than on estate development; it appears that the grant was not given for wholly altruistic purposes. Nevertheless, after a very controversial start, the museum is going ahead with the support of the local community.

Had the local authority not made strenuous efforts to clarify the position, the outcome of the election in 1987 might have been different. The House will no doubt be delighted to learn that the Labour majority in 1983 of 100 was tripled to 309 in 1987; the House will be even more gratified to learn that the majority is now just under 5,000.

For some reason that I cannot fathom, Bradford was subsequently apparently targeted by gipsies and a fair amount of illegal camping took place. I received a number of complaints with which I sympathised. More recently, the local authority refurbished the two caravan sites in the Bradford metropolitan district area. As a result, all the caravans had to be moved off those sites, albeit temporarily. The refurbishment also caused camping problems.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the problems are far less in the north of England than in the south? Kent and East Anglia have a far higher proportion of unauthorised camping than any other part of the country.

Mr. Cryer: I cannot make a judgment about that, but if the hon. Gentleman believes that illegal camping has not been a problem in the north, he is mistaken. There was a real problem in Bradford two years ago, which has been solved to some degree by the completion of the refurbishment of the two local authority sites.

It may be argued that a metropolitan borough the size of Bradford could provide more sites, but there are always difficulties with providing sites because of the problems that arise from the activities of some gipsies. The local authority refurbished the sites and increased the number of pitches from 32 to 47. As each pitch can accommodate two caravans, the sites at Mary street and Esholt provide a total of 94 caravan sites.

I hope that this debate will follow a tenor of concern about the provision for gipsies and not the tenor of the Conservative-controlled Pickles administration in Bradford.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): It was brilliant.

Mr. Cryer: The Government Whip, who should not speak in any case, claims that that administration was very good. However, there were many disadvantages—that is why that administration was thrown out neck and crop in the local authority elections.

Although the refurbishment had started, the Conservative administration to which I have referred stopped it. That was unfair, unreasonable and arbitrary, particularly when the refurbishment was not a call on local authority funds but part of a 100 per cent. grant from the Department of the Environment. Stopping the refurbishment was also dangerous. The builders were removed and jagged edges and holes three or four feet deep were left on the site. Children on the site could easily have fallen over and injured themselves. I hope that the concern of the House will be superior to that of that Conservative administration.

As £1,241,953 has been spent on the refurbishment of the two sites to which I have referred, I am critical of the fact that the Bill proposes the repeal of obligations of local authorities. All local authority sites will be removed from local authority ownership. They will be sold with a 76 per cent. discount and, if they are not sold within 12 months, they will be sold without a reserve.

It is outrageous that public investment should be placed in jeopardy and handed over to a private landlord for a paltry sum. It is true that the Bill also provides for recognised gipsy organisations to be considered as owners, but if the sites are not sold, even at a discount, or are sold at auction without a reserve, clearly the future of such sites might be in severe jeopardy. The sites do not even have to be sold to a recognised gipsy body at auction. That is a severe criticism of the legislation, particularly when such a great deal of taxpayers' money has been invested in those sites. I want taxpayers' money and the taxpayers' investment to be protected and not simply handed over to organisations that may or may not prove to be decent landlords. Those landlords may not provide proper facilities or ensure that the travellers who stay on the sites contribute to the community by paying a reasonable rent.

The nomadic way of life of travellers has been criticised. Indeed, that criticism was encapsulated in an intervention from the Conservative Benches. It is said that travellers move around to avoid the poll tax and that they are living off the state. That criticism, which is frequently heard, can be refuted if sites are provided on which travellers have to pay rent and contribute to society at large. We must always bear in mind, too, that children are involved. Any criticisms of their parents are visited willy-nilly on the children. That is generally accepted to be extremely unfair. The greater the number of permanent sites, the better, as they provide an opportunity for children to participate in an unbroken educational process.

I have heard many criticism and comments about illegal sites. I have always pointed out that Bradford takes its fair

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share of the burden of site provision and that other local authorities should do the same. That was envisaged in the Caravan Sites Act 1968, but, as the Minister said, that provision is not being applied universally. As a result of that, three directions under section 9 of the 1968 Act are in operation requiring local authorities to make provision. I believe that there should be more directions.

If the Bill is enacted, local authorities such as Bradford, which try to provide adequate sites, will still bear that burden while local authorities that have done nothing will escape scot-free. That is simply not fair and the burden on local authorities which have sites will almost certainly increase. If there is no possibility of a local authority providing a site, where will the magnet occur? It will occur in the local authorities that have already provided sites. Attention will focus on those authorities and gipsies will move to those local authorities rather than to local authorities that do not provide sites. The latter will be able to turn around and say, "The obligation to provide sites has been completely eradicated, so we are not going to provide sites, and the Department of the Environment is not going to issue a direction so you will have to go somewhere else—not here."

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if there are more directions, there will be more sites to which gipsies do not want to go in the first place? That will create problems. Would it not be better to follow the course described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow)? We would then have sites to which gipsies want to go. They will get together and submit planning applications and will not experience the resentment of local people. If the gipsies do that, they will have followed a proper consultation process and the situation will be much better than if they are directed to go to a site where they do not want to go in the first place and where the local people will resent them.

Mr. Cryer: I am not opposed to private sites. Private sites provide a useful supplement to local authority sites, but there are not enough local authority sites. If we place a question mark over local authority sites, we do not necessarily gain more private sites. Private sites supplement local authority sites, and that is fine. It has been made clear today that the criticisms apply to any site. Few people want a gipsy site at the bottom of their garden or in their back street. Such criticisms will always exist.

Shifting the matter to the planning process so that gipsies will be able to have the sites that they want will not work, because the planning process is subject to objections and controversy. I do not share the view of the right hon. Member for Woking about consultation. I have been able to cite some unhappy examples of a lack of consultation. When Bradford, Leeds and Kirklees sought sites, there was massive consultation. Consultation is always a dangerous process for local authorities to undertake. They undertake it, as a matter of fact, with the best of intentions and with an idealistic view, but the local authorities always come out of it badly. Wherever they propose a gipsy site, there is always controversy. They undertake some consultation, but, whatever the process, whether it involves a local authority or private planning, applications will be fraught with massive controversy.

Mr. Pike: Was it not always possible to have private sites, which Opposition Members certainly do not oppose, long before the 1968 Act? The fact that the 1968 Act has not been able to deliver public sites, in conjunction with the ability to deal with private sites, shows that there has been a failure to solve the problem because we do not have adequate private or public sites.

Mr. Cryer: I have outlined the massive controversy in Low Moor in my constituency. Gipsies invaded a former goods yard beside the transport museum. Curiously enough, while people were raging about that, within a couple of hundred yards of very angry meetings, there was a private site which everybody accepted and were perfectly comfortable with, so things worked perfectly well. Private sites can be acceptable. In that instance, there was planning permission and people got on well with the travellers who were living there. That is ideal, but the removal of any local authority participation and a dependence on private sites and planning processes will not be a solution: there will always be controversy.

Mr. Gill: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument and I have some sympathy with it. One can speak only from one's own experience. There are two local authorities in my constituency, one of which has designation, the other does not. In the case of the local authority where there is no designation, a private operator would have provided a site, all things being equal, but I am afraid that all things were not equal. Under the Bill, there will be a greater prospect of that private operator and other private operators being able to make the provision which, for the past 25 years, has not materialised in one of the district councils in my constituency.

Mr. Cryer: I do not think that private provision should be encouraged at the expense of local authority provision —[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—because private provision can only supplement local authority provision. I am all in favour of that, but I am not in favour of removing the obligation on local authorities to provide sites. It is too soft an option.

I wrote to every local authority within the area of Bradford and nearby. I have written to Craven and Kirklees local authorities, for example, and I wrote to Leeds local authority long before it produced a site, amid much controversy. I wrote to Calderdale local authority asking it to provide sites because Bradford was taking the burden, and also asking why it was not prepared to share that burden. I am happy to say that some local authorities are seeking sites, but I do not want to remove that obligation, because too many local authorities will take the soft option and do absolutely nothing. The private solution does not guarantee that sites will become available.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one problem is that local authority sites are often much larger than private sites? That is what upsets many of the people who object to them, because they have a large provision with many facilities while private sites can be much smaller and thus do not arouse the same animosity as large sites arouse.

Mr. Cryer: I share that view, because it is prudent to have half a dozen smaller sites rather than one or two large ones. They can be made much more harmonious with the surroundings and the burden is shared more equally by the

community. A large site means that a certain area is taking the whole burden. In the case of Bradford, 500,000 people are taking the burden. A large number of small sites scattered throughout the area is a much more harmonious solution. That is a perfectly legitimate argument to advance, but I do not think that it is a sufficient ground to eradicate the obligation on local authorities. Certainly in Bradford, many people have criticised local authorities for not being prepared to share what they regard as a burden.

Sometimes people live in harmony with one another, and that is a great achievement, but the correct perception of travellers is not one of guitar-strumming Romanies living in wondrous harmony. Such a perception is based on folk tales and folk lore. Sometimes people can be objectionable. Sometimes their children throw bricks at doors. Sometimes they burn scrap tyres, and so on, to the general horror and discomfort of the neighbours. Making provision is a sign of a tolerant and civilised society. It is easy to make provision when people are not awkward and slip easily into the surroundings. The difficulty is in making provision when it is a conscious effort and a burden. Of course, that burden must be shared by many people and must be reduced as much as possible when a decision is made.

Mr. Heald: One of the points made by the National Gypsy Council is that local authorities do not always focus on what is required for a good gipsy site. The effect of clauses 2 and 6 would be that organisations such as the National Gypsy Council would be able to acquire sites currently in local authority control. If the discounts are allowed, about £40 million could be transferred to bodies that would then become powerful independent site associations tailored to gipsy needs and able to push forward the process of buying private land for gipsy sites. That is surely a laudable aim, giving people independence —I am approaching the point at which I am making my speech.

Mr. Cryer: I am not opposed to people being independent, but I oppose handing over a total investment of £56 million to bodies that are given preference in the legislation, but which in some cases will not be able to raise the ante for all the money; I do not think that they should be given that opportunity, anyhow. If local authorities have made bad judgments about sites, either because they are too large or because they are on tips that happen to be available and convenient at the time, those difficulties will not be altered by handing over the money.

Conservative Members argue that a private planning procedure will enable gipsies to seek sites that they feel are most suitable to their needs. That is a rosy view of what the planning process is likely to produce. There is no reason why that process cannot go on at the same time as local authorities make provision. I argue strenuously that the Bill will be the soft option for local authorities because there is no provision whatever to guarantee an increase in the number of pitches available to the gipsy community at large.

Mr. Gill: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman and I have different ideological bases, because he represents an urban area and I represent a rural area. From my experience, when a district council wants to find a site it says, "We will look here, there and somewhere else", and automatically there is opposition. The community gangs up to oppose whichever site the local authority may have designated.

Under the changes proposed in the Bill, landowners will volunteer sites. That will get over the first hurdle, because nobody is volunteering sites at present. In the changed circumstances envisaged by the Bill, and given the changed circumstances that affect the economy of rural areas, I am sure that the market will work and sites will become available. The fact that sites have been offered rather than——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is becoming a speech rather than an intervention.

Mr. Cryer: I am sure that the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) will make his own speech when the time comes. The idea that the volunteering of sites will provide a solution is not necessarily the answer, because people volunteer sites now. The hon. Member is right that I represent an urban area and he represents a rural area, so I cannot speak for rural areas and I do not attempt to do so.

When sites have been volunteered, they have often been subject to the sort of controversy that the hon. Member suggests is allied only to the local authority process. All sites will be subject to controversy unless they are completely isolated from local inhabitants—by and large, that is the reality—or unless people have complete conformity with and acceptance and understanding of the way in which travellers live. That might happen, and it would be a splendid thing if it did, but on the basis of past human experience it is unlikely to happen.

I wrote to the Calderdale local authority several years ago asking it to provide a site. When this argument was being hotly discussed at meetings in 1987, the Conservative candidate said that there was not a single area in Calderdale flat enough for a site. That was completely nonsensical. Since then, I have pressed Calderdale local authority to produce a site, but it has not done so. There have been one or two suggestions. Control of the Calderdale local authority has now switched to the Conservative party, and there is no prospect of a site being produced. Undoubtedly, the local authority is waiting for this legislation so that it can say, "We will not have a site." That is very unfair. The legislation will bring a sigh of relief from local authorities.

Why on earth should Bradford provide sites? My constituency goes to the edge of the Halifax constituency. Why should my constituents bear the burden while other areas have the obligation removed? It is a mark of a civilised society that we collectively make such provision. On the other side of my constituency is Craven local authority, which stretches into the Yorkshire dales—an area with a romantic image that the gipsy traveller in a horse-drawn caravan would find absolutely perfect because it is rural; yet there is not one site.

When I write to local authorities, I receive assurances that they will consider the matter and that it is under review. The obligation is on them to share the contribution to a group of people who cause difficulties from time to time but who, in the main—like everybody else—want to contribute to society and have a place in it. Gipsies have a particularly distinctive way of life. I am sure that the

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House recognises that obligation, so we have make provision. The provision must be nationwide, not on an arbitrary basis, as it will become if the legislation is passed.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I accept that the provision must be nationwide, but it must be where the gipsies want to go. The report from the National Gypsy Council refers time and again to local authorities that do not understand the culture of gipsies. Local authorities come up with hare-brained ideas and spend many thousands of pounds on the gipsies, but, because they do not properly understand the culture of the gipsies, it is money which the gipsies say is absolutely wasted. It would be much better if the gipsies were allowed to select where they want to go, apply for planning permission and go through the proper consultation process. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) seems to think that the state or the local authorities must be the font of all knowledge, but they are not.

Mr. Cryer: I am not saying that at all. I have made it clear that private provision can happily supplement local authority provision in some cases. Let us suppose that a local authority provides a pitch with 20 sites. The pitch is taken over and the landlord says, "I don't think it is very comfortable; we will reduce it by 15". That sort of thing can happen. Such cases will place a question mark over the provisions of the Bill.

There is no reason to suppose that travellers especially want not to go to Halifax, Skipton or other parts of the Craven area. Indeed, I should have thought that they would like to do so. Those local authorities should have the obligation that has existed since 1968 and which they have failed to honour in the provision of sites.

The Secretary of State should have the power to make a direction. It is rarely used; it is not some sort of centralised Marxist state direction, but simply an attempt to provide for a group of people who have a perfect right to their way of life, which, by and large, is different from that of the vast majority of people who like a stable, house-based existence. It is a mark of our society that we are prepared to make that sort of provision.

In addition, I argue that local authorities are accountable to some degree. Councillors are elected from all the political parties in the House. When Conservative councillors express their views at local authority elections, they do so because they are accountable and they are subsequently held to account, as are Labour and Liberal councillors. The idea that local authorities are some sort of Soviet imposing unyielding and unheeding decisions is simply not true.

It might be argued that, by and large, gipsies do not have votes because they have not registered to vote and that their views might be ignored, but that is not so. In many local authorities where gipsies have sites, there is not much electoral advantage in providing them; it is an example of altruism at work. It should be heart-warming to learn that people are prepared to make decisions and to make an effort without consequent electoral advantages being sought at the same time. It is a good thing that people should be altruistic, that they have ideals and apply them. Local authorities are accountable.

The idea that local authorities are completely divorced from the needs and aspirations of the gipsies is not true. Only local authorities can afford to employ, for example, gipsy liaison officers—as Bradford does—in an attempt to build up a relationship between the local authority and the gipsies. We should surely want that. Do we want people to remain for ever outside the system of democratic administration that we have built up over the years? Do we want them to remain an alienated, isolated group?

Mrs. Chaplin *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I shall just finish this point. The fact that the local authority provides education for gipsy children inevitably means that the local authority is brought into contact with the gipsy community. That is a strong means of maintaining a link with gipsies and understanding their wishes and aspirations.

Sir Cranley Onslow: There is nothing in my Bill or in my approach to the problem that seeks in any way to put an end to the gipsy liaison officer system. Those posts will be just as necessary after my Bill, or something like it, reaches the statute book. However, the system under which we are obliged to live due to an outdated Act promotes confrontation and creates communal tensions which ought to be avoided.

Mr. Cryer: I was not criticising the promoter of the Bill. I was replying to an intervention by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and was making the point that the operation of local authority services perforce brings local authorities into contact with gipsy communities. They therefore understand the hopes, aspirations and needs of travelling people, even though they may not always deal with them adequately. What human institution deals adequately with all the people all the time? We do not, because of inadequacies of structure and humanity and because of the way we live, work and breathe. Nevertheless, the democratic structure of local authorities leads to some accountability.

Conservative Members cannot complain about the controversy created when local authorities propose sites and yet argue that local authorities impose their wishes on the community. The community often acts so strenuously against such a proposal that the local authority has to withdraw it amid a storm of protest. That is part of the democratic process. People should have the right to object to proposals. I do not believe that planning system will be devoid of the right to object to proposals, as implied by Conservative Members. Planning procedures nearly always lead to controversy—whether they relate to gipsies or to other issues: a factory, a tannery, or whatever. Objections will not go away, because such proposals are controversial.

I understand perfectly the anxiety and concern that are caused by the creation of illegal gipsy sites. My aim is to reduce illegal camping, but we shall not achieve that aim by removing the obligation on local authorities. I call on authorities such as Craven and Calderdale to select sites and to demonstrate that they want to fulfil their obligation to provide sites for a range of travelling people.

I should make it clear that my remarks, like those of every other hon. Member today, are not directed towards the new age travellers, who create different problems; we are concentrating our remarks on the traditional travellers, provision for whom has been made under the 1968 Act. It is unfair if local authorities do not fulfil their obligations. The provisions of the Bill will fritter away a

great deal of public investment that was made in the best of spirits and with the best of intentions. I am not prepared to accept that. I believe that private sites should supplement local authority provision; I am not opposed to them. According to the figures provided by the Minister and the promoter of the Bill, we are short of sites. The January 1992 count showed that there were 13,500 caravans and about 4,500 unauthorised sites. My criterion is whether the Bill will increase or reduce the number of authorised sites. I believe that it is likely to reduce it and that it will encourage illegal camping. I therefore oppose the Bill.

11.24 am

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I very much welcome—as, I believe, does the House as a whole—the initiative shown by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) in selecting this subject for his private Member's Bill. As the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, it is a serious subject. This is a difficult question to solve and it must be tackled in a sensible, deliberate and logical manner.

It is common ground, I believe, that a civilised society should show tolerance and a capacity to accommodate the nomadic way of life that traditionally has been led by the gipsy people, but we should not let tolerance descend into licence and into threatening, disruptive and violent behaviour against the settled community and other property owners. That is entirely wrong, and something which the House should set its face against.

It seems to be that for 25 years we have had the solution that the hon. Member for Bradford, South advocates and supports—a compulsory obligation on local authorities to provide sites. However, that has not worked. Faced with the fact that it has not worked, and faced also with the growing number of so-called gipsies—nomadic or itinerant people, anyway—we have to seek a different solution. It has to be a solution similar to that to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) referred. It has to be acceptable both to the gipsies and to the communities through which they pass or in which they encamp for the winter.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the difficult situation in my constituency. I know that communities throughout the home counties, including Surrey, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking referred, face similar problems. We have been seeking a gipsy site. It may surprise the hon. Member for Bradford, South to hear that sites throughout east Hertfordshire have been sought for the last 25 years, and that we have not yet found an acceptable one.

I have, for a variety of reasons, vigorously opposed every site that has been proposed. My objection has usually been connected with the inappropriateness of the site and the very disruptive effect on the environment that gipsy sites would have. I very much welcome the Minister's proposal that gipsy sites should not be allowed on green belt land if settled communities cannot also settle there. The rules on green belt land should apply to gipsies, just as they do to any other members of the community.

The Minister's proposal today will remove a great deal of the anger and frustration and the sense of unfairness and injustice that many members of the settled communities would feel if they were not allowed to live on green belt land while gipsies were allowed to place their caravans there.

That brings me to the serious incident that occurred outside Hertford last year. East Hertfordshire district council has been unable to provide a site. As the Minister said, his Department had imposed a direction upon Hertfordshire, as on Surrey, to provide gipsy sites, on pain of being taken to court if they failed to meet their obligations. Therefore, Hertfordshire renewed its search for a site.

I thoroughly deprecate the decision of the county council on where to place this site. The only site suggested by county council officers that was acceptable to the Conservative-ruled county council happened to be in the only district represented by a Labour member. As an example of an objective way to seek a proper gipsy site, what could be more cynical or wrong? It was on green belt land immediately outside the town of Hertford, alongside a combined council and private housing estate, which had enjoyed—and still enjoys—beautiful views of countryside, green belt and woods which also provide recreational facilities for the people of Hertford and the Sele Farm estate.

After that land was proposed for a gipsy site, what happened? Like keeping poultry—it is the same with gipsies—once a site on which gipsies may be entitled to camp is designated, it attracts all sorts of other nomadic vagabonds. And so they came—in large shiny caravans pulled by Land-Rovers and Jaguars of recent vintage.

Sir Cranley Onslow: And Mercedes.

Mr. Wells: Yes—accompanied by Mercedes, and the odd Shogun.

They first arrived about 18 months ago and arrived for the fourth time during the election campaign. They came in large numbers on a bright summer's day—they are not to be found in Hertfordshire in the winter. They began to terrorise the town of Hertford. They vandalised public places and destroyed local areas amenities, and their children invaded the local school swimming pool. They swam in the pool, unguarded and at night, and they wrecked facilities.

Mothers did not dare let their children play in the play areas on the housing estates because of the so-called gipsies' children. I would not call them gipsies—I am not quite certain what to call them. They are travellers of some kind, but they are certainly not gipsies of the kind that the hon. Member for Bradford, South so romantically described—the gipsy with his horse-drawn caraven—and they were serious operators.

They proceeded to offer their services making drives, gardening and clearing areas of wrecked cars and lorries, which they brought to that beautiful field to deconstruct, burning the tyres and wiring. Plumes of black smoke arose from that beautiful site, day in and day out. People in Hertford stopped taking holidays, as they dared not go away. They had to stay in their properties to protect them from vandalism and burglaries, which shot up at that time.

No one can tell me or the House that we should permit the settled population to be terrorised and vandalised and to be deprived of the amenities of their homes and property in such an appalling manner. We cannot stand by and let that happen.

[Mr. Wells]

Another consequence of the invasion needs to be considered separately in another Bill. The Commission for Racial Equality became involved. As the candidate for Hertford and Stortford, I was appalled by the desecration and lack of respect for property, and the inability, or unwillingness, of the police to do anything about it. I was also concerned about how difficult it was to remove those people.

I held a public meeting during the election campaign, and I introduced a Bill under the ten-minute rule, which excited the Commission for Racial Equality to make a complaint. It seemed to have the capacity to command police resources to investigate whether, as a candidate, I had committed an offence against the racial equality laws. One afternoon, soon after the general election, I was solemnly interrogated by a senior superintendent, a sergeant and two constables in Hertford police station for two hours. The police then reported to the commission on whether it should take out a prosecution against me for committing such an offence.

What a waste of police time, and what an outrage. As a candidate and a representative, am I not entitled to put forward the views of the people of Hertford and to speak out against the outrages committed by people who had invaded the land near to their property? If we are denied that opportunity because of the Race Relations Act 1976, it must be one of the most undemocratic laws ever to be passed by the House.

I condemn the Commission for Racial Equality for even beginning to take up the case. The National Gypsy Council subsequently sent me some interesting evidence about the people who had denounced me to the commission, and told me that they were not gipsies, never have been and could not claim to be. The commission took up their case and condemned all of us who objected to the sort of behaviour that I outlined. In a letter to me dated 6 January 1993, the National Gypsy Council told me that those people had nothing to do with gipsies, and should not be thought of in the same way.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that if he had been found guilty of inciting racial hatred because of his remarks about the antics of those people, the whole country would be guilty, because they, too, would have deplored such actions if they had taken place in their area?

Mr. Bowen Wells: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. The Commission for Racial Equality needs to think through what it is doing.

I objected, on obvious and sensible domestic grounds of common law and practice, to behaviour that is unacceptable, whether or not it is the behaviour of gipsies. The Commission should be careful about the way in which it uses its powers. I am not an admirer of its activities, although I am a passionate adversary of racial hatred and prejudice.

We must consider how to find a solution to the problem. First, we must not forget that there are many different types of travelling people in this country. I do not believe that there has been a major increase in the numbers of those I would call gipsies, whom I would describe in the way that the National Gypsy Council would like them to be defined in a new Bill—someone who has links with families of traditionally nomadic habit. That is as good a definition as any that I can find.

We should make provision for people of traditionally nomadic habit to carry on their way of life, tolerantly and sensibly. I do not think that there is any disagreement in the House about that. Many people, however, seek to live in that way. Some are genuinely homeless and find the way of life more congenial than living in hostels provided by local authorities or living in appalling housing conditions in some of our towns. They find that it is better to be out in the open air in a ramshackle truck than with the sort of people with whom they would have to share accommodation in those circumstances. I have much sympathy for them, but I do not believe that they can be allowed to do that at the expense of the settled community.

Those living on caravan sites, whether gipsies or not, should be entitled to all the social benefits available to anyone who is without work or, for some reason, needs housing benefit or income support. The nomadic community living on caravan sites should be entitled to social security benefits just like the settled population. In that way, we should be able to take care of the homeless people, who can also move to recognised sites with water, electricity, sanitation and waste disposal. All those who camp on and invade the countryside have none of those facilities and create a serious health hazard for the settled community and themselves, apart from leaving someone else to clean up the mess that they leave behind.

We can deal with the homeless, provided that they can find places on legitimate sites and pay what they can for those sites through housing benefit. As such benefits are, or should be, available in every case, we shall be able to provide for those people on private sites, as the private site owner will be able to pay back the costs, and possibly make a modest profit. My right hon. Friend's Bill proposes selling sites to gipsies, to whom I have just given a narrow definition.

However, there are a number of different gipsy organisations. When the Minister considers legislation, he may wish to find a broader definition of "gipsy". I believe that the term should be narrowly defined, as those who are not traditional nomads must live like the rest of us. They can live as they like, but they must live on legitimate, licensed gipsy caravan sites and pay for them. Those sites must be hard standing, with proper sanitation, waste disposal facilities and running water. Those who live on them must have the ability to educate their children—an important issue which we should all support. It is an offence not to send one's children to school, so we must make provision to enable those people to do so.

We should use the money that we have made available to provide sites for gipsies—many of whom are not rich, unlike the shiny caravan owners in Hertford, but of modest means. But their organisations are not insignificant. They can organise themselves and have the ability to manage sites. They are currently managing a site in Leeds. Through their management of the sites, they can make them acceptable.

They will begin to find the sites acceptable, as they will not have to share them with many other people whom they do not know, and with whom they have nothing in common and often fight vigorously before moving on. Many such people live in the countryside because they do not want to live on the council sites, which are open to a wide range of people as defined in the 1968 Act.

In the Act, gipsies are defined as

"persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, but does not include members of an organised group of travelling showmen, or of persons engaged in travelling circuses, travelling together as such".

That is as wide definition. Who is a "person of nomadic habit"? I would say that it could be anyone who decides to go to live in a caravan for a week, which is far too broad a definition.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertforshire, North (Mr. Heald) said, we can provide resources. Gipsies can sell sites to raise money if those sites are in the wrong place and use the money to establish separate sites, which they can manage, own and keep clean. As a result, they will become acceptable. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking gave an example of a gipsy site that had been perfectly acceptable for many years. Gipsies can have such sites, provided that they are administered and managed by those who want them—not by a remote official or someone established in a hut and employed by the local council simply to monitor what is going on. That is the way forward.

We may have to introduce provisions to help some of the groups to borrow money initially. They will not have property against which they can provide security, but they will be acquiring a property. We may have to think of a way in which we can give some assurance to lending institutions, or possibly establish a fund from which gipsies can borrow in order to finance the purchase of sites. Representations have been made to me by people who say that would love to purchase sites but they do not have the money. We could make the money available through the discounting system envisaged in the Bill.

We must sell the rest of the sites or we shall be leaving the local authority in charge of a site that it will have to continue to administer. Gipsies or organisations that do not purchase sites using the 76 per cent. discount clearly do not want to do so, and in such cases the sites must be disposed of. The sensible way to do so is to auction them, despite what the hon. Member for Bradford, South said. Those sites may than be used for caravans or for other purposes, but they will certainly have a value, even if the itinerant community does not want them.

Mr. Cryer: The legislation does not seem to contain a safeguard to prevent an attractive gipsy site in an attractive district from being purchased at auction by a developer and turned into development land, which would reduce the number of sites and hamper the provision. If all sites are simply auctioned to the highest bidder without any protection, that might be the outcome.

Mr. Wells: That scenario is unlikely. If the site is attractive, the gipsy community will want to purchase it using the 76 per cent. discount. Even if they do not do that, if the site is so attractive, I am sure that the gipsies will bid for it at auction, and I do not believe that there is a problem. Those sites that are clearly not wanted by the nomadic community and which they do not buy at the 76 per cent. discount rate should be sold and put to other uses.

There are many other sorts of travelling people. I have spoken of the homeless and the traditional gipsy or nomadic person, but there are many others. Where are the Irish at this time of year? They inhabit our land, coming to this country in droves from Ireland and living in large caravans. The gipsy liaison officer in Hertfordshire tells me that they come only in the summer and go home to Ireland in the winter. There is no reason why we should provide gipsy caravan sites, or even settled homes, for Irish itinerants and tinkers who harass our communities during the summer.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Is my hon. Friend aware that they are able not only to come here to live at the taxpayers' expense, but to vote here?

Mr. Wells: I am well aware of that, and have long resented it.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am appalled by the remarks that have just been made about Irish people. Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that, under the 1949 treaty, there is absolute freedom of movement of people between Britain and Ireland? People from this country can go to live and work in Ireland and, in just the same way, people from Ireland can come to live and work in this country, and can vote in both countries. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the 1949 treaty and subsequent legislation should be amended?

Mr. Wells: Yes, I certainly am—and the sooner the better. I would not like the Irish people to think that I am condemning them all, but there are some itinerant people from Ireland who come here and behave badly, and I do not think that we should be compelled to provide sites for them to live on.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman seems to be heading off in a curious direction. Precisely what legal means does he propose to adopt to stop certain Irish people coming to this country? Apart from the prevention of terrorism legislation, which applies to people from any country, there is no legal provision to stop Irish people coming here. Is he seriously proposing that the relationship between the people of this country and the people of Ireland be fundamentally changed——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman resumes his speech, may I point out the nature of the Bill we are discussing? It seems to me that we are rapidly heading towards wider issues that are not germane to it.

Mr. Wells: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker: I was about to say the same. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was about to open up a different debate, but I do not propose to join him.

There are undoubtedly problems with itinerant people from Ireland, and they need to be dealt with. We should not be required to make permanent provision for them in either caravan sites or settled homes.

The Bill deliberately excludes new age travellers, but they do come under the 1968 Act, so they are not entirely a separate problem. To be sure, this is a public order matter and a social security matter. It is shameful that the nation has to bribe these people with social security money to stop them breaking the laws of the land. What disgusting behaviour we have driven ourselves to.

We have to protect ourselves from this problem and I urge the Minister to press the Home Office, the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister to bring in legislation implementing the provisions of this Bill, the ideas in the consultation document and the views of the Home Office. A comprehensive Bill must be brought before Parliament

[Mr. Wells]

so that we can properly provide for traditionally nomadic people and stop the vandalism perpetrated by all sorts of other people who take to the roads in the summer months.

We must provide for those who wish to live in caravans by giving them sites in the private sector and by giving them social security benefits to pay for those sites if they are impecunious or unemployed. That is the sensible way forward to ensure equality for all our communities throughout the land.

11.52 pm

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): The Minister will know from the huge number of responses to the consultation document how much interest there is in this subject. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on introducing this Bill.

One reason why the problem gives rise to such interest is that it concerns not just real travellers but new age travellers, not to mention all who fall between the two categories. All the measures in the Bill and in the consultation document, although plainly directed at genuine travellers, also affect new age travellers, who cause so much anxiety in most parts of the country.

It is important to remember the differences between these various groups, because there are different solutions to be sought for different types of traveller.

I have been slightly worried during the debate by the fact that hon. Members talked exclusively of putting these people on sites, as if they will stay there permanently. But the definition of a traveller is that he wants to travel. It is like getting on one's bike; these people travel in caravans and work in different parts of the country.

In many areas, such people come and do seasonal work from time to time. Huge numbers go to certain rural areas to pick fruit, for instance, and then move back to more urban areas in the winter. Then there are others who have moved into occupations such as collecting scrap. They, too, move around collecting it. It is, therefore, wrong to view the solution to the problem as merely finding places where these people can become permanent residents.

Some travellers come from Ireland and move around doing various jobs. They need temporary accommodation, which can often be provided by the farmer or other person temporarily employing them. Many of our roads are built by such people, so the person involved in road construction has a duty to provide a site where travellers can go without offending other people. He has a duty to provide the right site and facilities for them for as long as the work lasts.

Few people criticise any of this or are worried by it, but many people strongly criticise the huge numbers of people moving around the country who are known as new age travellers. In my constituency, we are fortunate enough to have a large number of attractive commons, and for hundreds of years the sort of itinerant workers whom I have described have moved around in small groups on the commons without greatly offending the local population. It is only since the war that their numbers have increased and that they have begun to cause distress to local people.

On beautiful commons such as Bucklebury or Burden Heath, people used to expect to see just a few travellers in the summer months; they would then move on. Not any longer. People are very worried, because larger numbers are arriving, settling for longer periods and doing immense damage.

The beautiful Hungerford common, just outside the town of that name, has been the scene of great difficulties in recent years. Three years ago, a large convoy of travellers stopped on the common and caused great distress to the inhabitants of the town. They then went into the town, many of them strangely dressed, and into shops, where they offended the local people. Indeed, they drove them away from the centre of town altogether, to the disadvantage of the shopkeepers there. All this took place on the May bank holiday, and it was most upsetting for the people of the town. The next year, exactly the same happened again, only there were far more travellers.

One factor that annoys many people is that the camps in which the travelling people live become virtually no-go areas for the police. It is intolerable that there should be such areas in parts of this country. Local people say that these people often do not even obey the law. Their vehicles are frequently unlicensed or uninsured. That should not be allowed, yet the police cannot deal with the problem.

One of the local farmers tried to prevent more people going on to his land by parking a tractor across his gateway to a field. The police came and did him for not having a licence for it. He had not used the tractor for a long time. That merely served further to ignite passions in the local community.

Many people believe that such congregations deal in drugs, and that is often true. That, of course, is illegal and many believe that it will spin off into their families and affect their children. It is unsatisfactory that we have still not grasped that problem and done something about it.

Such was the feeling about the Hungerford common invasion that local people rose up and demanded a solution. The police moved in the third year. They watched to see where the congregations of people were coming from, and cut off the approach roads with huge tree trunks. That enormous police presence stopped the congregation, but it is wrong that residents trying to enjoy a bank holiday should have to live in a state of police siege, which was the impression given by the number of police vehicles and personnel. I pay tribute to the amazing efficiency of the police who prevented the gathering, but the travellers simple moved to another area.

Mr. Pike: I understand the problem to which the hon. Lady refers, but how will the Bill help to deal with it?

Mrs. Chaplin: I shall deal with the link later in my speech.

My constituency has another large common, and for many years it has not been available for people to walk upon. It is, of course, Greenham common, which is known throughout the country as one of the key sites in the cold war which led to the banning of many nuclear weapons and movement towards peace.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Lady describes the problems in Newbury, Hungerford and Greenham common. I know the area well. Does she agree that the presence of nuclear weapons at Greenham common posed a far greater danger to the whole country than any number of new age travellers, tinkers, gipsies or anybody else?

Mrs. Chaplin: Most hon. Members, and most people in the country, believe that the presence of those weapons

prevented the escalation of nuclear capabilities. Most of us maintain that there is still a need for an independent nuclear deterrent as an aid to agreed negotiation and a reduction in such weapons.

Greenham common is no longer used by the United States air force, which has returned to the States. Everybody would like to see parts of the common opened up again so that people can use it as they did in the past. Many people have visited the common's perimeter fence. Local people are worried that, when it comes down, hordes of people—new age travellers and others—may move onto the common and cause distress to the inhabitants of the area.

One of the problems with the Government's consultation paper is its narrow definition. It specifically mentions "caravans". It may surprise hon. Members to know that, although the cruise weapons and the USAF have gone from Greenham, the Greenham women have not. I hope that the Government will look again at the consultation document to try to ensure that it deals not just with caravans but with illegal camping in tents and sheds and all sorts of temporary buildings. That problem must be dealt with, as well as the problem of caravans moving around the country. As well as large congregations of people, small numbers also upset those who wish to see an end to illegal camping.

As hon. Members have said, some travellers will no longer wish to travel. It is important to provide sites on which such people can make permanent homes, and they should be enabled to provide such sites for themselves. Some of them will wish to move into council houses, and I welcome the consultative document's proposals that that will be examined and encouraged. However, some people will wish not to move into permanent housing but to stay in their caravans on more permanent sites.

Some hon. Members have said that, although the number of sites has been increased, that has not solved the problem in the way that was envisaged when the Act was passed. The implication is that, because more sites have been provided, more people have taken up travelling, but I rather doubt whether that is the whole truth.

Nowadays, it is a great deal more comfortable to travel than it used to be. Caravan standards have been greatly improved, and some are infinitely preferable to some of our smaller houses. There has been an increase in the number of travellers, because many people prefer a caravan to a permanent home. Another factor in the increase is that some people have been unable to get houses or have to move around the country.

Mr. Ian Taylor: A gipsy in Surrey with whom I discussed the problem there said that gipsies resent many of the later definitions of gipsies and that the best definition in law should be that a gipsy is someone who, when travelling, uses the old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mrs. Chaplin: That would limit the definition to a very small number of people, who could probably be accommodated on about two sites. I am not sure that it is a realistic definition. There is a huge variety of reasons for travelling.

Given the rise in the number of travellers, it is important to increase the number of places to which they can go without upsetting other inhabitants. We need to look more carefully to see whether people want to continue to move around the country or whether they want to stay in one area and live in caravans. The Bill addresses the latter point rather more than the former.

It will always be incredibly difficult to find caravan sites that are acceptable, let alone popular with local inhabitants. Many counties still do not have designated sites. Even when it is possible that a private site will be opened, very often the local population feel instinctively that they do not want a site nearby.

In my constituency recently, a site was proposed on derelict land, well away from other houses, that had not been used for farming for a long time. From many points of view, it might have been a good site, but instantly, all those who lived within any distance of the area got together and said that they did not want a gipsy site there because they were worried about the effect on the value of their properties and the mess, the damage to the environment, the risk of burglaries, additional vandalism, and so on.

It may be unfair that people usually view travellers in that light, but the experience of many leads them to that conclusion—and travellers will have to overcome that prejudice when they look for sites.

The Bill embraces the privatisation or sale of all local authority sites, but perhaps that would be too restrictive. It should be possible, as in the case of council housing, for occupants or those coming to the sites collectively to purchase the sites from the local authority at a considerable discount. That is in line with many of our other policies—particularly for council housing—and would be a worthwhile way forward.

Nevertheless, local authorities should still be allowed —as the consultation paper suggests—to provide sites if they considered that appropriate. They provide a mix of housing for others, and there is no reason why the same should not apply to sites.

Local authorities should more carefully consider the sites that they provide. We can all give examples of sites comprising a relatively small number of pitches, provided at apparently enormous cost. Given that expense, one wonders why the local authority did not provided proper permanent housing rather than pitches.

Local authorities should not be compelled to provide sites of a very high standard—not because those occupying them should be denied good facilities, but because they may not be necessary in the light of the standards of the caravans themselves. Sites with relatively few facilities could be provided that nevertheless accommodated their occupants adequately.

Local authorities should also carefully consider the size of the sites they provide. One reason for antipathy to sites is their large size and their impact on an area. Perhaps fewer, smaller sites could be made available. That should be a discretionary power, with local authorities—if they attach a priority to providing such accommodation in their areas—being allowed as much autonomy as possible.

A larger number of private sites should also be available, but if that is to be done, planning regulations and rules will have to be re-examined. We are endlessly urging farmers, for example, to use their land in different ways and find alternative ways of improving their incomes. Farmers may have small sites that could accommodate a few caravans located near farm buildings equipped with a water supply and other facilities. They should be permitted to open them to caravans, and not be told that it is against council policy and prohibited.

[Mrs. Chaplin]

Temporary planning permission should also be considered. Local people may feel concerned that a long-term site to accommodate a large number of travellers will destroy their environment. If temporary planning permission is granted for a small site, that consent could be revoked if it caused difficulties. Then local people might be more likely to give their approval.

The suggestion that travellers have a right to occupy a site for all time understandably worries local people, who do not know what may happen to their villages. Qualifications and standards that the site owner must observe could form part of temporary planning permission. If they were not met, consent could be revoked and the site closed. But unless temporary sites are made available, the problem of accommodating travellers will not be solved.

It has been said that travellers should not have privileges not enjoyed by ordinary people applying for planning permission. By and large, that is right. There may be an argument for more temporary arrangements in respect of sites than apply in other cases. If, as the Bill suggests, more small sites are provided, both by local authorities and private interests, there will be more accommodation throughout the country for people who want to pursue that way of life.

Once there is greater availability, it will be possible to clamp down on the illegal parking that so upsets and distresses those who live in the countryside. I welcome the consultation paper's proposal that a tougher regime should operate against those who park illegally. I hope that it will quickly be made law for local and highway authorities to act more speedily in moving on those who offend in that way.

Sometimes, local authorities do not act effectively. Many of us have experience of cases in which the authorities could have acted in moving on those who parked illegally but did not do so. Landowners often spend much time and incur considerable costs having people moved on from their land. When landowners start a legal action, they frequently find that the case cannot be heard for a long time because of the court's work load and they, therefore, experience difficulty in obtaining a possession order that will enable the caravans to be moved on.

There should be a means for landowners to take faster action, at lower cost, than now. The consultation paper makes no mention of action that landowners themselves could take to have people moved on more quickly.

There are many good things in the consultation paper, and the Bill adds to it in providing well for those who want to travel around the country or become more permanent dwellers. However, other ways of increasing the number of sites and of stopping illegal parking should be considered.

Last summer, we were all appalled by the huge groups of people who were moving around and causing terrible distress and disruption—acting in a way that was intolerable to law-abiding citizens. I think that even more important than the matters that we have discussed this morning is discussion of how that can be prevented, so that it does not happen again this summer.

12.19 pm

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I am pleased to have been called, and especially pleased to follow the interesting speech of my distinguished colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin). I am also pleased to speak in a week during which my constituency has had to suffer a small but unwelcome invasion by new age travellers for the first time.

My constituency has a unique history. Scarborough was originally a Roman signalling station, and then a Viking town. The people who settled there were led by a Viking called Scarli, which is how Scarborough got its name. Those who settled in the north of East Anglia became known as the north folk, which turned into Norfolk, while those who settled in the south were known as the south folk, which became Suffolk. The east Saxons settled in Essex and the south Saxons settled in what is now known as Sussex. Those who settled under King Hakon on Hakon's island became Hakonsea, now Hackney, and the island of Shells became Chelsea.

My excuse for that historical tour of England is my wish to draw the House's attention to the settled nature of our communities. The community in which I live with my wife and three children, and which I have the honour to represent, will be known to hon. Members as Scarborough and Whitby. It is so beautiful that 270 people applied for interviews in an attempt to succeed my distinguished predecessor, Sir Michael Shaw. Every summer, it attracts about 250,000 visitors and the number is growing every year; but it also attracts gipsies and, as I have said, it has already attracted an unwelcome invasion of so-called new age travellers and people who travel around in caravans generally. Fortunately, no one from Greenham common has turned up to date. *[Interruption.]* In comparison, even the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) would be welome in my constituency.

Mr. John Marshall: What—him?

Mr. Sykes: Yes, even him.

In August 1990, the Seamer road—the main road into my constituency—was invaded by so-called gipsies and travelling people, who parked in a field. There were about a dozen caravans and they stayed for about five days. They left an atrocious amount of rubbish and filth—a disgusting mess—and Scarborough's ratepayers had to pay to have it cleared up. It was said at the time that the council would have to find a permanent caravan park for so-called itinerant travellers at Weaponess. I objected in the strongest possible terms to the intrusion.

A large percentage of my constituents are old-age pensioners, many of whom live alone. It is difficult to express the fear, distress and profound anxiety caused to those people by the prospect of a nearby gipsy encampment. I raised several objections and, fortunately, the proposal was turned down, though one Labour councillor was moved to write to the newspaper complaining that gipsies had rights, too.

I am not talking about the old romantic show people —the old Romanies. I am not talking about fortune tellers. The plain, unvarnished truth about new age travellers and people like them is that, in many cases, they are dirty, lazy drop-outs, whose dedication to their way of life extends no further than the nearest benefit office, followed closely by the nearest pub.

I am in no mood to take lectures from Opposition Members about the rights of politically correct new age travellers. Opposition Members would soon change their tune if they woke up one morning to find their back gardens invested by new age travellers. Let us not listen to the likes of Andrew Puddephatt of Liberty, who attacks views such as mine—and those of elderly people—on the grounds that they are intolerant, distrustful and prejudicial. Let us dismiss out of hand politically correct editorials in *The Guardian* such as that entitled, "A home to go to". *The Guardian's* response to Government proposals was as follows:

"All nomadic people who travel through settled tribes are an easy target. They make easy scapegoats, particularly for politicians facing difficult elections . . . The document"—

a document produced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning—

"is a deep disappointment given that Sir George Young, one of the Government's most progressive ministers, was in charge of its drafting."

According to the newspaper, the document makes

"no attempt to put the increase in perspective . . . Seizing caravans from offending gypsy families might sound sensible, but what about the cost of placing the subsequent homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation?"

That is a question that the newspaper should address to its bosom chums in Labour-controlled local authorities, where so many council houses are empty that we have lost count of them.

The Guardian goes on to say that

"none of the fundamental causes is even addressed in the consultative document."

That is no more than the jargon of the left—a script straight out of the television programme "LA Law". As usual, its authors have managed to distance themselves from the facts. Conservative Members know the facts: the people who stand up for travellers are standing up for loafers and spongers, hiding their position behind a veil of wishing to preserve the gipsies' way of life at all costs. I believe that it is right to stand up for the taxpayer.

Why, for example, should the little man working behind a lathe in a factory pay out of his hard-earned wages to subsidise such a way of life? Why should the young husband and wife with a small child, who are just starting out in life, pay one penny of their tax to subsidise the way of life that the hon. Member for Islington, North is trying so desperately to preserve?

The Bill responds to the majority view in the country, and Opposition Members should do the same. They should listen to people such as the Mr. Gibson who wrote to *The Independent* of 2 September:

"Your article refers to the desire of the gypsies to preserve their way of life. I wonder if this desire includes events that have occurred here over the last few days. A couple of weeks ago, a solitary gypsy family, complete with lorry and caravan, parked behind a nearby empty warehouse unit. Within days they were joined by a dozen more families and since then our normally peaceful industrial estate has been overrun.

Break-ins and damages are rife. Anyone silly enough to have a diesel tank has found the tank drained. In our case the culprit simply had to open a valve. More diligent companies who keep their diesel under lock and key suffered even more. Their valves and locks were smashed and the diesel then drained. To make matters worse our local police claim to have neither the manpower nor resources to nip the problem in the bud.

No doubt the gypsies will claim that our problems are coincidental. In the meantime perhaps they could preserve their way of life elsewhere and their leaders could consider allowing the rest of us to preserve ours."

Even the National Gypsy Council, whose last known address was Grengage street, Oldham, fully supports the Bill. It said:

"A further progressive move would be for Local Authorities to encourage the provision of private sites by Gypsies."

The Bill tackles the problem exactly where it should be tackled. It allows for further consultation and powers of removal and removes the duty of local authorities to find sites for these people. On behalf of the people of Scarborough, I am delighted to support the principle that underpins the Bill.

12.28 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I begin by offering my apologies to the House for not being here for the beginning of the debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It's nice to be among friends. I had to undertake a hospital appointment on behalf of my son.

Mr. John Marshall: Where are they?

Mr. Corbyn: My friends are all around me, but not opposite.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the Chair clarify exactly where the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends are?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Corbyn: In an existentialist maner, my friends are all about me, so let that not worry anyone.

I was fascinated by the early part of the speech of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) and I wish that he had stayed in the same vein. However, he went on to display the most appalling series of prejudices, no doubt for the benefit of the front page of Scarborough's weekly paper next Friday. It is a great shame that he did not follow the traditions of some far more illustrious people from his constitutency, such as the Brontë sisters who wrote such wonderful works—I wonder how they would have described his speech—or Captain Cook from Whitby who displayed great humanity towards people throughout the world.

Mr. Sykes *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will recount some of the prejudices that he displayed earlier or perhaps tell us which other prejudices he did not have time to display.

Mr. Sykes: The hon. Gentleman displays a remarkable knowledge of my constituency. He is extremely welcome to visit at any time. If he spoke to the people there, he would find that my views are those of the majority.

Mr. Corbyn: I have been to Scarborough and Whitby many times. They are both delightful places and I like them very much. The north Yorkshire moors are also very pleasant. They are spoilt only by the Fylingdales early warning system, but when that is removed the moors can be returned to their pristine beauty. I hope that that will happen one day, but one never knows.

Mr. Sykes: Fylingdales is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

Mr. Corbyn: I am sorry. I did not know where the frontier lay between the hon. Gentleman's constituency and his neighbour's.

This issue is very important because it is extremely easy for anyone to whip up prejudice against people whose life style is different from that of the majority. I am not condoning criminal acts or break-ins; I am talking about the way in which prejudice is whipped up against people who have a different life style.

The history of this century in Europe is one of appalling prejudice against people with a different life style. Whom did the Nazis go after first in 1933? It was not the Jews but the gay, or homosexual, community and the gipsies, followed by the Jewish community, trade unionists and many others. The Nazis rounded up the gipsies first and put them in concentration camps to die. They murdered them in very large numbers, but they were able to get away with it because of the prejudice that they had earlier succeeded in whipping up against those people throughout Germany.

Another example of such prejudice is the way in which some of the former eastern European regimes whipped up prejudice against the Romany community from Romania and incarcerated those people in camps. Conservative Members used to protest against such things. They should remember that human rights is an international issue which knows no boundaries. If we are concerned about human rights in other countries, we should also be concerned about them in this country.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that part of the problem is a matter of perception? It has already been said that "gipsy" is far too loose a term and is used to cover all sorts of people. Last summer there were many problems with new age travellers, and some people grouped them together with gipsies. The new age travellers displayed some dreadful antics: they invaded peaceful countryside, decimated peaceful villages, went on the rampage and had raves lasting two or three days, showing a total disregard for the area. Part of the problem is that some people perceive those travellers to be gipsies.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech later, but he should consider the fact that if large numbers of young people wish to congregate for festivals or other events, which I accept can sometimes cause a nuisance, there is perhaps a need to deal with that wish instead of merely driving away the problem. Driving the problem from one area to another does not solve it, but merely moves it down the road to another place. Unfortunately, the Bill does nothing to tackle the problems. It merely heaps greed on prejudice with the idea of selling off sites so that people can make a fast buck out of what was originally a public investment.

Norman Dodds, a former Member for Erith and Crayford, fought a long and lonely campaign to gain rights for travelling people in this country. He took part in the defensive actions of people threatened with eviction from sites all over Kent and the south-east of England. It is interesting to note that the farming community in Kent were happy to use the labour of travelling people to pick hops and fruit at certain times of year, while at other times they were more than happy to evict them from the sites. That happens in many places; it is a two-way process. We should recognise the great work that Norman Dodds did in that campaign, which was to culminate in the enactment of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. He will be remembered when those who can only display their naked prejudice have long since passed on.

As a former chair of the planning committee of the London borough of Haringey, I have some experience of dealing with the problem of travellers sites. From time to time, travelling people came to that borough, as they come to all London boroughs. They came mainly but not exclusively in the winter, and would look around for places to put their caravans. Usually, an enormous outcry followed, and the traditional response of the local authority was to seek a court order for possession of the land if it was council owned, an order under the environmental health legislation if it was owned by someone else, or an order under the Highways Acts if it was on a highway. Seldom was a successful court case brought against the travellers because they usually moved on in advance of the action.

I was never happy with the process because it seemed to me that we were avoiding dealing with the problem. When I was asked to sign an eviction order in respect of a group of travellers, I refused to do so. I thought it completely hypocritical of the council to keep evicting travellers without having made any attempt whatever to provide them with permanent sites. After a long campaign, permanent sites were eventually provided by Haringey under the leadership of my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant).

Haringey now has a number of permanent sites for travellers and, so far as I am aware, they are fairly well run and fairly well used. Water and toilet facilities are provided and a sense of order prevails. That is surely the way to address the problem and far preferable to saying blandly, "We will move the problem on and, while we are at it, let us see whether we can sell off this land."

The operation of the 1968 Act has had its ups and downs. It has had a good side, in the sense that the Department of the Environment gives 100 per cent. grants for the provision of sites. The argument that they are paid for by local taxpayers is fallacious, as the hon. Member for Scarborough knows: all the money is provided by central Government. Obviously, taxpayers' money generally is involved in the provision of sites—and I hope that the hon. Member for Scarborough will consider the problems of tax evasion and abuse, especially the levels of taxation paid in the City of London and the record of Virgin Atlantic Airways and Richard Branson, who has registered most of his companies in the Channel Islands to avoid paying tax in this country. I understand that Richard Branson has managed to evade payments of £94 million in the process.

Mr. Sykes: I was merely standing up for the ordinary taxpayer—someone who may work seven days a week to make money to bring home to his wife and family—and it is about time that the Opposition did the same.

Mr. Corbyn: It is precisely those people for whom the Opposition speak. That is why I am drawing the attention of the House, and of the hon. Member for Scarborough in particular, to the problem of taxation as it applies to Virgin Atlantic Airways and Richard Branson and their tax haven registration. All the other companies in the City of London that operate from tax havens to avoid paying tax in this country are also selling people short. They are evading tax. The hon. Member for Scarborough should

address his concerns about non-payment of tax to those companies. He would find a far greater source of revenue among those companies than anywhere else.

The 1968 Act gave local authorities the opportunity to provide permanent caravan sites and to claim 100 per cent. of the cost of that provision from the Department of the Environment. The difficulty is that there is no mandatory requirement on local authorities to do that until they are challenged for not making that provision. That is a weakness in the 1968 Act. There should have been a time limit on the requirement. It obviously takes time to provide sites, but some 25 years after the passage of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 many local authorities have yet to provide permanent sites for travellers.

Mr. Pike: Is my hon. Friend aware that when the Select Committee on the Environment considered the DOE's estimates, it criticised the Department for not using the stick in the 1968 Act, to which the Minister referred earlier, more frequently to ensure that more local authorities complied with the Act and provided sites?

Mr. Corbyn: Since the 1968 Act was passed, I feel that the Department of the Environment has not really wanted it. It has not done much to pursue its provisions and officials at the Department have not taken much interest in its operation. It is an Act of Parliament intended to provide permanent sites for travellers, but the Department of the Environment has done little to ensure that its provisions are carried out.

Little pressure has been brought to bear on local authorities to force them to implement the Act's provisions. Indeed, many local authorities, not all of which are in densely built-up urban areas, have achieved designation in respect of the 1968 Act. There are obviously problems about that legislation.

We must also consider the needs, problems and the contribution to society of the travelling community. For the most part, Conservative Members equate the travelling community with new age travellers, with Stonehenge and with problems. They should recognise that the traditional Romanies, who have travelled as itinerant labourers throughout Europe for many centuries, have a deep and respected culture. The general level of prejudice exhibited by so many Conservative Members reveals a deep ignorance of history and a deeply unfortunate streak of populism on their part.

When we consider the problems facing travellers in this country at the present time, if politicians whip up prejudices against individuals, that multiplies the effect of prejudice on other people. For example, the children of travellers are often not admitted to certain schools. The travellers also have problems obtaining health care and in some respects the level of chronic illness among travellers is far higher than among other people. We must do something about that.

The response of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to the Government's document about the reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is far more responsible than the approach taken by many Conservative Members. The AMA response refers to the problems facing local authorities if there is insufficient provision for travellers in terms of sites, education and welfare. Therefore, illegal parking and camping are primarily due to the fact that the number of designated sites has failed to keep pace with the increased number of travellers. If we are to deal with that problem, we surely need more and not fewer sites. According to the AMA, if sites are not being used, they are probably in the wrong place or badly managed. There is no excuse for that. Sites should be fully used if they are properly administered and in the proper place.

The other aspect of the Government's proposals, and the thinking behind the view expressed by so many Conservative Members, is to criminalise travellers. What possible purpose can that serve? What does criminalising people who have a different way of life achieve? We need a far more sensible approach than is revealed in the Bill or in many of the ideas expressed by Conservative Members today.

The Bill is fundamentally wrong on several counts. It fails to recognise that if there is a problem, it has to be addressed. It fails also to recognise that people have different ways of life and different styles of life. Surely different ways of life and life styles are perfectly acceptable in a pluralistic society. I do not believe that Conservative Members agree with that; they may say it, but I do not think that they believe it for one moment. They do not want people to have different life styles and different ways of life.

It is quite beyond me why we have the annual media obsession with problems at Stonehenge. May festivals have been held at Stonehenge for centuries, but we now have grotesque barbed wire all around one of the most significant ancient monuments in Europe if not in the world. It is an absolutely beautiful place. I remember being taken there as a child by my father, who has a great interest in such matters, to watch the sun rise at midsummer. Nobody can go near the place now—one cannot get within miles of it. There are police marksmen, police vehicles all over the place, closed roads, and closed this, that and the other. It is absolutely obscene what goes on there each summer. It is about time we started to consider people's rights to visit that ancient monument, albeit in a controlled way if there are large numbers of people, to prevent damage to the stones or whatever, but it is bizarre that we should surround it with a military-style operation to keep people away. It is about time we changed a few attitudes.

At the bottom of the Bill is what one finds at the bottom of most Bills from Tory Members of Parliament—a bit of asset stripping and a bit of greed. The Bill is about selling off sites which have been paid for by public money. As the hon. Member for Scarborough keeps reminding us, taxpayers bought the land. Yet the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) proposes that sites be sold off for 75 per cent. below their real purchase price. Where is the value for money for the taxpayer in that? Why cannot sites remain in public ownership and public administration, with local authorities being encouraged to provide a sufficient number of necessary sites?

If we go down the road of attack, prejudice, and so on —there is much in what Andrew Puddephatt of Liberty has said—it will be extremely dangerous. I hope that the House will not support the Bill and that it will listen very carefully to all the submissions in respect of the Government's consultation paper on the operation of the 1968 Act. I hope, too, that hon. Members will recognise that we live in a pluralistic society, that there are different ways of life, that adults and children have rights and that we need more and better run sites, rather than a diminution in the number of sites, which can lead only to

[Mr. Corbyn]

an exacerbation of the problems of illegal camping, illegal parking and criminalising people. That is a daft way to deal with the issue.

Too many Conservative Members spent too much time last summer reading the editorial columns of the *Daily Mail* rather than thinking through the issue and the problems which arise.

Mr. Heald: Has not one of the problems over the years been that London boroughs have been particularly poor in their provision for gipsies?

Mr. Corbyn: There is some truth in that remark. When I was a member of Haringey council, I was aware of that problem, and I raised it with the then London Boroughs Association, now the Association of London Authorities and the London Boroughs Association. We tried to persuade boroughs to provide sites in a wider area across London. Some achieved designation, but some did not. I am not particularly happy about that mix, because there is a need for urban sites as well as rural sites. It should not be just a rural problem. Coming from Shropshire myself, I recognise what the hon. Gentleman who represents the Ludlow constituency says. We need to understand that there is a requirement for urban and rural sites.

Mr. Heald: My constituency is Hertfordshire, North.

Mr. Corbyn: I apologise if I mentioned the wrong constituency. I understand that there is great competition among Conservative Members with the boundary changes and so on. I would not want to intrude on private grief. If I have caused a problem for the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) I am deeply sorry, but long may it continue.

Those are the main points that I wanted to make about the Bill. I hope that hon. Members will not see fit to pass the Bill, but, instead, will listen to the responses to the consultation paper and come up with a more sensible and civilised solution. In the past, too many people have ridden on cheap prejudices against travellers. They should remember what happened in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and what has happened in so many other places in Europe since then. We deny human rights to people at our peril: once we start to deny human rights to a specific community, it extends to every other community. We should remember that with great care.

12.50 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this debate. Like my hon. Friends, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on the excellent way in which he presented his Bill. He seeks to achieve a balance between the rights of travellers and gipsies—by providing them with adequate sites so that they can properly pursue their nomadic way of life—and the interests of people such as the residents in my constituency, who are entitled to live peaceably and sensibly alongside gipsies within their communities.

I have some sympathy with the arguments of the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I am the secretary of the parliamentary rights group. As a result, I recognise that human rights do not begin and end at Dover. People in the United Kingdom have the right to live according to their wishes. Equally, I recognise that the problem with gipsies has got completely out of hand in the past few years.

It is 25 years since the Caravan Sites Act was introduced. Plainly, it does not work. Not only do we have 4,500 caravans on non-authorised sites, but, for example, in my constituency we do not have a designation, despite the fact that 60 caravans are presently on council or authorised sites. Hereford and Worcester county council has the most sites in the west midlands.

As has rightly been said, since 1965 there has been a huge increase in the number of gipsy caravans. In 1965, there were 4,750. For some reason, the number has now reached 13,500. We have been told of the increase in the number of Irish itinerants. In the past 10 years, the number has grown by some 2,800.

In a brief intervention on an earlier speech, I said that the Caravan Sites Act means that the more a county or district council provides, the more they have a reputation for providing caravan sites for the itinerant community and, therefore, the greater the number of people who come to those councils. If councils do not have the power to move them on—as my own council does not at present—the sort of problems they cause can be legion, and not only in terms of cost.

It is estimated that the capital cost per pitch of a properly provided site is some £28,000, with annual maintenance per site of about £30,000, which goes on the bills of the local community charge payers. A number of hon. Members have referred to the mess and the appalling disruption which is caused by some—I emphasise some, not all—of the itinerant community.

I shall quote from two letters that I have received from constituents about the problems caused when itinerants occupied a site on the Birmingham road in Kidderminster. It was a couple of years ago, but, nevertheless it illustrates the point. One lady wrote:

> "Last month there were at least 15 caravans parked there, and we had to suffer all sorts of abuse, stone throwing and noise. The mess they have left behind is appalling and is still there if you have time to view."

I viewed the site and was able to verify what my constituent said.

Another constituent, a pensioner, wrote to me about the same site. He and his wife live next door to this site. They say:

> "There are no toilet facilities on the ground, and the adults and children are using the bushes and backs of caravans as toilets. There is no water on the site, but the itinerants bring milk churns filled with water daily. There are cars and lorries, and an amount of old furniture around, and several dogs also."

That illustrates some of the problems caused by itinerants who are less than responsive to the needs and wishes of their neighbours. There are no adequate facilities for the itinerants, a point which I wish to emphasise.

The Caravan Sites Act has proved grossly inadequate. Although 25 years have passed since its enactment, only 38 per cent. of local authorities have powers under it. Too often, it has been the cause of a ping-pong effect, under which individual districts within a designated county argue against having to provide additional sites. The result is delay in providing sites, or they are not provided at all.

Hereford and Worcester is aware of the inadequacies of the Act and of the fact that central Government, district councils and county councils have been playing off against one another in terms of their responsibilities under the Act

after the judgment in 1988 involving Hereford and Worcester county council. In his judgment, Mr. Justice Mann decided that 18 years was sufficient for the county council to come up to designated standards, and that it was not sufficient to argue that it had not been instructed to do so by central Government.

Equally, the Caravan Sites Act is inadequate, in that it does not provide a sufficient incentive for the provision of private caravan sites, which is one of the aims of the Bill. The Act is far too reactive. What often happens, as I have seen at the Sandy lane industrial estate at Stourport in my constituency, is that a piece of land comes on to the market and is automatically grabbed by the county council as a potential site for gipsies, irrespective of its suitability.

Although no hon. Member has referred to this subject so far in the debate. I want to deal with some of the other remedies that are available to local communities who find themselves invaded by the anti-social activities of some gipsies.

The Public Order Act 1986 covers illegal acts of trespass, but the police tell me that that Act has a number of significant defects. First, unless there are 12 caravans on a site, it is difficult for the police to prove nuisance and use their powers under the Public Order Act. Secondly—even worse, particularly in terms of the problems that I have experienced on a site in Lickhill road in Stourport—if a landowner appears to give his consent by not himself taking any action, it is difficult for the police to prove trespass and therefore to take action under the Public Order Act. Thirdly, a circular was issued in 1991 by the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), which hedged around the capabilities of the police to deal with trespass under the Act.

One of the points in the circular relates to the availability of other areas for itinerants who are to be moved away from a site. That condition frequently cannot be met. Far too often, therefore, police officers have to take a fairly circumspect line when invoking the powers of the Public Order Act.

Mr. Ian Taylor: May I add to my hon. Friend's list of problems? Surrey police have informed me that section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 is effective only if there is public disorder. The problem is that often there is not public disorder but merely public dismay.

Mr. Coombs: That is a good point. The Public Order Act requires that there should be aggravated trespass. If people are just sitting around, although they may be acting in a messy and probably an environmentally distasteful way, it is difficult to use the provisions of the Act against them.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 can be used against itinerants on the ground of nuisance, but, unfortunately, it takes far too long. One has to prove the nuisance and give an opportunity for remedy, but all the while, the nuisance continues, to the detriment of local residents.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have just returned from outside the offices of the Department of Trade and Industry, where five women from "Women Against Pit Closures" are demonstrating. They are burning coal in a brazier and there is some danger that the police may take excessive action against them. Do you know whether the President of the Board of Trade is going to make a statement about the matter, either to show that there will not be excessive action——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have had no request for a statement on anything.

Mr. Coombs: Hon. Members have already said that civil action, under the Town and Country Planning (Compensation) Act 1985, can be taken to remove a nuisance caused by unreasonable and irresponsible travellers on a site. However, that is an ineffective means for local residents to get quick action.

I know an example of the sort of problems that can be caused. About a week ago, I visited a site with three caravans in Lickhill road, near the centre of Stourport, opposite a number of residential properties. The police are having great difficulty invoking the Public Order Act. The authority is not designated, so the Caravan Sites Act 1968 cannot be used—principally because there seems to be some complicity between the owner of the site and the people on it. Too often, owners of private sites who have been denied planning permission decide to put pressure on the district council by "inviting" possibly unwelcome elements on to the site, which makes it difficult to deal with them under present legislation.

The law should be tightened up. I should be happy to do away with designation, although I am told that we are likely to have it in Wyre Forest during the next few months. It should be illegal for someone to trespass and set themselves up in a caravan or whatever else on someone's property, and we should be able to move them on. I hope that the legislation will also cover road verges, because a number of itinerants parked on verges are causing great problems in Chaddesley Corbett in my constituency.

As for privatisation, obviously I want as many authorised sites as possible for gipsies, because that will mean that we can avoid the problems that too often arise on unauthorised sites today. However, I am worried about clause 7 of the Bill, which makes it compulsory for all sites to go to the private sector. Wherever sites are—whether in public or private control—we want to ensure that they are properly managed. I agree with Opposition Members' comments on the subject.

I cannot understand how buying a site at a knockdown price—even at more than 76 per cent. discount—at public auction will encourage the owner to manage the site properly and will benefit local residents.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Bradford, South said about making the sale of sites compulsory. The interests of the taxpayer will not necessarily be looked after. If a 100 per cent. grant has been given to buy and equip the site, I do not see why all the benefits—including the 76 per cent. discount—should accrue to the National Gypsy Council, when it cannot necessarily be proved that the new manager will act more efficiently than the council has done.

The Bill is good as far as it goes, but it does not cover a number of important issues. At present, there are 4,500 caravans on unauthorised sites throughout the nation. In addition to the greater powers of compulsion inherent in the Bill, we should consider, as a matter of priority, the problem of unauthorised sites.

I was delighted to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister said about the Government's proposals on the planning implications of providing more gipsy sites. I also

[Mr. Coombs]

agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) that it seems illogical for the Government to argue for diversification in the farming sector, while not ensuring that local planning officers and authorities reflect that change by giving permission for small gipsy encampments and authorised sites on farm land.

Will the Government look at the recommendations of the Carnworth report? Recommendations 10 and 11 stated that, on planning grounds, stop notices should be capable of immediate effect—I understand that they are not at present. The report also recommended that district councils should be given the opportunity to apply to the courts for an injunction against threatened breaches of planning policy rather than breaches that have already occurred.

If the Government are to tackle the problem in the round, they should be maintaining grants, not abolishing them as the Bill does. It is unlikely that local councils, if it is their responsibility, or landowners, if it is theirs, will make large capital investments in the provision and improvement of gipsy facilities—which is what we want—given the rates of return that one of those groups is likely to face and the political opposition that the other is likely to encounter. The 100 per cent. grant regime should remain and I urge the Government to maintain it when they implement their consultation paper.

We must remember, as was said earlier, that gipsy communities have children, who are too often the unwitting victims of a policy that concentrates solely on enforcement, thereby shoving the gipsy communities around the country more effectively. The services available for gipsies and their children must be kept continually under review.

The Government should look at the police guidance in the Public Order Act 1986. They should clear up the apparent confusion on invoking the Act over the availability of other sites. They should also clarify whether the existence of 12 caravans on a site makes it virtually impossible to implement the Public Order Act.

When I read the Government's consultation paper, I was slightly concerned that they wanted to encourage nomadic people or those with a nomadic tradition into permanent housing. That would be grossly unrealistic. People are nomads because they like moving around. It would not be wise to spend a lot of taxpayers' money or time trying to encourage nomads to do otherwise.

That is my principal objection to the proposal, but I also believe that it would cause great resentment among indigenous communities where there are waiting lists for council houses—such as my district—were communities to see that the policy resulted in nomadic people, for environmental and public order reasons, being given priority on housing lists.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman is making a valuable point. Those who lead the nomadic life do so because they want to. Romania tried to make it illegal to lead this way of life—the Ceausescu regime tried to force those people into permanent accommodation, which led to a great deal of misery and destroyed their culture.

Mr. Coombs: That is to distort what the Government are trying to do. They want to encourage people into permanent accommodation. I say that that is unlikely to be successful.

In some parts of my community, particularly Jubilee drive in Kidderminster, large numbers of gipsies live in council accommodation. I do not want to tar all of them with the same brush, but they do give rise to a large number of complaints—right or wrong—from my constituents. That ought to be borne in mind when consideration is given to housing permanently those whose habits are nomadic. They are scrap metal dealers by trade, and they do not want to live in such housing.

Mr. Heald: One problem that the National Gypsy Council has identified is that these days a great many people who are not really from the travelling tradition call themselves gipsies. They have taken up this way of life in recent years because of the benefits system, and for other reasons. If we are arguing for the retention of some element of council provision, does my hon. Friend agree that we should distinguish between traditional gipsies and people who have just taken up the way of life recently because they think it is a good idea?

Mr. Coombs: It is very difficult to make the distinction in practice—and we must be practical. It is difficult to stop a particular family entering an authorised site purely on the ground that the family's pedigree is not thought to be good enough. We are left with the problem that a man, his wife, his caravan, his three children and his dog need accommodation. The council is interested in this matter, but in practice it is virtually impossible to make these distinctions.

I welcome the Bill in part—especially its enforcement provisions. They need to be much more rigorous and must lead to the ending of the designated regime under the 1968 Act. The Bill does not go far enough, however, to implement measures to improve the situation. After all, we are already 4,500 sites short of proper authorised provision for people of an itinerant way of life.

I agree that the best way of solving the problem is to allow gipsies to provide for gipsies, using many of the methods that the National Gypsy Council has suggested. I hope that the Government will bear those ideas in mind when they release their plans following publication of the consultation paper.

1.12 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I had better start with the necessary disclaimer: when I refer to gipsies I do recognise the distinctions between them and tinkers and travellers and other itinerants. We have all been using the term gipsy in the widest sense, meaning no prejudice thereby to genuine Romany people.

I suppose that it is inevitable, however, that a debate of this kind will reflect some prejudices. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was no exception in that respect—he paraded some of his own prejudices before us. Perhaps some of the prejudices expressed in the debate reflect those of many of the people whom we represent. We cannot avoid the fact that difficulties have arisen and have caused strong feelings.

It is also inevitable that we should draw on constituency examples quite heavily in such a debate. The point agreed by most of us, nevertheless, is that the present law is

unsatisfactory. I was surprised by the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, North, who seemed reasonably content with the state of the law. If anything, he merely wanted to build on and reinforce the 1968 legislation. The starting point for this debate and the background to it is an attempt to change that law to bring about some improvements.

Mr. Corbyn: My point, which I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman understood, was that the 1968 legislation was a significant step at the time. We should pay tribute to Norman Dodds for his part in that. The principle of site provision is important. I want to see it maintained and the number of sites increased.

Mr. Haselhurst: The hon. Gentleman took more than 20 minutes to try to explain what he meant. Perhaps I should not have given him an extra minute to repeat himself. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) is concerned about making effective provision. The argument from most, if not all, of my hon. Friends is that the present legislation is not helping to make the provision that we all accept is necessary. Hon. Members have struggled in the debate to find a better method of trying to meet an undoubted need.

The present law is unsatisfactory. It is bad for landowners and members of the public. An illustration of that has conveniently come to hand in a letter from a constituent who lives in Greenstead Green. He wrote to me a few days ago telling me that he had written to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning in December and had not yet had a reply. I am sure that that will be noted. I have also followed it up in correspondence. My constituent's experiences have been brought to my attention only because of the delay in replying to a letter which was sent directly to a Minster. In the letter he gives an example of what has been happening in his area. He states:

"May I give you an example of what has happened particularly these past 2 years in this farming area of Essex.

In 1991 gipsies with 12 top of the range caravans"——

there has been an echo of that in the debate——

"arrived here almost in front of our cottage and parked on the grass verge of the road.

They said they had come from camps around London Airport.

The results of this were my brother-in-law's field of wheat was used as a toilet, standing grain was trampled on, trees were stripped for fire wood and shooting went on in the woods.

The grass verge became a sorting ground for old car bodies, fridges, and bits of metal.

Items went missing from people's garden sheds, my wife's handbag with a lot of cash in it was stolen from our kitchen.

The local district and county gipsy liaison officials have not enough authority to give real assistance.

This year gipsies arrived to do pea picking for another farmer, he would not let them park in his fields.

They camped in our 'set aside fields' which is not allowed under 'set aside' rules and we could not get them out.

The district council foolishly served a notice on us to remove them as we had no 'Caravan Parking Licence'. This was a ruse on their part to save themselves paying for a court order to remove the caravans and pass the buck on to us.

When the gipsies were told we would block the entrance to the fields unless they went, they became very nasty. We had to have a court order prepared which was going to cost £600 for one day for just one field.

Fortunately the gipsies went the day before the court order was to be put into force, but they could come back a few days later and we would have had to repeat the routine.

Small farmers cannot stand these costs. It took 8 men 2 hours to clear up the mess left by the gipsies. They had even used milk cartons as toilets and thrown them around the fields.

We also found 5 tons of brick rubble have been dumped in a corner of a field."

Those people are not exercising a right that should be respected. I acknowledge that everybody, including itinerants, has rights, but itinerants also have duties and reponsibilities under the law in the same way as every other citizen. The situation revealed by my constituent is a further example of how the present law is not working at all. It is also bad for gipsies themselves, because the demand for sites is accelerating away from the ability of local authorities to meet it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) doubted whether the legislation was the sole reason for increased numbers, but I suggest that there is at least a coincidence. If a district council makes progress with providing sites, more caravans or travellers may arrive in that area—so the problem is never satisfactorily resolved. Genuine gipsies suffer under the 1968 legislation because others cram in to benefit from it.

The 1968 Act is also bad for local authorities. I know of the grief and difficulty caused to my local authority whenever it tries, as honestly and reasonably as it can, to implement that legislation. Whenever it alights upon a particular site, it is confronted by enormous difficulties because the local people do not have an image of the traditional gipsy but of car breakers and itinerants of the kind described in this debate. The district council finds itself involved in enormous expense, and great ill will is created between parish councils and district councils. We know how few local authorities have achieved designation as a result.

Against that background, I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking for seeking to get things moving, which will be the effect of his Bill if it is accepted by the House. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) who played a great part in adding to the momentum. Having heard about his experience at the hands of the Commission for Racial Equality and the police, we must all be glad that he was let out on bail to be with us today!

A dominant theme in today's debate is the Government's consultation paper and their indication that they intend to legislate. A common feature of the consultation paper and of my right hon. Friend's Bill is a desire to put the initiative back in the hands of gipsies—to place the onus on them to make an application which will be subject to normal planning laws, so that residents in the locality will have the right to raise any objections that they may have.

There are, however, certain differences of approach, notably in respect of existing sites. I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) doubts about whether it would be completely satisfactory to have them sold—particularly if it is done by auction, when it is unlikely that they could be acquired by gipsies. That would serve to diminish the number of available sites. As a great deal of public money was spent on providing those sites, it would be a pity if that happened. Legislation of the kind proposed by the Government and the Bill might have the effect of reducing demand. Some of us suspect that in the

[Mr. Haselhurst]

same way that the 1968 Act served to increase demand, so its repeal may reduce demand—to the benefit of the genuine Romany.

Another difference between the Government's approach and that of my right hon. Friend concerns enforcement. My right hon. Friend's Bill has an absence of enforcement measures. What action is to be taken? Is it to be a matter of seizing caravans whose owners offend against the law? I imagine that that would be difficult. If a caravan is towed away and kept in a pound, its usual occupants might simply follow it and squat in the caravan at its new site, just as they did before. Neither do we want to add to the difficulties of housing authorities in respect of their obligations under legislation for the homeless. If our legislation makes more people technically homeless, we shall be cutting off our nose to spite our face.

Although it is absolutely right to proceed in the direction in which my right hon. Friend and the Government appear to be heading, we should not delude ourselves about the considerable difficulties that remain. Reference has already been made to the difficulty of fitting genuine nomads into a more settled way of life. After all, people want to travel; although it is interesting to speculate on the possibilities of securing permanent settlement for some people, that may prove very difficult in practice.

In an intervention on my right hon. Friend I wondered whether, under a new dispensation, gipsies would obtain planning permission. The prejudice that we know exists is bound to be raised if an application is made. I am glad to learn that my hon. Friend the Minister intends to issue guidance.

Sir Cranley Onslow: May I deal with a point that I did not raise, but which has emerged during the debate? In the case of a private application, it would be perfectly possible for a number of smaller sites to be submitted for consent, and it is conceivable that a small site would attract less objection than a large one. At present, local authorities tend to go for large sites, and there is always the fear that they will enlarge them later. The private regime might encourage the development of small sites, which might ease the problem.

Mr. Haselhurst: My right hon. Friend has made a valuable point. We must try to ensure that gipsies are given a fair chance. We must tighten the definition of a gipsy, and deliberately seek to help those in the genuine gipsy tradition, rather than simply providing an easy life for those who have come in on the back of the old Romany tradition, causing great offence to the rest of the community.

My final point relates to the current interim position. The Bill would help to change that position. The Government have said, and all Conservative Members acknowledge, that the Caravan Site Act 1968 contains grave defects, but at present it is still in force. Meanwhile, various developments are taking place. Some instances have been mentioned. I shall mention another. Essex county council and Braintree district council propose to establish a gipsy site outside the village of Ridgewell, in my constituency—a proposal which is vigorously opposed by the whole village and by some neighbouring villages.

My constituents will find it difficult to understand the Minister's action if he gives approval, and a grant, to allow the site to go ahead, when there is no evidence that gipsies are clamouring to occupy that site in the northern part of Braintree district. People know that the Minister and the Government no longer believe in the existing legislation and want to change it at the first opportunity, and there will be tremendous bad feeling if such sites are commissioned with the use of public money..

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to bear that in mind; a bad situation will only be made worse if, in its dying days, the Act is exploited to the full—or worse, if designation is not achieved. We could end up with the worst of all worlds: another site could be created at public expense, there could still be no designation and, as a result, it might be impossible to shift those who are still parking illegally, to the distress of many other citizens.

We have moved into a curious period. My right hon. Friend's speech, and my hon. Friend the Minister's response, underlined that. We are nearing the end of a certain era and a certain legislative regime. It would therefore be wrong for the Government to implement existing legislation too rigorously. They should show some restraint, until the imminent time when either my right hon. Friend's Bill becomes law, or their own legislation is presented to the House.

1.29 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I shall be brief because I know that some of my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) wish to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on introducing a Bill which has enabled us to have an extremely useful debate on the problem and on the Government's consultation document.

I especially appreciated some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), who emphasised the fact that whatever legislation we introduce, prejudice will still exist. I was pleased to hear from the Minister that the Government are soon to issue planning guidance. Whether or not the Bill is passed, it will be some time before the Government will be able to introduce the legislation which will presumably flow from their consultation document. Therefore, for at least a year—probably more—we shall have to cope with the present system.

As I listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking, I thought that it was excellent that the Bill would ban illegal camping, which is also the Government's intention. We can all support that. The Bill would also remove the prejudice that favours gipsies in the planning system—that is also the Government's intention—so that they can no longer locate a caravan site where a member of the public who is not a gipsy could not. That notion causes great irritation in my constituency and elsewhere.

However, the Bill would also remove the pressure on local authorities to accommodate the gipsy population and the potential gipsy population. Where will that admitted pressure fall? The planning guidance will be very important, and I hope that it will pay due regard to what local authorities have already done to accommodate gipsies. There would be considerable ill feeling if a new planning system allowed an expansion of gipsy encampments. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) mentioned the honey pot effect. It

would be very controversial in hosts of communities if the "the more you have, the more you get" principle were to become established through loopholes in the guidance.

I think that the Minister is aware that we have had one or two difficulties in Somerset. It is not a party political matter. It clearly arouses great feelings in the immediate communities, but it should not be used for party political purposes in Somerset or anywhere else. I must tell my constituents and county councillors in Somerset that one community's nimbyism—"we don't want it here"—does not operate in a vacuum and is not without consequences for other communities. It can, and often does, leave neighbouring communities open to further development and planning pressures.

There is strong feeling in my constituency about recent developments in Somerset and about the long delay of almost two years before the inspector's report on the Middlezoy gipsy site was published. The reason for the strong feeling was that my constituents in North Curry, Wrantage, Stoke St. Gregory and Stoke St. Mary were worried that if the necessary action were not taken in the neighbouring authority, they would be open to further development. They have already suffered considerable development, so I await my hon. Friend's proposals with interest.

The Minister and his officials will be aware of Somerset county council's reservations about the consultation paper. For example, it points out that the Government have apparently been reluctant to use their powers of direction under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. In that connection, my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking indicated that the action in Surrey will create difficulties.

Up to the end of 1987, the Secretary of State had issued only one section 9 direction—to West Glamorgan county council, which had failed to provide any sites at all. On 30 October 1990, the Secretary of State served a section 9 direction on Avon. The total of official sites provided by Avon, which is next door to Somerset and whose actions have implications for Somerset, was one—one gipsy site in the whole of Avon. As Somerset county council said in its comments to the Department:

"It is no accident that our most serious problems with unauthorised encampments occur in the northern part of the County, along the border with Avon."

It goes on to state:

"The number of traditional gypsies . . . has remained substantially unchanged since the passing of the Act. Although this perception might not always be shared by people living in the vicinity of official sites, it is important to bear in mind that most gipsy families now own at least two caravans; an increase in the number of caravans does not necessarily entail an increase in the number of caravan-dwellers."

The big problem in Somerset has resulted from the emergence of new age travellers, who account for the increase in the numbers—although I recall my hon. Friend the Minister saying that his statistics excluded them, and that is an important point. The House should take into account the great difficulty of defining a gipsy. Section 16 of the Act refers to

"persons of nomadic habit of life".

That definition includes travellers of any background who may recently have taken to the road, and may be interpreted by the courts as including people who travel only seasonally and have permanent winter quarters to which they return, as happened in the 1989 court case, Greenwich LBC *v.* Powell. New age travellers are usually fairly well aware of their rights in law. Armed with the knowledge that they are or may be gipsies within the meaning of the Act, some new age travellers are becoming adept at exploiting their status as a means of resisting eviction from the highway, from other county council-owned land in non-designated areas and from privately owned land. The law should be amended in that respect. In its response to a previous consultation paper issued in 1986, the National Gypsy Council suggested that the definition should be amended by the inclusion of a reference to the traditional gipsy trades and occupations. That might help matters.

I wish to refer to two more of the concerns expressed by Somerset county council. As we have heard, paragraph 24 of the consultation paper suggests that gipsies who become settled in an area should be encouraged to move into houses. I strongly agree with those of my hon. Friends who have said that that appears unrealistic. I hope that it will not be regarded as a way to solve the problem.

Mr. Baldry: I think that there has been some misunderstanding over the word "encouraged". Hon. Members appear to think that direction will be involved. The consultation paper states:

"The Government believes that it may be necessary to provide advice on education, health and housing which encourages gypsies and other travellers to settle and, in time, transfer into traditional housing."

We are concerned to ensure that there are no barriers; it will not be a question of direction or compulsion. The proposal should be seen in that context.

Mr. Nicholson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for that clarification.

Somerset county council says in its paper:

"The repeal of our duty to provide sites will not take a single travelling family off the road. All our experience of New Age Travellers suggests that they took to the road for a wide variety of reasons".

The council also suggests that the Public Order Act should be extended to deal with raves, which have become a frequent and much-resented activity of new age travellers, especially in my constituency and neighbouring areas.

I appreciate the need for us to consider carefully the way in which we handle the traditional gipsy problem and the planning and resource problems involved. As hon. Members have said, the problems have been made worse through the advent of new age travellers. We saw outrageous activities by the new age travellers in the west country last summer after the summer solstice.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden explained, new age travellers cause considerable damage. More importantly, they instil great fear. Hon. Members may recall from their history books the "great fear" which existed just before the French revolution. That kind of fear began to occur in our rural settlements in Somerset, Devon and elsewhere.

Law-abiding people who pay their taxes and community charges resented the fact that the new age travellers often do not pay vehicle tax and that their vehicles are not properly insured. Those new age travellers obtained social security, and in Somerset it seemed that they obtained a drug substitute. Indeed, many new age travellers suffer from drug conditions. The massive police effort that was necessary last summer was also largely paid for by the community charge payers in Somerset and the other counties in the west country.

[Mr. Nicholson]

From the end of last July, we had a rather bad summer. There was quite a lot of rain. As a result, the number of new age travellers on the roads and the rave parties diminished. If we have a good summer in 1993, as I hope that we shall, the House can imagine what that might produce in terms of problems with new age travellers.

I implore my hon. Friend the Minister to urge the Home Office—there should be clear instructions from the Home Office to police authorities in respect of the co-ordination of their activities—the Department of Social Security, the Department of Transport, which polices the way in which road vehicles are managed, and the Department of Employment, to use their powers and, if necessary, to come to the House and obtain administrative powers to enable them to act. We cannot wait for the legislation that my hon. Friend the Minister envisages. We must have action this summer to prevent the problems that occurred last year with new age travellers.

1.41 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I shall endeavour to tackle the problem as succinctly as possible, although it is not a problem which easily reduces itself to brevity. However, we have had a useful debate and I compliment my neighbour, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Woking (Sir C. Onslow), on raising the matter for consideration.

The issue of gipsies raises great emotion. At the outset, I must state that genuine gipsies should not feel that Conservative Members are endeavouring to attack them or to cause further provocations. I have visited the official gipsy sites in Surrey and I am satisfied that they are well run. Very little damage is caused in the local communities as a result of those official sites. Some of the gipsy families are trying to integrate as much as possible and their children attend local schools.

The problems do not arise with the official gipsy sites once they are established. The problem is one of persuading people to accept a new official site in a community. The difficulties arise largely through a lack of understanding on both sides and they are exacerbated by travellers who camp illegally and cause the maximum damage. Many hon. Members have described such damage in this debate.

The problem is difficult because we need official sites. We must find a way to accommodate people who are basically itinerant. We must build bridges so that they do not feel more isolated from the community. However, we must do that in a way that does not appear to threaten existing communities.

My constituency, like many others, has suffered the kind of problems that have beset our countryside over the past few years. That clearly shows that the current legislation is simply not effective. I received a letter from a constituent within the past few days in which he points out that 21 caravans and a large number of lorries and other vehicles have appeared on land adjacent to him. The site has become polluted and there is general anxiety for the landowner, who is neither well nor young. The landowner has already spent more than £1,000 in legal fees, but he has been warned that, even if the gipsies were evicted, they could return to his land or to the adjacent land at any time in future and he would have to go through the whole process again.

There are many other cases in which itinerants arrive, make an awful mess and then disappear, leaving the local community to clear up. How can we move them on in the current circumstances of the law? Without designation under the Act, it is very difficult to do so. Hon. Members, local councils, county councils and the police receive much criticism. In other words, the Act is not only wrong but it is causing great public dismay with established institutions, which is unlikely to create any improvement in their standing.

I am delighted that the Government have brought forward a consultation document. There is no doubt that it is an overdue but, therefore, extremely welcome contribution to the debate. I am not entirely happy with every aspect of it, but I am not surprised about that because it is, as it states, a consultation document; there are opportunities for us to put our opinions. There is no doubt that the consultation document tallies considerably with some of the views that have been expressed by our county councils. In my case, Surrey county council has highlighted the fact that the proposals overlap its own ideas, for example the ability to reduce the length of time illegal encampments remain on a site, the ability to pursue a remedy via the magistrates court rather than the county court or the High Court, the ability of local authorities to act on all illegal encampments in their areas, and the prohibition of illegal encampment offenders from returning within a given area.

Those points are important in Surrey in particular. As I have remarked, Surrey county council is subject to a direction order under section 9 of the Act, which was made by the Secretary of State in 1989. It therefore needs to oblige local councils to find official pitches in order to bring them up to a state at which they can be designated under the Act. That is causing enormous difficulty, but, paradoxically, the difficulty is being made much worse by the consultation document.

A very controversial site in Cobham in my constituency has been chosen, slightly perversely by the Elmbridge borough council, and taken up by the county council. That case has created great local opposition. The Cobham action group for old common sense is determined to take the matter right through to the High Court. The problem that is now emerging is the status of the proposition. Should the county be pushing ahead? Will the borough benefit even if the site is approved? In other words, will there eventually be designated status that is worth achieving? I do not have time, because I wish to curtail my remarks, to answer my questions, but my hon. Friend the Minister should understand that local confusion and irritation are gaining apace. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking mentioned the problem that we have in another part of my constituency in the Guildford borough in which a pitch in my right hon. Friend's constituency is subject to similar controversy.

If we are to delay legislation for a while, there is no doubt that we should meanwhile attempt to clarify the issues. I take up some of the points that Guildford borough council has made. In some ways, it is not a matter of new legislation; it is a matter of tightening up existing legislation. Perhaps we could do that much more quickly. In the circumstances, perhaps we could make it much clearer that if the boroughs obtain designated status, if they make the effort to do it, they will be given even tighter powers.

I have asked before why the powers in the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984 have not been widened to make designation easier. Why should the Department for Education delay the approval of applications for new sites? Despite risks, would not it be possible to give limited self-approval to some local authorities? Such matters need to be thought out locally, where the controversy is.

I am concerned that, even under the new proposals, the ability of councils to act on illegally parked caravans and the ability of the magistrates courts to intervene might not be sufficiently effective. We need to examine carefully what sort of powers should be given to impose fines or whether seizure of assets—the caravans—will be made possible. The cost of clearing up after illegally parked travellers have moved on often needs to be found from somewhere. I see no reason why the travellers should not be obliged to make a contribution.

I am aware of the need for a debate as wide and as broad geographically as possible among colleagues so I shall cease my remarks. My final point is that people are concerned about the issue. We have delayed action for many years because the problem is complex. People will not forgive us unless we deal with the problem as rapidly as possible. Parliamentary time is difficult to find, but if we delay new legislation we should do our best to use whatever tactics we can to tighten existing legislation.

We should use all the Government's resources to deal with the problem because it affects the Department of the Environment, the Department of Social Security and the Home Office. Those Departments should concentrate on the best way to solve the issue so that further outbreaks of community anger do not occur.

1.52 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): One of the reasons why we are debating this matter is the failure of the 1968 Act to address the problem of the provision of sites for gipsies. The fact that only 38 per cent. of our areas have been designated shows the great shortfall of provision.

Much has been said in the debate about the problems of gipsies. Much of the perception of, and prejudices about, gipsies are ill founded. Part of the problem has been the scenes that people have increasingly seen on television recently and the perception of the grouping of new age travellers and various other people—pseudo-gipsies, who are not the sort of gipsies to whom the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Cryer) referred: the sort of romantic Romany-style gipsies with a caravan and a guitar in the back. Unfortunately they are few and far between.

We have instances of Romany-style gipsies in my constituency, although I cannot vouch for the guitar. In my constituency, pseudo-gipsies have moved in alongside commercial properties in an area where there are no gipsy sites. Such areas are totally inappropriate for gipsy sites and there has been great hostility from the public about that.

Apart from the various stories that people read in newspapers and saw on television about the atrocious activities of some of those people during the rise of the new age traveller last year, there was a danger that some of the travellers would come into the Ribble Valley and mass encamp in my constituency. Obviously, there was a great debate about what the locals would do to get the new age travellers to move on.

One must remember that the farmers' workplace was involved. The farmers were extremely concerned about what action they could take, especially after they saw the scenes in which it seemed that the police were almost powerless to move the travellers on. The farmers' wives had a word with some of the new age travellers. I do not know what they said, but I can say that the travellers moved on. The moral of the story is that one should not mess with farmers' wives in the Ribble Valley or probably anywhere else. It had the desired effect.

There is a fear that throughout the United Kingdom the same thing will happen again this summer. Action must be taken to ensure that it is not allowed to happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that the problem does not involve just one Department—it involves the Home Office, the Department of Social Security and the Department of the Environment. Few things could be more distressing than seeing Department of Social Security officers chasing new age travellers to give them giros so that they could move on. We saw last year the giro circus that paraded itself around Britain. We must put a stop to that. The taxpayers of Britain have had enough of it. Action must be taken.

The intention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking in introducing his Bill is to ensure that gipsy sites can be provided privately. The state and local authorities have signally failed to provide them. I was a member of the West Glamorgan county council, which miserably failed to find sites for gipsies so that it could become a designated area. Part of the problem, as has been said time and again, is that councillors look at areas which are totally inappropriate for gipsies. They do not want to go to those sites. The last thing that county councillors wanted to do was to send gipsies to places where they might wish to settle.

We want gipsies to be encouraged to get together and look for their own sites and to seek planning permission. There could then be full consultation with the people who live in those areas. If they had objections, as happens with any planning permission application, their objections could, rightly, be heard. If that happened, gipsies would not be directed into areas, thus creating hostility. As the hon. Member for Bradford, South said, the burden ought to be spread so that we can reach a solution that is acceptable both to the people who live in the area and to the gipsies.

I pay tribute to Lancashire county council's education department. It is rare for me to do this, so I ought to do it now. Last summer I visited its education department to find out what it was doing about ensuring that the children of gipsy families are getting the education that the law dictates that they ought to have. I was impressed by the dedication of the staff and the provision of books. I was also impressed by the department's commitment to ensuring that the children of gipsy families have placements in local schools. That is absolutely right. Those children ought to be given exactly the same opportunity as every other child in this country to benefit from a full and proper education.

We want equality under the law for gipsies and their children, but that means that they must keep within the law and make sure that their vehicles are taxed and properly maintained. It also means that they must pay their council tax or their poll tax, as well as income tax. If

[Mr. Nigel Evans]

the Government were to take action, the animosity and prejudice that some people feel towards gipsies would soon evaporate. The Bill is definitely a step in the right direction.

1.58 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on introducing his Bill. Members from places as far apart as Scarborough, Somerset, Surrey and Essex have demonstrated the widespread public concern about the present state of the law. I listened, too, with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I must congratulate him on part of it, if that is not the kiss of death for him. I thought that his comments about illegal encampments were remarkably level-headed. He then spoilt the effect by praising local authority provision.

If we look at what has happened over the past 25 years, we see that two local authorities out of three have not done a thing. If we were to leave it to local authorities to solve the problem, it might be solved in the year 2040, but I suspect that the problem will never be solved if we leave it to local authorities.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) made an interesting speech and complained that Conservatives are whipping up prejudices against certain people. I shall remember his words when he next speaks about Americans, about our fellow members of the European Community, or about people from the City. He attacked the City, but forgot to say that it makes a major contribution to the balance of payments and employs many hundreds of thousands of people.

I support the Bill because the London borough of Barnet has searched for a site for years and has not been able to find one. Earlier in the Session—last summer—I and my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), for Finchley (Mr. Booth) and for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) went with a deputation to the Minister to discuss that pressing issue. We believe that there is no suitable site in Barnet. I am glad to say that the Minister listened to what we said and we may have influenced the thoughts in the consultative document published shortly afterwards.

A built-up borough such as Barnet does not have a suitable site and I am therefore not surprised that the authority has been unable to find one. The Caravan Sites Act 1968 suffers because local authorities are told to find the site and to judge the planning application for it. People say that if private enterprise take over, there will be problems with obtaining planning permission, but the private applicant can appeal against any refusal of planning permission. When a local authority department applies to the self-same authority—perhaps as a sham or a charade—and its planning application is turned down, it does not appeal against the refusal because it is also the refuser. Recalcitrant local authorities will never give themselves planning permission and will never appeal against refusals. So long as one allows sites to be provided mainly by local authorities, one will always have that problem, as is demonstrated by the fact that many authorities have failed to provide sites. I warn the inspectors who will hear future planning appeals that it is unwise to impose sites against the wishes of local residents, because the ill will generated can last for many years.

Hendon, South has many main roads, such as the north circular and the M1 nearby, which creates wonderful opportunities for illegal campers to come to the constituency and cause a great deal of mayhem. My constituents have often been appalled to hear the inhabitants of such illegal sites described as gipsies—they are no more gipsies than anything else; they are people who have sought a particular way of life and in many ways have tried to opt out of society. They make a limited contribution. One of the great tragedies is that frequently their children are not encouraged to go to school, so they play all day and miss out on that great escalator of opportunity—state education. If they miss out on that, the next generation are condemned to a similar way of life. That is one cause of great offence to my constituents, who are also offended by the suspicion that the people living in illegal encampments pay no taxes but claim social security benefits.

The encampments arouse fear among law-abiding citizens—fear about what the people on them will do—and that is the real problem. I spoke to some local residents the first time there was an illegal encampent after the 1987 election. I was shown into one house where a man told me, "I'm afraid I'm parking my motorbike in the front hall in case it gets stolen." I did not like to tell him that there was a risk that other things might happen, too. That seemed to be a sign of how the law-abiding members of the community regarded such encampments. Many things happen on those encampments; there are always consequent health risks, and sometimes they are not cleared up with the enthusiasm that should be shown. There was one such site in my constituency on land owned by the London borough of Camden but situated in the London borough of Barnet. It was only after Barnet threatened to take Camden to court under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 that the site was cleared up. The encampments are always messy, and always cause health problems and difficulties with neighbours.

I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to urge the police to make greater use of their powers. They should not plead lack of manpower when police resources are greater than they have ever been. The illegal encampments are a major social problem with which I expect the Government to deal swiftly.

2.6 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on his fortune in being successful in the ballot for private Members Bills. When I saw the subject that he had chosen I did not intend to congratulate him on his Bill, which I shall not support. However, we have had an extremely good debate on a number of issues. Anyone analysing the *Official Report* of today's proceedings will find a number of issues on which there has been clear agreement across the Floor of the House. That does not mean that we have agreed on the solution to the problem or that the Bill is the right way forward and should make progress.

Unusually, I heard the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) say nice words about Lancashire county

council. If he were to study more of the actions of that council he would find more to praise it for and would criticise it less than he usually does.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) referred to planning, as did the right hon. Member for Woking. I accept that there are problems with planning, but they are different, depending on whether they relate to private sites or public sites developed under the 1968 Act. We need to tackle those problems in the longer term.

I served for a long time on a local authority—and was leader of a local authority—and I have always held the view that, when dealing with planning applications, the local authority should have no more advantage when making an application of its own than anyone else. The test should be whether the local authority development application would fail if it were a private sector development. If so, the local authority application should be rejected on the same ground.

Only one speech has been made where I could not agree with the main argument. The hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) made the sort of speech that I feared would be the general theme developed by Conservative Members. While I disagreed with many other parts of Conservative Members' speeches, they all contained some aspects with which I did not totally disagree, but I could not accept the main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's speech.

In the early part of his speech, the right hon. Member for Woking said that local authorities often tried to develop a site that was totally unsuitable, such as a former tip. I share his views on that issue, and believe that they were expressed in many of today's speeches. To pick a site because it happens to be an unused piece of land, without regard for its suitability, is nonsense and is, of course, a flaw in the existing legislation. So far, we are agreed.

The Opposition do not oppose the idea of developing private sites, but that does not mean that we think that the 1968 Act should be repealed. We have always believed that the right to develop such sites existed anyway. It should remain.

Several hon. Members have suggested that there is a case for developing smaller sites, which might avoid some of the problems created by larger ones. We support that view. We also support the view that besides public consultation in areas where a site might be created, there should also be consultation with the people expected to go and live on the site subsequently. It is ridiculous to develop a site in an area that is not acceptable to those who will be expected to use it.

The Labour party opposes the Bill because we do not believe that it will solve the problems. On the contrary, it will create difficulties—increasingly so as sites are sold off. We are also concerned about the problems of unofficial sites—in Surrey, the county of the right hon. Member for Woking, where I went to school, or Hertfordshire, the county of the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), in which I was born, or the county in which I live, Lancashire. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) explained his view of the problem of unofficial sites and the associated nuisance—the burning of rubbish and the lack of sanitation. The Labour party shares his concern and believes that the public should not have to suffer from these problems. We are not divided on these matters, either.

The division between the Opposition and the Government stems from the fact that we do not believe that the Bill does anything to tackle the problem or solve the difficulties. We all agree that it does not deal with new age travellers. I do not want to get involved in arguments about them. We all know about the difficulties, but both the Minister and the right hon. Member for Woking recognised that the Bill does not cover them. The subject needs dealing with, however, even though it is not relevant today.

Mr. Wells: The hon. Gentleman says that the Bill is not an answer to the problem. Would he care to outline what he thinks the answer is?

Mr. Pike: I shall say that if the 1968 Act is enforced and local authorities are given the powers to enforce it, we believe that it will offer a better solution——

Mr. Wells: It will not.

Mr. Pike: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make my speech I shall be able to explain. I am not alone in thinking that the 1968 Act can work. The Select Committee on the Environment, which studied the issue at great length while I served on it, decided that, if used properly, the 1968 Act could tackle the problem.

The Bill had its First Reading on 10 June last, but was not printed until recently. It clearly follows on from the principles established in the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford, covering the privatisation of gipsy sites—a Bill dealt with under the ten-minute Bill procedure. The Bill only partly deals with the issues covered by the Department of the Environment's consultation document entitled, "Gypsy sites policies and illegal camping: Exchequer grant to local authorities for gypsy sites" which was published on 18 August. The Department sent hon. Members a copy of that document, and it was accompanied by a press notice and a covering letter from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), setting out the procedures for the consultation.

We felt that to some extent that exercise was completed in haste and was not well thought out. We thought that it was a response to the problem of new age travellers, which the Bill does not address. Paragraph 24 of the consultation document states:

> "The Government expects existing caravan sites to continue in being not least because, where grant has been paid towards the capital costs of a site, local authorities would have both to repay grant if the site closes and to provide alternative accommodation for any people from the site whom they accept as statutorily homeless."

Following the publication of that document, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) asked about cost and was told that £56·2 million had been spent to date on site development. The Minister repeated that figure in the debate. The maximum discount available is 76 per cent. However, one would expect an upward valuation, which means that a substantial amount would be wiped off the current value of sites. The Bill contains no guarantee of what sites would be used for. In theory, it would allow bodies representing gipsies to buy them and, in the short term, such sites could continue to be used as sites. However, the Bill does not protect such usage. That means that the asset could be misused in a short time. Clause 7 provides that if sites are not disposed of within 12 months they should be sold at public auction without

[Mr. Pike]

reserve and with no qualification on the disposal. Land sold in that way would be lost as a private sector or public sector site.

In a letter to hon. Members this week, the Save the Children Fund rightly says that there were more than 1,200 responses to the consultation document. On 9 December in reply to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) the Minister said:

"We are considering the responses carefully, and will make an announcement in due course about implementing the reforms."

I asked the Minister to give an assurance that his Department was not working to a rigid timetable and would consider responses and complexities of the issues before taking action. The Minister replied:

"We will consider all the responses very carefully,"—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 834.]

In an intervention the Minister said today that the Government intend to introduce legislation "when time permits." What does that mean? A couple of weeks ago we debated Sunday trading and hon. Members thought that the Government would introduce a Bill this year. However, they suddenly found out that that was unlikely. In its letter the Save the Children Fund also said that the issues involved in the reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 were complex and required careful consideration and balance. We share that view. I have grave doubts whether the Government's consultation document proposals will solve the problems, and I fear that they will create more. In going further and making the sale of sites compulsory, the Bill will make the problems worse still.

Clause 7 causes great concern. Although it may be the intention of gipsies occupying a site or of residents to acquire it, there may be many possibly technical reasons why they cannot not do so and will suddenly find that it is being disposed of compulsorily. Disposal and privatisation of sites will lead to a worse situation than exists today.

Mr. Cryer: Would not a more sensible solution than the compulsory, mass sale of local authority sites be to encourage private sites? In that way, at some stage in the future—if all the problems, and the difficulties confronting gipsies in purchasing sites, were overcome—we would see the phasing out of local authority sites. It is extremely unlikely that selling local authority sites would have the effect of destroying them.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. If the Bill positively encouraged the development of private sites to deal with existing problems and prevent future difficulties, we could support it—but that is not the proposal before us.

Last July, the right hon. Member for Woking asked the Secretary of State to

"suspend further approval of local authority applications for the funding of pitches"

and the Minister who is replying to today's debate replied:

"I do not think that it would be appropriate to do so."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. *399*.]

A number of points raised by the Environment Select Committee, on which I served for a number of years, are relevant to the Bill and indicate that the members of that Committee, as well as two former Secretaries of State for the Environment, unanimously took a different view from that reflected in the Bill.

A former Chairman of that Committee, Sir Hugh Rossi, vigorously pursued that issue—and departmental estimates—on four or five occasions. As a former Conservative Minister, Sir Hugh was well regarded on both sides of the House.

The question was asked today: what is a gipsy? Leaving aside new age travellers, the question is one which the Select Committee raised on several occasions. The Department considered it and Professor Wibberley, who studied that and other aspects, tried to redefine the 1968 interpretation. The new definition was:

"A nomadic family who, by reason of their lifestyle, habitually travel to pick up casual and seasonal work or to sell the products of their self-employment and whose only or main residence is a caravan or tent for which they have no authorised site."

There are many even wider definitions.

We know that many of the problems that confront local authorities are caused not by traditional gipsy families of the kind to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South referred, but by those who travel around, occupy unofficial sites, and are moved on from one place to another.

The Select Committee's third report of 1989-90 records that the then director of finance at the Department of the Environment, Mr. Fletcher, was asked a question about designation. He said that

"to offer advice on how political will will be generated was not for a civil servant. In saying this he put his finger on the nub of the matter. If some local authorities given a regime of 100 per cent. grant do not have the political will to carry out their duties under the Act, then the time may have come to supersede their discretion in the matter. We would recommend that the Department monitor the situation with a view to seeking default powers to enforce designation should this prove necessary."

I mention that, because of the Minister's reference to the carrot and the stick. I pay tribute to the work done by Norman Dodds in fighting the gipsies' case for many years before the introduction of Lord Avebury's Bill, but we have heard that the Department has used the stick only three times since it was enacted in 1968. Perhaps it should have done so more often.

According to the Select Committee's fourth special report, on 21 July 1989 Nicholas Ridley said:

"I note the Committee's reports, and my Department should monitor the progress in the provision of sites . . . At this stage I am not persuaded of the need for change in the legislation such as the Committee suggests, but I regard speedy progress in site provision as important, and I can assure the Committee that we will continue to keep a close eye on developments."

I do not often quote the words of that particular Secretary of State—as he then was—but on that occasion Nicholas Ridley expressed a view which I share.

The following year, the Select Committee again spent considerable time on the issue. It concluded:

"There are three major deficiencies in the way the Act has worked. The first is the growth of unauthorised pitches"—a problem which has been identified again today.

"The second is the reluctance of some local authorities to seek designation as having made adequate provision under the Act."

Clearly, no party politics are involved: some Labour authorities have been just as slow in providing sites as Conservative authorities.

"The third deficiency",

said the Committee,

"is the slowness of provision of authorised sites as a result of inaction by local authorities in fulfilling their obligations under the Act . . . progress towards adequate provision is still

painfully slow. Our own conclusions lead us to the view that new provision would take 25 years to solve the problem. The Department did not demur from our estimate."

At that stage, the Secretary of State had only just used his power for the second time in issuing the order to Surrey to which the right hon. Member for Woking referred. The Select Committee said:

"We are heartened to see the Department taking a more robust line with defaulting local authorities and a new system of capital grant may have the desired effect. Nevertheless, we feel the time has come to set a realistic timetable for site provision with the threat of much more vigorous use of the Secretary of State's powers of direction against laggard authorities."

We want Government action to ensure that the 1968 Act is enforced, but we do not want the privatisation proposed in the Bill.

On 26 July 1990, in the Committee's second special report, the former Secretary of State—Chris Patten, now Governor of Hong Kong—said:

"I welcome the Committee's support for the more vigorous policy we are pursuing towards those local authorities that are failing to provide an adequate number of gipsy sites. The Government is considering the options available."

He went on to quote what Christopher Chope had said on 10 July—that the Government were

"considering a further incentive to local authorities and the possibility of time limits."

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman argues for the continuation of the provisions of the 1968 Act, but a county such as Hertfordshire, which has had an order placed on it, finds it extremely difficult to provide sites. We have been searching for sites in the North Hertfordshire district council area, but none of those that we have found has been satisfactory. How would the hon. Gentleman solve that difficult problem?

Mr. Pike: The issue must be considered in each local area. I accept that the problems may vary from area to area. I agree with the right hon. Member for Woking, who said that at times there was a lack of political will or that it was for political reasons that decisions were not made. I do not know whether that is the case in Hertfordshire, but we believe that if a local authority adopts a positive attitude the solution could perhaps be cheap. That is because we believe in the principle of local government——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

CHRONICALLY SICK AND DISABLED PERSONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 February.

MISUSE OF DRUGS (ANABOLIC STEROIDS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

RACIAL VIOLENCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 May.

TELEPHONE ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES (SUPERVISION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Second Reading what day? No day named.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (FREEDOM OF SPEECH) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

COMMONWEALTH OF BRITAIN BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

WELFARE OF ANIMALS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

LICENSED PREMISES (EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN PERSONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [29 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 12 February.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object,

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

COMMONWEALTH OF EUROPE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

IMMUNITY CERTIFICATES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

FUEL COST CREDITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HOSPITAL SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ENERGY (FAIR COMPETITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point or order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the Commonwealth of Britain Bill, the Reform of the House of Lords Bill and the Commonwealth of Europe Bill all require that the Queen's consent be notified to the House. Have we received such a letter to tell us whether or not she is happy with them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to say that we did not reach that stage.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had understood that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office would be telling us whether Her Majesty had agreed to the Bills in question. I am surprised that we have not heard anything about that today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As we did not reach that stage, the right hon. Gentleman was not asked to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I rise on a point of order which I believe to be a valid and important one. Are we not, now that the proceedings of the House are televised, in an entirely new situation as far as individual and anonymous objections to Bills are concerned? It is possible for my constituents to see the hon. Member who objects but not to see the report of the objection in *Hansard*. It strikes me that we have not updated our procedures. I am naturally very concerned, as the author of the parent legislation, about the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry)—the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has made his views known, and they will be recorded in *Hansard*. The Bill to which he refers has not yet been printed, so it is perhaps not surprising that an objection was voiced.

Mr. Morris: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it possible for the Select Committee on Procedure to look at what I think hon. Members on both sides of the House consider a very important issue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Select Committee on Procedure can consider what it wishes to consider, and I am sure that its members and Chairman will read today's proceedings. I repeat, however, that, in the case to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, the Bill has not yet been printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

2.35 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With permission, I shall put together the four motions on business of the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to object to motion 26.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In that case, I shall put the Question on each motion in turn.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Lilley relating to Pensions, Social Security and Terms and Conditions of Employment not later than three hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th February, the Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on the Motion in the name of Mr. Stephen Dorrell relating to Supplementary Estimates 1992-93; and that Question may be decided after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 11th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the question necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motion in the name of Mrs. Secretary Bottomley relating to Local Government Finance not later than three hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 11th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John M. Taylor relating to the Supreme Court of England and Wales not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and

(2) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John M. Taylor relating to Judgments not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon;

and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.36 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am very pleased to have secured this debate. First, I congratulate the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on its campaigning and lobbying work and thank it for the help that it has given me in preparing for this debate, which is the first on animal experiments since the passage of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. I served on the Committee that considered that Bill, and I must say that the claim made for it by Ministers at the time—that it would stop many unnecessary tests—has sadly proved unfounded.

Let me explain the background. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, something like 5 million tests were carried out on animals. By 1986, that figure had fallen to about 3·5 million per annum. Unfortunately, the Act has significantly slowed that downward trend. The figure still stands at 3.25 million tests per annum, and last year the number of experiments actually went up for the first time in 15 years. The 1991 figure was 3,242,449. That means that during the half hour of the debate, 185 animals will be killed.

The use of dogs and primates fell, although there were some horrendous cases of primate abuse, to which I shall refer later in my speech and which the Minister has had to acknowledge in correspondence. There has been a 31 per cent. increase in the use of cats, and the figures for other mammals and amphibians are also substantially up. Two thirds of all the procedures were carried out without any form of anaesthetic.

On Second Reading of the Act in February 1986 I said that many unnecessary experiments would go on and that "the regulations seem designed to protect the experimenter than the animal."—[*Official Report*, 17 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 111.]

Sadly, that seems to have been borne out. There has been no comprehensive review of the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. I believe that, at the very least, there should be an annual debate in the House about the continuation of animal experiments and the operation of the 1986 Act.

Animal welfare and animal rights groups have undertaken a series of investigations and they have amassed a considerable amount of evidence of the ineffectiveness of the 1986 Act. Even the Minister has acknowledged that. Those investigations are not isolated examples of abuses of the 1986 Act. Every investigation has uncovered serious problems and I want to refer to recent examples of those problems.

In 1989, an investigation by BUAV into the Huntingdon research centre, one of the largest contract research laboratories in the United Kingdom, revealed experiments for trivial products such as food additives and "me-too" products, for products about which human data were already available and for products for which tests on other species had already been carried out.

Cage sizes in the dog unit at the Huntingdon research centre did not meet the minimum Home Office code of practice standards. Other aspects of the code, such as the handling of animals, exercising and dosing, were also not met.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

In respect of the London Hospital medical school, BUAV showed in 1991 that sick animals were used in procedures. Veterinary cover was inadequate; under the 1986 Act there should be 24-hour veterinary cover. However, on two occasions dogs died following unsuccessful attempts to contact a vet. Painful experiments were carried out on dogs even though the technique had already been tried on people. In an experiment in relation to anal muscles, the *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* records:

"we do not envisage this technique ever being the first choice operation for patients with faecal incontinence; there are other cheaper, less complicated manoeuvres which should be tried first."

However, those tests were carried out on animals.

Eighty-nine-year-old Professor Feldberg was videoed by Advocates for Animals carrying out unlicensed procedures and using an inadequate anaesthetic. In one disturbing moment, a rabbit screamed and struggled to get up while it was being cut into. Despite 14 visits in one year by the inspectorate, no action was taken by the Home Office until after campaigners released the video. That shows a serious inadequacy—the inspectorate's refusal to act in such cases unless it is pushed.

I want now to consider the trade in and use of primates. Many problems with the 1986 Act are best highlighted by BUAV's investigation into the use of man's closest relative in the animal world. Indeed, primates are supposed to enjoy a special protection under the 1986 Act.

Appalling care and handling, sometimes even leading to injury, was recorded on video at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. Quarantine was shown being breached; large numbers of primates died or had to be put down within weeks of arriving at Shamrock; cage sizes and conditions—as was the case in all the investigations—did not meet the Home Office code of practice standards.

The investigation into Hazleton UK revealed inadequate caging and conditions. Monkeys were slapped, punched and taunted by staff. Project licence conditions appeared to have been broken. For example, the laboratory did not give proper information to the Home Office on its project licence application. A vet opposed an operation which he thought would involve too much pain, so the company simply used another vet. The metabolism department was caught carrying out unlicensed procedures three times, but no action was taken. Technicians were operating who were not licensed to perform incisions.

I am pleased that the Minister recognised those problems at Hazleton in a welcome statement that he made in December. However, simply moving the day-to-day care person who is still employed there and implementing retraining is hardly likely to be enough. The malaise goes much deeper than that. I hope that the Minister will give further information. In his letter on Hazleton, he said:

"I hope that the time may not be too far away when it will no longer be necessary to use such animals . . . We are therefore considering setting a target date, not too far ahead, after which we would expect all primates to have been purpose bred".

When does the Minister propose to phase out the import of wild-caught primates? Many of them die in the process of coming to this country for experiments.

Some problems do not need any investigation to be revealed. Trivial tests, such as those for cosmetics and discredited tests such as the LD50 and the Draize test, continue. The section requiring animal pain to be weighed against potential benefit appears not to be applied. Certainly, the value of a product does not seem to be questioned by the Home Office; it goes ahead and authorises project licences. On cosmetics, 8,000 substances are already known to be safe, and about 89 per cent. of the population want a ban on them. I hope that the Minister will not refer to the EC target date of 1998 as realistic, because the all-party animal welfare group, for example, has said that it welcomes it in principle, but the Council of Ministers amended text may result in little change in the current situation. There is an attempt to seek an agreement with the United States and Japan, which have even worse records in this matter. I do not think that the EC report on the banning of certain cosmetics will come about by 1998.

The Draize eye test involves irritants being administered without pain relief until the animal dies, and the LD50 involves the painful poisoning of animals until 50 per cent. of them die. On Second Reading, the then Home Office Minister, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) said:

"The Draize test will not be necessary for very much longer . . . There will come a time, and it is not far removed, when full alternatives will be possible for the Draize test . . . the same is true of LD50."—[*Official Report*, 17 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 159.]

Use of the Draize test has increased considerably. In 1991, the last year for which figures are available, there were 3,500 Draize tests. That is not a successful record for the Government.

The Government have increased funding for alternatives during 1991-92, but £250,000 for the year is serious underfunding. Government funding was criticised by the Animal Procedures Committee in its 1990 report, and last year it made it clear that funds would need to be increased in future if Government funding is to be effective and appropriate.

There are double standards in the validation of non-animal tests as distinct from animal tests. The eyetex replacement for Draize has not been accepted, despite evaluation of more than 10,000 substances in many laboratories. United Kingdom representatives have been promoting two new animal tests, including penile irritation and rectal irritation, which "Frame" has described as unvalidated, yet those animal tests have been placed on the suggested lists.

Other problems are highlighted by the evidence from animal welfare and animal rights groups. The code of practice standards are not being met at virtually every laboratory that was investigated. Standards are inadequate. Primates are allowed to be kept in cages the size of small filing cabinets. Paragraph 3.54 of the code of practice states:

"Cages should include wooden perches, a swing, a wooden nest box, a shelf for feeding and sufficient wood shavings to allow foraging.

The animals should have space to jump horizontally from one perch to another."

If there were perches in the cages of the size set out in the code of practice, there would not be enough room to put in the animals, yet laboratories have cages which are even smaller.

The code of practice is not being implemented properly and the inspectorate has been unable to monitor the Act

effectively. The Animal Procedures Committee is dominated by pro-animal research interests and is not monitoring effectively.

The Animal Procedures Committee visited Huntingdon and Shamrock shortly before the BUAV investigation and found nothing wrong. I ask the Minister how that can be so in the light of the subsequent evidence. A review is needed to examine how such faults can be picked up in the future and why faults such as too small cages, lack of exercise and no bedding are being missed.

The project licensing system is failing. It is not preventing repetitive experiments or those where alternatives are available. At the time that the Act was passed, promises were made but they have not been kept. In 1986, the then Minister of State, Home Office assured us that obviously no one would be given permission to use a primate if a rat could be used. However, BUAV's report reveals that a licence was issued for the use of primates, even though the researchers involved admitted that they had no reason to believe that primates would give any more accurate results than those from experiments which they were carrying out on rats. That is a damning indictment of the Act.

It is impossible to list all the problems with the Act, but there are things that are needed. For example, there should be an independent and comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the 1986 Act. I urge the Minister to set up such a review. Other steps could be taken immediately. Trivial and discredited experiments for cosmetics, tobacco and alcohol, the LD50 and the Draize test could be banned. Funding for the planned development and use of non-animal alternatives could be increased.

The inspectorate could be strengthened and the Animal Procedures Committee could be restructured to eliminate its pro-animal research bias. An annual target could be set up to reduce the number of animals used by at least 10 per cent. That would give impetus to the trend away from animal experiments and encourage the use of alternatives. In the fifth environmental programme approved by the Council of Ministers, the European Commission proposed a 50 per cent. reduction in the use of animals by the year 2000. Animal targets are essential if the United Kingdom is to come close to meeting that proposal. I urge the Minister to take action to achieve some of those targets.

2.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): At the outset, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his success in obtaining the debate and on the constructive form which it has taken and which I shall certainly follow. The hon. Gentleman always argues passionately on behalf of whatever case he raises with my office. I sometimes see him as a latter-day David fighting the Goliath of officialdom, not with a slingshot but by David barnstorming the ramparts of Whitehall, sometimes with great success on behalf of his constitutents.

Animal research is a subject which arouses much emotion, as hon. Members will know from their postbags. Some people believe that animals should never be used for scientific research, and they are entitled to their opinion. That is not, however, a view which the Government hold. We believe that essential medical research must be allowed to continue.

Over the years, there have been great advances in the development of alternative methods and techniques, enabling many aspects of scientific work to be undertaken without the use of animals. Experimentation on tissue, or by the use of computer models, can help enormously, yet it cannot take us all the way. For the foreseeable future, therefore, we are likely to need some animal experimentation if medical research into animal as well as human conditions is not to be weakened immeasurably. For example, there are no acceptable validated alternatives to animal testing for acute and repeated dose toxicity, carcinogenicity or teratogenicity.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I make some general points. I shall refer to Shamrock and also to Draize and the other cases, where he referred to what may be anecdotal evidence. I shall go through his speech and seek to reply to all the points on which I can give him a reply.

I am not prepared to say to new parents who are worried about cot deaths, or to those caring for an elderly relation whose personality and quality of life has been destroyed by Alzheimers, or to sufferers from cancer, AIDS, Parkinson's disease or a host of other serious conditions, that the medical research that gives them hope must now come to an end. I am not prepared to say to those who have been saved from life-threatening or disabling illnesses by earlier research using animals that they should have been allowed to die or to continue to suffer. That is the implication of arguing that animal experimentation is wrong and should not be allowed, or should not ever have been allowed in any circumstances.

I understand what the hon. Gentleman says about the need for controls and I shall seek to expand upon that subject.

Some of those who argue for a total ban accept the logic of their beliefs, and it is their right to do so. Presumably they refuse any medical assistance which may have derived benefit from such experiements, if it is ever offered. Many others, I am afraid, have been misled by arguments that animal experimentation achieves nothing, or that research can always be taken forward by other means. I fear that that is a delusion. We can have medical advance, or a total ban on animal experimentation, but we cannot have both.

What the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act gives us is the best of both worlds, I believe. The choice is not between a-free-for-all in animal experimentation, or no animal experimentation at all. The solution that the 1986 Act provides is a system for judging the justification of animal use against the likely suffering to the animals concerned. The Act provides a triple licensing system—an arrangement, incidentally, which goes further than any of our European partners in ensuring rigorous scrutiny of animal research.

Let me describe some of the elements of the control system that the 1986 Act provides. In the first place, every establishment in which research is carried out must be "designated" by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary in advance. The holder of a certificate of designation is thus made personally responsible for ensuring that all the animal work carried out in his or her establishment complies with legal and administrative controls. The certificate will also designate named persons responsible for the day-to-day care of the animals and a veterinary surgeon or other suitably qualified person who can provide advice on the animals' health and welfare. Central to the Act, therefore, is the notion of individuals

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

being personally identified as responsible for what goes on. They know that they are going to be held accountable if standards are ever allowed to slip.

Separately from this, we license the individuals who will carry out research, usually under supervision when they start working with animals. This is essential to ensure that such persons have the appropriate education, skills and training so that the animals they are using do not suffer any unnecessary harm. The training of personal licence holders is obviously crucial. I believe that it has been good in the past, but it has relied heavily on supervision by an experienced licence holder. We are about to make it even stronger through the introduction of formal training courses for those who wish to apply for a personal licence. The Home Office has recently been reviewing in detail the areas of expertise and understanding that must be covered. New guidance on the content and form of training, and on the validation of training schemes, is about to be issued.

Perhaps most significantly of all, we have the project licence. This is where the judgment is taken on the justification for the research. Some propaganda in circulation suggests that researchers undertake animal work for the sheer sake of causing cruelty—that is not the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, but it is put about in some quarters—and with no clear objective in view. That is simply not true of this country and can serve only to spread false alarm and unfounded concern. In this country there are no grounds whatsoever for the accusation, since the law expressly lays down the scientific objectives that the research must be intended to address before it can be considered for licensing at all. Nor is it sufficient that the research should have one or more of the intended benefits in some degree. My right hon. and learned Friend must specifically weigh the likely adverse effects on the animals concerned against the benefit that is intended, and he must not grant a licence unless he is satisfied that adequate consideration has been given to the feasibility of using non-animal means to obtain the same objectives. Further protection exists in respect of cats, dogs, primates or equidae, which must not be used unless it is not practicable to obtain animals of any other species suitable for the purpose.

The Home Office inspectorate is obviously an essential part of the system, and the hon. Gentleman referred to the inspectors and their role. I believe that we are unique in having an inspectorate of this kind, made up of individuals, each with a medical or veterinary background, who have direct expertise in the field of biomedical research. They perform a dual function under the Act. Their first function is to consider all applications for licences and certificates, and to advise, in the light of their expertise, on whether the places, persons or projects in question can appropriately be approved under the legislation. I have talked of the detailed negotiation in which they are often engaged over the terms of individual project licences.

The inspectors see that as their best opportunity to ensure, before work starts, that proposals are refined as far as possible to minimise the impact on animals. I acknowledge that measuring success is difficult. Indeed, it is sometimes necessary to use more animals in order to reduce the impact on the individual animal. None the less, there is an increasing perception that the detailed discussions over project licence applications have done much to mould attitudes in the scientific community since the introduction of the 1986 Act. Scientists accept the need to justify their proposals and are becoming adept at predicting the likely adverse effects of their procedures on animals and are increasingly enthusiastic in putting forward strategies to minimise these. By definition, inspectors are individuals whose scientific standing is of a kind to enable them to engage as equals with the scientists wanting to carry out the research.

Secondly, inspectors have an important role in inspecting establishments themselves, and in ensuring that animals are properly housed and treated, and that the terms of individual project licences are being observed. It has been suggested that the inspectorate should be made up exclusively of veterinary surgeons. I believe that we should lose significantly if that were the case. Most laboratory animal use is directed towards human health or safety. The strength of the inspectorate lies in the range of disciplines and experience that its members can bring to bear, and in the fact that the same individuals are responsible for inspecting the research in progress as have previously negotiated the terms of the project licence. It is from their knowledge of the licence, and of the factors that led to its being in the form it is, that they derive their particular authority and strength in the course of inspections. Inspections, of course, are spot checks. The onus for day-to-day observance of the statutory and administrative controls and standards rests with the holder of the certificate of designation.

I have mentioned the Animal Procedures Committee, and I should like to stress its role as an independent watchdog of the system, which I know concerns the hon. Gentleman. It is nonsense to suggest, as some people outside the House have done, that the committee is made up of persons with a vested interest in scientific work on animals and that it will always take the side of the scientists. By statute, the committee is a balance of those who have a direct involvement in animal experimentation, of those whose principal interest is in animal welfare, and others who fall on neither side—including, at present, a professor of law and a former professor of philosophy. All that I have learnt of the committee convinces me that it performs a very valuable role in scrutinising the working of the legislation, in following up individual issues which have given rise to public concern, such as Shamrock farms, and in providing a rigorous analysis of individual issues concerned with animal research. In that context, I pay tribute to the wise leadership that the committee has received under the chairmanship of Lord Nathan, whose retirement from that post has recently been made public.

Mr. Cohen: I, too, congratulate Lord Nathan on his retirement, but was he not also on the board of the Cancer Research Campaign? While I have a lot of time for that organisation, it carries out more experiments than any other charity. Does that not mean, at the very least, that his position is not neutral?

Mr. Wardle: The committee is not one-sided or made up of people whose sole interest is animal experimentation. It has a balance and, although I do not have time to list them, it has some members whose sole concern—to counterbalance those represented by Lord Nathan, for

example—is to represent the interests of animal welfare. I believe that there is a balance. If the hon. Gentleman will allow, I will make progress, as time is running out.

The committee is engaged on wide-ranging reviews of two vital issues: the use of primates in research, and toxicity testing. The hon. Gentleman asked about the former. Any announcement from the Home Office will be based on our consideration of the committee's findings. The Government look forward with much interest to hearing the the committee's conclusions on both issues.

One area of the committee's activity calls for special mention. That is the part that it plays in the development of alternatives to animal research. Its research sub-committee—currently under the chairmanship of Sir Andrew Huxley—administers a research budget, funded by the Home Office, into means of replacing, refining or reducing the use of animals in research.

The research sub-committee's work is an important element in the Government's efforts to encourage alternatives to animal research, but it is not the only measure we take. We have been active in Europe, for example, in encouraging the search for alternatives to animal testing. We were prominent in encouraging an international collaborative study to assess the scope for reducing the need for the LD50 toxicity test, and the validation and acceptance of alternative fixed dose methods. Very recently the United Kingdom and the EC Commission jointly initiated an international study into means of validating alternatives to the Draize eye irritancy tests. Those are practical ways in which we give force to our expressed desire to see the use of alternatives to animals wherever possible.

The hon. Gentleman referred to Shamrock farms, and I refer the House to the answer that I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 2 December stating the action that we had taken as a result of considering the findings of the inspectorate and the Animal Procedures Committee.

The Government share the view of those who believe in the value of animal experimentation, but believe that such work should take place only where there are strictly identifiable potential benefits, and where there are no other practicable alternatives. We have the most rigorous and extensive of systems for ensuring that only justifiable research takes place, and for policing the operation of approved work. There is no system that is not capable of further improvement and that is why I look forward with much interest to the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee on its current areas of study, and to the further reviews that it will no doubt undertake in future. But I am confident that we have a system in the United Kingdom which provides the best possible guarantee of animal welfare, set alongside the justifiable needs of scientific research.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 8 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Concessionary Fares (London)

1. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of discussions between the London boroughs and the transport operators regarding the London concessionary fares scheme for 1993-94.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I understand that the boroughs have reached agreement with London Transport and British Rail to continue the existing scheme for 1993-94.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister realise that, year after year, there is anxiety about the scheme and the way in which the Government leave it to be funded in this rather ad hoc way? If we are not to pay a decent pension, we need to have a decent concessionary fares scheme that elderly people believe, with conviction, will continue and not be subject to the vagaries of local authority funding from year to year.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the arrangement enshrined in the London Regional Transport Act 1984 allows precisely for that to happen. It provides that the boroughs agree a scheme with London Transport every year. In the event that they do not, a reserve scheme, which is in the Act, comes into effect. That means that, each year, the boroughs and London Transport, as they have done this year, reach a straightforward settlement.

Sir John Wheeler: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of the scheme is now in excess of £120 million a year for the 32 London boroughs, that it may disproportionately be taken up by the better off and that it costs over 20 per cent. of each of the 32 London boroughs' social services budgets? Is not there a case for giving elderly people a better choice about how that money is spent?

Mr. Norris: I note what my right hon. Friend says, but he will agree that the principle that underlies the present arrangements is that the boroughs, in concert, should agree whatever scheme they believe to be appropriate. Having done so, the scheme is agreed with London Transport and the reserve scheme operates only in the event that they are unable to come to an agreement.

Mr. Cox: Is the Minister aware that questions such as that asked by the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) greatly concern people who benefit from the scheme in London? Can he ensure that, in any discussions that take place, no restriction will be placed on the way in which people can travel throughout London, irrespective of where they live, and that that right will continue?

Mr. Norris: We made it clear that we intend to give the boroughs the right to continue to operate a concessionary fares scheme. The content of that scheme is entirely a matter for the boroughs, but the hon. Gentleman will note the agreement that has been reached this year, of the details of which, as in other years, he is well aware.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend accept the thanks and congratulations of all my pensioner and disabled constituents who are delighted that the scheme is going ahead for another year? Will he also accept my regrets at the way in which every year certain groups, whose motives are to be questioned, say that the scheme is threatened, thereby worrying pensioners? Is there any chance of the scheme being agreed a little earlier in the coming year? That would be welcome.

Mr. Norris: I am sure that I do not deserve my hon. Friend's thanks, but I am grateful for gratitude from whatever quarter it comes. As for timing, the length of the negotiations is a matter for the boroughs and London Transport. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that it is the existence of the reserve scheme, which comes into effect if the boroughs fail to reach agreement, which has ensured that they reach agreement by the stated date.

The boroughs are well seized of the importance that the elderly attach to the scheme. I am sure that in future, in a deregulated bus market, the boroughs will want to continue to provide the facility that is now available and to pay for it as they do at present.

River Transport (London)

2. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve transport in London by river.

Mr. Norris: I recently announced the formation of the River Thames working group which, under my chairmanship, will study the potential for developing freight and passenger traffic on the river and identify the scope for private sector improvements.

Ms. Hoey: I am sure that the Minister agrees that the river is vastly underused as a form of public transport for Londoners. Will he congratulate London Riverbus on managing to put together another deal that means that it can survive for a little longer? Does he agree that the only way in which we shall see the river used by Londoners is to bring river transport within the London travel network card?

Mr. Norris: It is precisely because I agree with the hon. Lady that we should fully exploit the potential of the Thames—not only for passengers, but for non-time sensitive bulk cargo, tourism and so on—that the working party has been established. I am glad that London Riverbus appears to have its funding in place for the rest of the year. It has, of course, always been a private sector initiative. It is supported now by private bodies because they recognise that it has marketing potential.

The hon. Lady will know that the present access arrangements are based on the concept of revenue forgone. Given the high operating costs of London Riverbus, the management accepts that a straight transfer to the travel card would be impracticable. It has raised the issue with me on several occasions and I know that it attaches importance to the matter.

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend will know that the Thames is the northern boundary of Dartford constituency. Apart from separating Kent from Essex, it is a greatly underused resource. Does he agree that if more freight and commuter traffic could be moved on to the river, congestion on the roads would be reduced enormously in south-east London?

Mr. Tony Banks: Stand up for Essex.

Mr. Norris: To respond to the hon. Gentleman's sedentary invitation to stand up for Essex, I can say only that I can think of better uses for the Thames than keeping us in Essex away from the good people of Kent. For what it is worth, my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) is entirely right. About 40 per cent. of London's domestic waste, for example, is transported down the Thames by barge. That means that every day literally dozens of heavy lorry movements do not take place, with the result that some of the congestion on our roads is relieved by river transportation. We want that potential to be exploited to the full.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister's River Thames committee consider the proposal to have on the river a floating heliport that could move around 22 sites between Battersea and the Thames barrier? Apparently it would need no planning arrangements or agreements, so implementation would be a matter for the Minister. If he knows about the proposal to have 4,000 annual civil flights and 400 military flights, will he tell us more about the 400 military flights? Will they be by helicopter gunships to ensure that the unemployed are following up the workfare scheme?

Mr. Norris: I know of that proposal and I agree with the hon. Gentleman that several aspects of it seem bizarre to say the least. It clearly cannot be right that the facility should be provided ad hoc. It is primarily a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's concern, which I assure him I share. I shall make sure that the project is fully explored by the Government before it is taken further.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: My hon. Friend will no doubt be aware of the river service that will shortly start between Gravesend and Canary Wharf. Let us hope that it will extend further to central London and even to Speaker's Steps. Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure proper access to pontoons up the river into central London and, indeed, the provision of further pontoons because it is absurd that constituents who commute cannot use this magnificent 20-lane motorway into central London?

Mr. Norris: I welcome the new ideas that are being advanced to expand use of the Thames, especially long-range use from areas such as my hon. Friend's constituency into central London. The working party was set up to investigate access to wharves, quays and pontoons and to ensure that, where possible, the Government consider all the possibilities.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

3. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the Birmingham northern relief toll road on congestion on the M6 motorway.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): It is estimated by the concessionaire, Midlands Expressway, that, on opening the tolled Birmingham northern relief road, M6 flows between junctions 4 and 11 would be relieved by about 28,000 vehicles per day of through traffic.

Mr. O'Brien: Was not the Birmingham northern relief road originally scheduled to relieve congestion on the M6? It now seems that the Government may be considering whether to toll the M6 after the widening that is due to take place towards the end of the 1990s. Are the Government now considering a general policy whereby motorways may be tolled if they have been modernised or widened?

Mr. Carlisle: The Birmingham northern relief road stands on its own merits; it is a much-needed road. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are issuing a Green Paper on the financing of roads and the implications for the Birmingham northern relief road will be considered as part of the wider consultations. The new relief road to the north of Birmingham is critical for traffic not only around Birmingham but in the north-west and on local roads in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, such as the A38 and A446, which are over-congested because of crowded conditions on the M6.

Tankers

4. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made since 5 January to the International Maritime Organisation, regarding the safe routing of tankers in British coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): Since 5 January, three meetings have been held at which International Maritime Organisation officials were present. In addition, there has been a substantial discussion at the emergency Transport and Environment Council in Brussels. We expect shortly the Commission's communication on marine safety, for which we have been urgently pressing. I hope that this will be discussed at the next two Transport Council meetings, which may lead to further representations to the IMO.

Mr. Wallace: Can the Secretary of State clarify the position that emerged after last Thursday's meeting, which was chaired by his Department and involved a number of bodies involved in shipping? Can he confirm whether it is intended that the Pentland Firth and the Fair Isle Channel will become a no-go area? The Braer may have been observing the voluntary ban within a 10-mile radius from Shetland. The key is not necessarily a ban but proper monitoring of shipping using those channels. What

assessment has been made of radar surveillance in British coastal waters? Will the right hon. Gentleman take forward these proposals to the IMO?

Mr. MacGregor: I am willing to listen to various suggestions that we might wish to take to the IMO, including the outcome of Lord Donaldson's inquiry. As a result of last Thursday's meeting between tanker owners and operators and my Department, provisions are being drawn up for a code of voluntary restrictions on tankers operating in sensitive areas such as the two that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. It will be a voluntary code, because to have a compulsory code it is essential to work through the IMO, which is why I have always stressed the need to reach agreement in the IMO. Radar surveillance all round our coast would be extremely expensive. We must, therefore, carefully consider the cost benefits. If one tries to introduce directions as a result of monitoring it could have implications for international law.

Mr. Adley: In welcoming the announcement that my right hon. Friend made about the meeting last Thursday, may I ask him to press on with his discussions with our Community partners? Does he agree that the Community is in a very strong position to exercise significant influence in the IMO and, as member Governments are likely to be more responsive to environmental concerns than a rather remote body such as the IMO, is not it a good opportunity to take our policy further?

Mr. MacGregor: That is the point. If we are to get agreement on further measures at IMO level, which has never proved particularly easy or quick, the more agreement we achieve in the European Community on measures that could be urged there, the better. That has been the purpose of our discussions. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noticed that the United Kingdom took a leading part in those discussions in January, as it did when it was president in the previous six months. Indeed, we were commended for the action that we took during the Braer incident.

Mr. Prescott: Although the House will welcome the Secretary of State's statement about moving towards some statutory control of the routings of vessels through that area, does he accept that the problem is that rogue operators and rogue ships take no notice of statutory enforcement or codes and that the only effective measure that they recognise is the possibility of getting caught? First, has he approached Norway and Russia about asking such ships to deposit their route movements with them when they pick up their cargoes? Secondly, it is nonsense to suggest that we have to wait for the IMO to get radar coverage in that area. Radar coverage is absolutely essential and the Government should decide to implement it now as the best form of deterrent.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman was not listening. I did not suggest that we needed IMO approval to have radar surveillance. I said that it involved substantial costs and that we should consider the cost benefits of implementing it all round the country. The hon. Gentleman was wrong on the first point, but, on the second, I agree that the tightening of port state controls, including the issue to which he referred, is certainly one of the most effective ways to bring pressure to bear on substandard ships. That is why we have given it high priority in the United Kingdom, where 30 per cent. of ships are now subjected to port state control—that is way above the target—and where the number of ships detained has increased substantially in recent years. I agree that it is important to target more and that is an issue which we wish to take up internationally.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There will be a general welcome for getting in place as many voluntary measures as possible, but does my right hon. Friend agree that to achieve the reduction there must be risk assessment? Would not it be a good idea to have radar surveillance in some of the most environmentally sensitive areas and the video recording of movements so that experts can consider what should be part of the voluntary agreement and what we should be asking for on a statutory basis later?

Mr. MacGregor: I see the point of it when there are benefits to be gained for the cost of putting such a system in place. That is why we have it in the Dover straits, where there are significant benefits. My hon. Friend's second point can be considered in the context of the Donaldson inquiry, although, even in that case, there could be implications for international law if one wanted to follow up the surveillance with positive measures.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is little benefit in removing tankers from the Minches if the new rule takes them within four miles of the coastline of the Outer Hebrides? Will he therefore urgently consider surveying a new route 40 to 50 miles from the coastline?

Mr. MacGregor: The question of alternative routes, especially in extremely bad weather such as that during the Braer incident, is very much part of the arrangements that might be made and I shall certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is considered.

Road Building

7. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the response has been to the future road building programme as announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The 41 new scheme starts, costing over £1·3 billion, which I announced last Thursday have been widely welcomed by the construction industry and road users, as were the 41 local road schemes that I announced in the transport supplementary grant settlement last December.

Mr. Ward: Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is correct in assuming that the construction industry will welcome the increase of thousands of jobs? We hope to hear a welcome from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), too. Above all, will my right hon. Friend ensure that the replacement for Poole bridge, which is desperately needed in my constituency, maintains its place in the programme and goes ahead as promised?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right about the importance of my announcement last week for jobs in the construction industry. Next year, the programme will involve as many as 30,000 jobs in the industry. I was not surprised that there was hardly a welcome from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) when I made the announcement. There is no doubt that

the record programme is good not only for jobs, but for the economy in terms of improving our road communications.

On the Poole harbour crossing, I can confirm to my hon. Friend that there will be public consultation in the spring. Following that, we shall press ahead with the scheme, although the completion date will depend on satisfactory progress through the statutory processes and, of course, on the availability of funds when those processes are completed.

Mr. Harvey: Is the Government's objective in proposing a Green Paper on road tolling to alter patterns of road use for environmental reasons or to raise revenue for the Treasury? If the objective is to raise revenue, is not it a bit steep to charge taxpayers to use roads for which they have already paid? If the objective is environmental, should not the revenue go to public transport?

Mr. MacGregor: We are pursuing environmental purposes in many ways in the road programme. As I said last week, next year we shall spend £2·2 billion in terms of capital investment in public transport. Given that 90 per cent. of passengers and freight now go by road, the figure compares favourably with the £2·9 billion of capital investment in roads.

One of the key issues in the Green Paper is that, to ensure that by the end of the century and beyond we do not have congestion on our motorways and principal roads, we may need to consider additional sources of finance to get the programme completed as quickly as we can. Even given the record programme of road building through taxpayers' funds, the main purpose of the Green Paper is to see whether private finance can augment public finance. I stress that it will be a Green Paper.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this programme is both helpful and exciting for the construction industry? I hope that he will continue with the programme beyond the present proposals. Will my right hon. Friend concentrate more of the effort in urban areas? In towns such as Reading there is major congestion. Will he also ensure that the planning process does not slow the development of such roads?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point, if my hon. Friend looks at the public expenditure programme announced last autumn, he will see that we are maintaining a high level of road building in years two and three. There is a concentration on the urban question—I know that this does not affect my hon. Friend—both in the considerable expenditure in London in next year's programme and in the substantial number of bypasses that are now included in the road programme.

On planning inquiries, I share my hon. Friend's concern about the amount of time that we take to go through the public consultation and public inquiry processes before we can start building a road. I am studying the issue carefully to see whether we can speed up the process in a way that is compatible with maintaining the rights of individuals.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State offer any experiments on road pricing and tolling? Does he accept that the Government raise three times more in road tax than is spent on road transport? Does he accept that that means a double whammy, in that he is trying to find a new tax to pay for the debt that the Government have imposed on this country and on its economic development?

Mr. MacGregor: That has to be nonsense. The hon. Gentleman knows that we do not have hypothecation of taxes in this country. If the hon. Gentleman is arguing that we should put more money into the road programme without considering the questions that will be raised in the Green Paper, does that mean that he has now abandoned the charge that he sometimes makes that we do not have a level playing field between road and rail?

Mr. Burns: May I suggest to my right hon. Friend a way in which his Department's budget on road building would be saved and in which expenditure could be diversified to please many of my constituents? If my right hon. Friend would be kind enough to cancel the appointment of the consultants who are studying the proposed new M12, for which nobody has asked and which no one wants, and if he used the money for other more important road projects, such as upgrading the A12 from the M25 to Chelmsford, he would kill two birds with one stone. He would please my constituents and improve road communications to the hinterland of East Anglia and to Chelmsford.

Mr. MacGregor: I note what my hon. Friend has said. That point of view has been pressed on me by other hon. Members from the same part of the country. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will be visiting Essex shortly to consider those issues and I am sure that he will also take into account what my hon. Friend has said.

A1 (Ferrybridge)

8. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains his policy for the route of the A1 to pass through Ferrybridge in West Yorkshire under the upgrading scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I announced the preferred route for the proposed A1 motorway between Redhouse and Hook Moor on 1 December 1992. The route passes to the west of Ferrybridge away from the built-up area. At present, detailed scheme design is under way.

Mr. O'Brien: Why is the Minister being so unfair and unkind to the communities in Ferrybridge and Pontefract which will border the new motorway? Why is he unconcerned about the health of the children at Ferrybridge junior and infant school, which will be near the motorway? Why is he indifferent to the people and communities of Ferrybridge and Pontefract by not allowing the motorway to go around their towns and communities, as happens in so many other areas? Why is the Minister being so uncharitable to those communities?

Mr. Carlisle: I know that the hon. Gentleman lives very close to the preferred route, but we believe that it is the best route. If we opted for the alternative route to the east of Knottingley, the journey would be much longer. Over the years, that would cost the country tens of millions of pounds more. However, there will be a public inquiry into the scheme and local communities and everyone interested in the road will have a full opportunity to put their views, which will be heard by an independent inspector. The upgrading of the A1 is truly important to the economy of

the whole of the east of the country. We plan to upgrade the road to motorway standard between the M25 and Newcastle over the next 10 years. That is much needed.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend accept the thanks of all of us for the care that he is taking with regard to the upgrading of the A1 and the careful planning of the M1-M62 motorway? Will he take into account the fears expressed by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) for the communities beside the road? Those fears are becoming increasingly important.

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. It is very important that roads are designed with great sensitivity and, wherever possible, are removed from communities. There are now much better techniques to achieve that. In addition to earth mounds, we now have the real prospect of much quieter surfaces such as porous asphalt. We shall be using porous asphalt for the first time in a commercial contract in the coming year. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) for the way in which he represents the concerns of his constituents. He will be coming to see me very shortly about the M1-M62 link.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: When will the Minister upgrade the A1 in Northumberland, where there has been carnage over the years and deaths galore? I remind the Minister that Northumberland is in England, and not in Scotland——

Madam Speaker: Order. We are dealing with the A1 in the area of Ferrybridge and West Yorkshire.

Mr. Campbell: It goes on from there.

Madam Speaker: I realise that; it starts much further south as well. I call Mr. Stephen to ask Question 9.

Shipping Accidents

9. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken at the International Maritime Organisation to improve compensation arrangements for shipping accidents.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom took a leading role in the adoption in 1992 of protocols ensuring higher limits of liability in the event of an oil spill. We are also doing so in the development of the convention to ensure high levels of compensation in the event of a chemical spill and in other ways.

Mr. Stephen: While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement about compensation, our principal concern must be to prevent the accidents from occurring in the first place. In relation to the English channel, which is of particular concern to my constituents, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is adequate radar surveillance of that very busy shipping lane and that if a vessel is seen to be contravening the rules for navigation in the English channel it will be contacted immediately by radio and that other ships will also be contacted by radio to warn them of the danger?

Mr. MacGregor: I confirm that that is the situation in the English channel. The traffic separation scheme, coupled with radar surveillance, has been effective in reducing the level of accidents in the area by more than 85 per cent. It is relevant to have that there because of the high level of traffic through the Dover straits. Where there is evidence of a contravention of the rules, appropriate follow-up action will be taken by the Department, which may include prosecutions.

Ms. Walley: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is crucial to have a unified approach to maritime safety? Why do we have to keep waiting for disasters such as the Braer and the disasters that we have seen in the English channel? Whatever the right hon. Gentleman may be doing with the International Maritime Organisation in respect of the new oil compensation proposal, is it not the case that we may have to wait three years for it to be fully ratified by the eight necessary states? When will he do something about ship safety? When will he increase port state control? When will he make public the results of port state control? When will he do something to save the British merchant fleet, which has the best safety record of all?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with the hon. Lady that it is not desirable simply to wait for disasters such as the Braer before action is taken. That is why we have been pressing for a considerable time along a wide range of fronts, but one needs the involvement and co-operation of other organisations, and countries around the world, if one is to achieve effective results. I accept that when there is a disaster it gives an extra spur to obtaining that agreement.

We have been tightening port state control, and I should certainly like that to be done very strongly elsewhere. It is producing effective results. I should be happy to give the hon. Lady the figures if she would like to table a question.

Piracy

10. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking, both nationally and internationally, to combat piracy, in particular in far eastern waters.

Mr. Norris: We are about to publish comprehensive advice to British ship owners and crews on dealing with piracy and armed robbery. Through our embassies and high commissions, we have ensured that littoral states in areas where attacks occur are aware of our concerns. At the request of the Secretary General of the International Maritime Organisation, we shall be sending two experts to work with the IMO piracy working group which is to visit south-east Asia in March.

Mr. Waterson: I welcome my hon. Friend's prompt actions in respect of international piracy, but will he continue to give the highest priority to avoiding incidents such as the attack on the Baltimar Zephir, which resulted in the deaths of the British captain and the chief officer?

Mr. Norris: We have made clear to the Indonesian Government, through our embassy in Jakarta, our very great concern at Captain Bashforth's murder on the Baltimar Zephir and our expectation that their investigation into the incident will be thorough and its results made known fully and speedily.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister recognise that transport piracy comes in many forms? Does he recognise the extreme concern that is felt today by railway pensioners as a result of reports that £4·25 billion——

Madam Speaker: Order. We are talking about piracy on the high seas in far eastern waters. That question is a long way from the mark.

Network SouthEast (Performance)

11. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the latest performance statistics on the south-western lines division of Network SouthEast.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): For the year ended 29 January 1993, the south-western lines managed to achieve an average performance which was above their targets for 1992. Peak punctuality was 90·9 per cent. and reliability was 99·5 per cent. That is a credit to staff and management.

Mr. Taylor: Would my hon. Friend like to know that there is unrestrained enthusiasm on the 10 stations in my constituency about the prospect of the south-western lines division being franchised? That enthusiasm will be maintained so long as the contract that is let to the franchisee observes better performance standards then those currently obtained and safeguards the commuter lines such as those which pass through my constituency.

Mr. Freeman: We are grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for franchising, particularly the south-western lines. It would be our intention that the private sector franchisees adopted even higher standards of punctuality and reliability to monitor their own performance.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is it not a fact that the franchising that the Minister and the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) welcome will jeopardise branch lines such as those operating from Chessington, Hampton Court, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Esher, the Chertsey branch line, and many other branch lines throughout the Network SouthEast area? Are they not in jeopardy, along with many intermediate stations?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken if he believes *The Guardian* newspaper that there is likely to be a threat to a substantial part of the network through franchising. The hon. Gentleman would be wrong: there is nothing in our proposals that jeopardises at all either branch lines or existing main routes.

Ms. Lait: Is my hon. Friend aware that standards of punctuality on the Network SouthEast route to Hastings are such that British Rail is paying a 5 per cent. reduction? Is he further aware that BR appears to be planning a reduction of seats on the fast trains in the new summer timetable? Will he consult British Rail and alert it to the distress and anger that my commuters feel about the appalling service that they receive from British Rail, which is leading to their approval for the franchising of the British Rail line?

Mr. Freeman: I will certainly reflect my hon. Friend's concerns to the chairman of British Rail, but it is a matter for British Rail at present to determine the services that it provides and the fares for its services. Under the franchising system, the franchising director will require a commitment to a certain level of service, especially in the peak, and he will control fares in Network SouthEast.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies there are in the Crown prosecution service in Greater London.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Crown prosecution service in Greater London and Surrey has vacancies for 49 lawyers out of a total requirement of 499, and for 100 support staff out of a total requirement of 1,428.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that that large number of lawyers means that cases can come to the courts more quickly? Is it not then offensive to many people for the courts to impose ridiculous sentences such as the recent £500 fine which was imposed on a rapist when a damned good hiding might have been more appropriate?

Sir Derek Spencer: I can assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General expects to receive the papers in that case quite shortly so that he can decide whether the sentence appears to be unduly lenient. He will take his decision on the matter carefully and within the 28 days allowed to him by statute.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Solicitor-General aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and many people in the country at large, find it difficult to understand the sentence—or rather non-sentence—imposed on the person responsible for rape? Is it not important that it should be clearly understood that rape is a vile crime and will be punished severely by the courts and that what was done in that specific case serves no purpose whatever in making it clear that rape is a vile crime?

Sir Derek Spencer: It was precisely to enable my right hon. and learned Friend to deal with the deep sense of misgiving to which the hon. Gentleman referred that we changed the law on this subject and gave the Attorney-General power to refer sentences which appear unduly lenient.

31. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the restructuring of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): On 1 April 1993, the existing 31 areas of the Crown prosecution service will amalgamate to form 13 new areas. The aim is to improve communication between the areas and headquarters, to lay emphasis on the CPS as a national service, and to enhance the responsibilities of chief Crown prosecutors and their role in management.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. Does he agree that it is important that more time be given to experienced lawyers to have a personal involvement in the more serious cases with which they are dealing? Will the changes go any way to enhance that and bring it about?

Sir Nicholas Lyell: Yes. Two of the advantages of the changes will be, first, that chief Crown prosecutors will be given a bigger role in the central management of the service

as a whole and, secondly, that it will free senior lawyers to do case work on the important and complex cases with which the CPS now deals.

Mr. Fraser: Can the Attorney-General confirm that he will carefully consider facilitating the CPS to argue before the Court of Appeal that the sentence in the Newport Crown court rape case was inadequate? Will he therefore give the Court of Appeal an opportunity to give some guidance about the sentencing of juveniles, as there has been a great deal of concern about the kind of sentences that juveniles have received for serious crimes?

Sir Nicholas Lyell: I appreciate the concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman. It would be wrong for me to pre-empt my decision before I have seen the papers and the factors that impinged on the mind of the learned judge in that case, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I will look carefully at the matter and that, if the case is referred, it will give the Court of Appeal that opportunity, among others.

32. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies for the Crown prosecution service there are in the county of Hertfordshire.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown prosecution service currently has a full complement of 48 lawyers in the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire area. It has one vacancy for support staff out of a total requirement of 80.

Mr. Evans: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that all prosecutions are being undermined by punishments not fitting the crime? Does he realise that, apart from the recent rape case, there are many cases of crimes such as joy riding and so on which the nation feels should be punished properly? When will he stop pussyfooting about and get on with it?

The Solicitor-General: We do not pussyfoot around. We refer many cases to the Court of Appeal when we believe that there are grounds to say that the sentence is unduly lenient.

Matrix Churchill

33. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to receive a report on the outcome of the inquiry on Matrix Churchill.

The Attorney-General: The time scale required to complete the Matrix Churchill inquiry is a matter for Lord Justice Scott. He has made it clear that he wishes to report to the President of the Board of Trade as soon as possible.

Mr. O'Brien: Is it not the case that Lord Justice Scott is currently still reading the papers and has not even spoken to witnesses yet? On that basis, are we not unlikely to have a report before the autumn? When the matter was first raised, the Prime Minister assured the House that he would not allow the inquiry to prevent parliamentary questions from being answered, but are not Ministers in fact refusing to answer legitimate questions to which the British public have a right to answers? If British Ministers have acted improperly, they should not continue in office until the report is completed.

The Attorney-General: There are three questions there. I repeat the assurance that Government Departments will give full assistance to Lord Justice Scott. He has already received about 30,000 documents. Obviously, they take a good deal of time to read and to assimilate. He then proposes to hear the evidence. I understand from a press release that he proposes to hear the evidence largely in public. It will then be for him to consider his conclusions.

Crown Prosecution Service

34. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the restructuring of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns).

Mr. Waterson: I welcome the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend a moment ago. Does he agree that the restructuring will produce a more streamlined and effective service to bring to book both serious and less serious criminals in the rising ride of crime that we face at present?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that the review, coupled with the recent improvement in recruitment in the Crown prosecution service, should play a significant part in helping to reduce delays in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not ironic that people who defraud social security to the tune of, say, a couple of hundred pounds a year in most circumstances, are caught and tried while the Crown prosecution service somehow manages to miss the people who make a small fortune out of City fraud? Why is it that the Crown prosecution service allowed Ernest Saunders to get away with most of his sentence? Why did it say that Roger Seelig, who now runs a business, could not continue his trial because of "nervous exhaustion"? Now he is making a big pile. If the Government want to deal with crime, they should start with the big people at the top—their Tory friends.

The Attorney-General: There are two answers to the hon. Gentleman. The first and specific answer is that both the decisions to which he referred, as I should have thought that he realised, were judicial decisions made after careful argument in open court. The second answer is that, in addition to the work done by the Serious Fraud Office, which handles some 50 to 60 large cases a year, the Crown prosecution service handles some 800 to 900 major fraud cases a year. The revised format of the service should also assist in that.

36. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the level of recruitment to the Crown prosecution service in Lancashire in 1991 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: In 1991 the number of lawyers in post in the Lancashire and Cumbria area of the Crown prosecution service increased from 66 to 67. The number of support staff fell from 90 to 88. In 1992, the number of lawyers increased to 76 and support staff to 113.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Does he agree that one of the ways in which we can improve the standards of the Crown prosecution service and avoid miscarriages of justice such as the recent Newport Crown court low sentence for rape, which has

caused so much outrage, is to ensure that Crown prosecution service lawyers and other employed barristers are given rights of audience in higher courts, to ensure that they have the standard of training in advocacy to enable them to present cases in the public interest and to the best of their abilities?

The Solicitor-General: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor and he will no doubt take into account the principles laid down in the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 when he considers whether there is any need for increased rights of audience in the Crown courts.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

European Community

38. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of United Kingdom aid is given via the EC; and whether he expects this to change in the next five years.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): In 1991-92 approximately 20 per cent. of British aid to developing countries was provided through the EC. During the period up to 1996, covered in the Chancellor's autumn statement, this proportion is likely to increase, but it is too early to make predictions.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Foreign Secretary aware of concern among aid agencies that as the European Community's aid budget increases, there will be a corresponding reduction in the bilateral aid budget, and that since bilateral aid is one of the most effective ways to dispense aid, and the EC is one of the less effective ways, that is a cause for concern?

Mr. Hurd: I have seen the Christian Aid statement to which the hon. Gentleman is perhaps referring. Of course, it is true that part of our aid is multilateral, since it goes through the European Community or the United Nations and its agencies. It is important that multilateral aid should be as effective as we can help to make it, but it all runs together. For example, the programme in Bosnia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is financed partly by the European Community, which is the largest single contributor, and partly by programmes such as our own, but it all goes to the same purpose.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm the principle that he laid down in a speech two years ago—that non-humanitarian aid to developing countries will depend on their human rights record? Will he consider the question of non-humanitarian aid to Ghana and Indonesia, as the latter annexed East Timor five years ago and is oppressing the population there?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, we apply that principle and my hon. Friend knows of examples where we have done so, especially in Africa. I have nothing to say about aid to Indonesia, but I was in Ghana recently and think that President Rawlings needs and deserves encouragement, in particular because of his economic policy and his proclaimed intention of opening the door to consultation with the opposition.

Mr. Meacher: How does the right hon. Gentleman justify his policy of cutting the aid budget to Africa substantially in real terms during the next three years while sharply increasing aid to eastern and central Europe? How does he justify using aid moneys to pay exorbitant consultancy fees to the former Soviet Union this year, and to justify the press release issued by the Overseas Development Administration this week with the headline, "Britain gives £1·5 million to help with Polish mass privatisation"? We have always known that the Tories never favoured aid in the first place, but is that not the most dishonest and disreputable distortion of the aid budget that can possibly be imagined?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member is hopelessly out of date. He cannot have been in eastern Europe lately. The know-how fund has been one of the most successful forms of British aid in recent years. Because of the success of our privatisations, the sort of programme that the Poles and others most desperately require from us is help with theirs —they are after privatisation and not nationalisation.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the rules governing aid from the European Community are no less stringent in relation to human rights? In that context, what pressure is the Community, as well as Britain, able to exert on the Government of Sudan to ensure that the record on human rights in the south of that country meets the requirements of those rules?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend, and this is something on which we agreed in the Community. Alas, we have felt bound to suspend virtually all our aid to the Sudan, except humanitarian aid, in an effort to show that country that its present record on human rights and good government in general is not acceptable either to us or to our friends.

World Bank

39. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he proposes to take to increase the accountability of United Kingdom representatives to the World bank to the United Kingdom Parliament.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The World bank is accountable to its shareholders, including the United Kingdom. The Government are accountable to Parliament for payments made to the bank as part of our overseas aid programme.

Mr. Denham: Does the Minister accept that the World bank, through its structural adjustment lending and project lending, has a far greater influence on the policies of many developing countries than our own inadequate bilateral aid programme has? In the light of that and of the recent Wappenhams report, "Inside the World Bank", which showed that more than half its projects are failing in social, environmental and economic terms, is it not a disgrace that the House has virtually no opportunity to discuss what the British Government are doing in the bank and the changes that we may seek to make to it? Would the Minister consider having an annual debate in the House on the policies of the World bank, which should include prior discussion of the main policies that the Government intend to follow in that institution?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The purpose of questions and debates in the House of Commons is to make the British Government accountable. The hon. Gentleman can initiate a debate if he wishes. If he wishes to know about actions by the British Government in support of environmental considerations, he need only take note of our opposition to the Narmada project in India, where we have taken an extremely robust line. We have made it clear that there must be great progress by April on environmental and other matters of resettlement if funding is to continue.

Somalia

40. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British aid workers are currently estimated to be working in Somalia; what is the nature of their work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Many British and international relief agencies operating in Somalia employ British nationals in a wide range of activities, but it is impossible to estimate their numbers.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the British contribution to the relief effort in Somalia is quite outstanding in economic and personnel terms? Will my hon. Friend particularly commend the wonderful work of Sean Devereux and other aid workers? Will the increased numbers of British forces enable some troops to go to Somalia to defend aid workers where appropriate?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. Operation Restore Hope, in which the United Kingdom has provided tremendous assistance, has, with the United States initiative, been a terrific success. In terms of financial assistance, we are the third largest bilateral donor to the relief effort in Somalia; more than £40 million worth of relief has been committed in the past 12 months. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the great courage of aid workers in Somalia, including Sean Devereux. I am afraid that only today the deaths of a further five Red Cross employees were announced.

Mr. Mandelson: Did the Minister happen to read the excellent article in Friday's edition of the *Financial Times* by Mr. Nicholas Hinton, secretary general of the Save the Children Fund? He drew attention to the terrible shortcomings of the United Nations and its agencies in dealing with disasters such as that in Somalia. What steps have the Government taken to co-ordinate with United Nations personnel the much-needed improvement in the performance of the United Nations and its agencies to overcome the shortcomings which are so glaringly obvious?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman will know, at our instigation a new co-ordinator has been appointed by the United Nations Secretary General and we wish him well. We fully recognise that when the United Nations takes over the operation from the United States that it must be properly funded.

Mr. Lester: Can my hon. Friend give us any idea of our involvement with the United States in planning what will happen when the United States forces withdraw? Many aid agencies, although they have supported the United States intervention in the current situation, are very concerned about what may happen when the forces withdraw.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is essential that a clear plan is drawn up for the handover of responsibility from the coalition forces to the United Nations when the former leave. Discussion about that is currently under way and, as I have said, we are pressing for the United Nations to be fully resourced.

Kenya

41. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Kenyan Government about aid policies.

Mr. Hurd: I last discussed aid and related issues with President Moi in Nairobi in September. My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is in Nairobi today. She is talking to President Moi and others about a number of issues, including aid.

Miss Lestor: Bearing in mind that last month, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), the Government said that new balance of payments assistance was being withheld pending political and economic reforms in Kenya, and bearing in mind that the political reforms have taken place as a result of the election, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when he expects the Government to restore new balance of payments assistance?

Mr. Hurd: That will depend largely on how the International Monetary Fund gets on with its review of economic reform.

I was glad to hear what the hon. Lady said about the elections. We support the Commonwealth observers' conclusion, but we hope that President Moi will now reach out a hand to the opposition parties there, try to heal the wounds and re-emphasise his stand in favour of unity and reconciliation.

Public Expenditure Reviews

3.31 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Portillo): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement about public spending. The Government are committed to a rigorous approach to public spending. We set out in our manifesto for the last election our objective of reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector. As part of that, on 14 May last year, following a discussion on public spending, the Cabinet decided that, once the 1992 public spending round was completed, I should be commissioned as Chief Secretary to conduct a long-term exercise involving in-depth reviews of the public-spending programmes of each Department of State. It was anticipated that the reviews would take much of the period of this parliament to complete.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister mentioned the exercise in a speech last week. He noted how easy it was for the state to settle into habits of spending that outlast their purpose and outrun their budgets.

The exercise will require Secretaries of State in each Department to conduct searching studies of their programmes in co-operation with me. The process will start this year with four of the largest programmes. The Departments involved are the Home Office and the Departments of Health, Education and Social Security. The particular aim is to distinguish clearly between the essential costs of high priority spending, which we will continue to fund, and avoidable spending which we cannot afford.

Over the course of the Parliament, we shall be looking at the direction that spending on every programme is taking, and at whether its purpose remains right for the 1990s. We will be seeking to identify areas where better targetting can be achieved, or from which the public sector can withdraw altogether.

These fundamental reviews are not a substitute for the traditional process of public expenditure control; rather, they are intended to reinforce it. Their focus will be on the medium to longer term, although our aim is that their provisional findings should inform the next spending round in the summer.

Making progress towards our fiscal objectives requires us to exercise tight control over public spending. We have an absolute duty to ensure full value for money for the taxpayer from the £250 billion that we spend each year. We shall fulfil that duty.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the Chief Secretary confirm that this is no ordinary review—that it is quite different from the normal Treasury overview of spending? Although he says that the review was originally intended to last the whole Parliament, will not the provisional findings of the review start hitting spending plans as early as this summer?

On what basis has the right hon. Gentleman chosen the four Departments? What are the criteria? Given that the Departments that he has selected cover our police, our schools, our hospitals and pensions, people will want to know now what options are being contemplated. What is up for grabs in this extraordinary review?

Given that the right hon. Gentleman has stated that there are areas of spending and investment from which the public sector can withdraw altogether, will he tell us which services, which benefits and which investment plans are under consideration as those from which the public sector can withdraw altogether? Which are "high priority" and may survive; which are only "a priority" and will therefore be doomed?

Who will be consulted before these decisions are taken? What is the process? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the election promises made by the Prime Minister were not only to raise child benefit in line with inflation but to maintain the levels of public services over the whole Parliament?

Is not the real reason for this extraordinary statement nothing to do with the fact that the Government want a genuine and open review of the efficiency of public spending, but rather a panic response to the Government's economic mismanagement—in particular, to the appalling levels of unemployment, costing £9,000 for every unemployed person?

Will not the right hon. Gentleman realise that it would be wholly wrong if the British people, who are already suffering in the recession, ended up paying the price in terms of worse policing, worse schools and worse health care—not to mention lost pensions and lost benefits? Should not the price of the recession and economic mismanagement be paid by the Government who caused them?

Mr. Portillo: I fear that the hon. Lady has not adopted the measured tone required by this subject. I will be happy to answer her questions, however.

Is this review quite different from what has gone before? It is a substantial review; it will cover the whole of this Parliament; it will cover every Department. It is different from what happens in every public expenditure round, but it will not be the bitter and vicious cutting exercise that the Labour Government went in for.

The hon. Lady wants to know whether there will be results as early as this summer. There may be some; I am asking for preliminary conclusions. She asked how the Departments were chosen. They are the largest Departments, with the exception of Defence, and Defence underwent a review quite recently, entitled "Options for Change".

The hon. Lady wants to know what will be included and what excluded. She should understand that at this stage we are asking questions. There is no point in asking questions if one knows the answers. As to what will be included and what excluded, perhaps I can use the following words:

> "We should be prepared to re-examine everything. I've not ruled anything out of court."

Those were the words used by the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, to describe the social justice commission that he has established.

It is extraordinary of the hon. Lady to ask me about manifesto pledges. Yes, they stand. We honoured them in the autumn statement. She is in an extraordinary position. Yesterday, she helped to build up a bonfire of the Labour party's manifesto pledges, which were then set alight by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). The pledge to nationalise water: gone. The pledge to renationalise electricity: gone. The tax rises in the shadow Budget: gone. Yesterday, the Labour party was urged by its leader to think the unthinkable—unfortunately, the hon. Lady was not included among the thinkers.

The party to which the hon. Lady belongs set up a Commission for Social Justice, a no-holds barred review. A party that is afraid to question is a party that is afraid to govern. A party that, in setting up the social justice commission, is willing to ask these questions, but then attacks our party for asking them, is a party that does not know its bottom from its elbow.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that this fundamental review will be welcomed not only by Conservative Members but by the financial markets, providing that it produces a sensible medium-term strategy for public expenditure that will take us to the end of the Parliament and beyond? Is he further aware that one of the structural problems of public expenditure, which must be addressed, is to improve the balance between transfer payments, which have, on the whole, been growing too fast and programmed expenditure on investment in such matters as human capital in education and training, which needs to grow faster?

Mr. Portillo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his well-phrased remarks. I appreciate the ready co-operation of my right hon. Friends in this exercise, some of whom are with me on the Treasury Bench. At the weekend, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said:

"I welcome the Prime Minister's review of public expenditure. Of course we have to look into every corner to root out waste and make sure we use taxpayers' money as efficiently as possible. This means taking tough decisions about priorities."

Priorities are exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) spoke about, and I agree with him, as I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The country thinks that the Chief Secretary's main job is to keep public expenditure under review all the time. Therefore, his announcement should not be a great surprise. His review will not be welcomed, but will be looked upon with fear and suspicion by the country, unless he gives certain assurances. He must give the assurance that the review will be public and open and not private; that it will aim at rebuilding Britain's economic prosperity; and, above all, that it will have as its objective a reduction in the appalling gap that has widened between the rich and the poor in Britain, and which has been the most damning legacy of the past 14 Tory years.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is nothing surprising about a Chief Secretary indulging in a review of public spending. We have to do that, and in May we announced that it would have two legs, which are the annual rounds and this further review covering the entire Parliament and each Department in turn.

The Government have an obligation to undertake such a review, because we are responsible for the spending of taxpayers' money, and in sorting out our priorities we must carry out this internal exercise. My right hon. Friends are conducting the exercise and are, of course, free to take what advice they wish from outside. This is basically an exercise for the Government to decide their own priorities. A central point is that the review is directed towards recovery. If the Government took an increasing share of the nation's resources year by year, it would have a devastating effect on the wealth-creating sector, and we must be concerned about that.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. Friend is right to remind the House that he would be negligent if in his important position he did not have public expenditure under review at all times. Will he note that the provision of health care free at the point of delivery is cherished by rich and poor alike, and that any erosion of that principle would be deeply resented throughout the country?

Mr. Portillo: Yes. I think that my hon. Friend well knows, as does the whole House, the real and absolute commitment of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. She would not have endorsed in such generous terms the necessity for this review if she did not strongly believe that money can be saved in the health service and that there are ways to provide better care and more money to patients. That is very much the object of the exercise.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): The Minister gave as his excuse for not including the Ministry of Defence the fact that a review of defence had already been undertaken. Have not huge changes been undertaken in the health service following review, and has there not been review after review of education to pretend that something is actually being done about the appalling standards? How on earth can the right hon. Gentleman justify leaving defence out? And is the Treasury to be part of the review, as it is the Treasury that has got us into the mess that has necessitated it?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman must not get upset. I assure him that all Departments will be included in the review, which will take much of a Parliament to complete. We must begin somewhere, and I have begun with four large Departments, taking account of the fact that Defence has recently been reviewed. That is not to rule out the possibility of looking further at what is done within the Ministry of Defence as conditions in the world change. All Departments, including the Treasury, will be reached in due course.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the commitment to undertake the review and to do so thoroughly. Is it not odd that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) should seek to ask so many questions when she does not want to have the facts before she seeks the answers? My right hon. Friend must be able to obtain all the information that he needs. Will he make it clear that, although he wishes to see certain results available during the year, the review must be sufficiently thorough to ensure that the results are sustainable in the longer term? In other words, he must not rush it.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. The important thing is to get the right answers over a period, and that will take a long time. However, it is reasonable to ask for some perliminary conclusions around the early summer, so that they can inform the public expenditure survey that begins at that time. The review will go on. I can do no better than to quote the Leader of the Opposition:

"I've set up the Social Justice Commission in order to conduct a very wide-ranging review of the whole complex

[Mr. Portillo]

system of tax, benefits, rights of peoples' . . . We haven't looked at any of this, almost since Beveridge. There's been no thorough examination, that's what we're going to do."
What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Chief Secretary spoke earlier about the state settling into habits of spending. Will he bear in mind the fact that the old-age pension is not a charitable dole from the state? People pay in for their pension all their lives, and most of our constituents, whether they vote Conservative or Labour believe——

Mr. Simon Hughes: Or Liberal Democrat.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Not many of them do that.

Ms. Abbott: Most of the constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House believe strongly that, when people retire, after having worked all their lives, whether in the marketplace or in the home, they are entitled as of right to a decent pension. They should not have to beg or go asking for charity. That is the principle behind a universal pension. The Chief Secretary tampers with the principle of a universal pension at his peril.

Mr. Portillo: I have never said that I would tamper with the universal pension. The person who has said it is the Leader of the Opposition. He said:

"We must be prepared to examine in an open-minded way some of the fundamental features of our approach. What is the right balance between universal and selective benefits?"
The hon. Lady's argument is not with me but with those on her own Front Bench.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that throwing resources at a problem is not always the answer? Sometimes the answer is good management and sometimes it is good work practice. We are not talking about the Government's money, because the Government do not have any. It is the taxpayers' money, and we are the custodians of it and have to use it wisely. There is nothing wrong with selective benefits as long as they are targeted on those in need. What is wrong with that? The Opposition will always cry, "Means testing." They mean, "Don't let's get it to those in need."

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. Only a fool could possibly believe that, in £250 billion-worth of public spending, every penny is as well spent as it could be. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said the other day:

"we cannot tolerate a drugs bill that is rising at around 12 per cent. per year, four times the rate of inflation, especially when staff are being asked to settle for no more than 1·5 per cent."
We need to examine such issues, and I cannot understand why the Opposition are opposed to such questions being put.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): When the Chief Secretary is looking at education, will he consider the effects that some of the so-called reforms have had? Is he aware that a two-tier system is developing in many of our constituencies? When he is considering the targeting of money, will he reflect on the £225,000 in grants that went to one opted-out school in Halifax, while the other 109 schools had to share £200,000? Is that the fair education in which he is supposed to believe?

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and his predecessors are warmly to be congratulated on moving the numbers of those in higher education from one in eight to one in four, and on planning over the next three years a 25 per cent. increase in those who will receive further education. The initiative that the Government have taken towards the development of grant-maintained schools has been enormously important in providing schools with pride and independence as well as ensuring value for money.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend be willing to extend this excellent review to cover agriculture, especially when we observe that last month the cereal mountains broke all established records, despite the fact that we are spending a fortune on set-aside? Will the Government be willing to consider postponing the implementation of the Maastricht treaty, bearing in mind the fact that the treaty will cost the taxpayer a huge sum on top of the £2·6 billion net that we are paying this year?

Mr. Portillo: There are no plans to postpone consideration of the Maastricht Bill. I can assure my hon. Friend that the consideration of agriculture will be reached in due course. Much of the spending on agriculture derives directly from commitments under the European Community's common agricultural policy. For that reason, it is important that we ensure that we use money to best possible value in all the areas in which we have discretion, and that we bring pressure upon our European Community partners to ensure that the CAP is reformed and improved so as to provide better value for taxpayers across Europe.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the right hon. Gentleman really saying that nothing is sacrosanct in this review? Are we to understand that even the amounts and rules of entitlement for the attendance allowance, the mobility allowance and other disability benefits will be included in the review? If so, how much consultation will the right hon. Gentleman be having with the organisations of and for disabled people?

Mr. Portillo: I quoted the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, who said that nothing could be ruled out. That is a sensible basis on which to embark on conducting a review—otherwise we omit things and we find that we are driven down alleys, with the result that extremely important matters are excluded. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had it absolutely right. It would be improper of any Opposition Member to seek to start scare stories on the back of the review, especially when the Labour party is pledged to examine things fundamentally.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does he agree with me that, as a society, we might have moved a little too far from the old-fashioned virtues of looking after our families and observing our own responsibilities? Does he agree also that it is essential that we do not continue to tax the business community, as only it can provide the jobs that will eventually provide an improvement in incomes for all those who need it?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I believe that the original objectives of the social security system were to encourage people into independence—in other words, to leave dependency. That is very much in our minds. It seems from the tone that the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition took that it is very much in his mind too. My hon. Friend does well to remind us of that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-West): A small amount of Home Office money is spent on encouraging the basic democratic right of electoral registration. Will the Government ensure that, following the review, expenditure on electoral registration is increased, so that this democratic right is encouraged and developed? Or is it the case that the only chance that the Conservative party has at the next general election is to be gained by not spending anything on electoral registration, so that as few people as possible are on the register?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman sounds as if he is writing a bidding letter at the beginning of a public expenditure survey. I do not think that there is much prospect of him being in government and in a position to do that. I do not think either that this is the time for totting up a list of the things on which we would like to spend more. The review that I am announcing is designed carefully to examine the effectiveness of the way in which we spend the money to which we are already committed over the public expenditure survey period of the next three years and beyond.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I welcome this statement, but observe that it is about time, too. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be no sacred cows in this review? The main objection to the community charge was that a duke paid as much as a dustman. It always struck me as illogical that the converse was not equally open to objection—that the duke receives as much as the dustman: no sacred cows, if you please.

Mr. Portillo: I think that all my hon. Friends are joining me in wishing to ensure that the money that is allocated is spent effectively. As the Government are spending billions, one must conduct a pretty thorough review and get down to the nitty-gritty of the way in which money is spent, in order to ensure that it is spent as effectively as possible. My hon. Friend is right to think that nothing should be ruled out from the scrutiny of value for money and the effectiveness of delivery.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Is the Minister aware that the budget of the local authority in Coventry has been cut by about £180 million in the past 10 years? Is it not time that he stopped rolling back the welfare state and conducted a proper review to bolster the welfare state and local government in particular?

Mr. Portillo: My memory from my time as Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is that local government was getting not less from year to year but more. Local government is facing challenges about how it will meet the targets and budgets that are laid down in the standard spending assessments and capping limits. Both central and local government should be willing to organise their priorities and take tough decisions, because at present we have limited resources and the economy has not been growing. We have to be sensible and responsible about how we spend taxpayers' money.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I welcome tight control of public expenditure, but will my right hon. Friend disregard what the Leader of the Opposition said about pensions—he does not know what he is talking about anyway—and please bear in mind the fact that an increasing number of elderly people have based their declining years, the last few years of their lives, on the present figures? They are not in a position to make drastic changes at this stage of their lives, and they do not expect to be let down. Will he please bear that in mind in the review?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend does well to caution me about quoting the Leader of the Opposition too much. I was stimulated to do so by the responses of those on the Labour Benches. We must adhere to our important manifesto commitments to pensioners. People make provision years in advance for their retirement—I do not wish to be deprived of any contribution that I have made to my pension—so these are important issues. I stress that we are looking at medium and longer-term reviews. At some time, however, somebody must consider the way in which public spending is developing, and be willing to take serious decisions about that.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Minister recall that 5 million people were bribed by the Government to desert the certainty of the state pension scheme for the lottery of personal pensions? Many of those people—probably 1 million—will lose unless somebody tells them they should go back into the state scheme. The Government are not telling them, and certainly the pensions industry is not doing so. Millions of people see national insurance as a future that offers certainty and safety, but the Government are now offering them a future that holds nothing but fear and insecurity.

Mr. Portillo: The previous Labour Government were involved in an extreme important and helpful pensions reform—the establishment of supplementary pensions. That has been carried forward by the Government to offer people choice. People will have a supplementary pension whether they are contracted into the state scheme or contracted out into personal or occupational schemes. It is extremely important that people make provision for their retirement over and above the state pension. We are obliged by our manifesto to make attractive to all ages the contracting-out route, but people can remain part of SERPS if they so choose.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We must now move on. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am not bound to give my reasons for moving on, but let me make two comments. First, the House must know that we are bound to return to these issues at a later date. Secondly, we have before us an important debate on the Principality.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

3.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move,

That the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 412), which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.

I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the next motion on the Order Paper:

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94, which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State has set out the basis on which the debate is to be conducted. Is it true that this afternoon, in answer to a written question, he will publish the costs of local government reform? If so, does he not think that we should have that information, so that we know the full parameters of the debate?

Mr. Hunt: I anticipate today sending to the local authority associations and publishing the Touche Ross report on the transitional costs of local government reform but that is not a matter to be debated today. There will be an opportunity to debate the report. I am not responsible for the business of the House, but I shall do my best and use my best endeavours to ensure that there is proper opportunity to discuss the report.

Today we are dealing with the local government finance report, which contains my decisions on the local government revenue settlement for 1993-94. The relevant notional amounts report sets out the amounts in lieu of budgets for 1992-93 which I propose to use in measuring budget increases in 1993-94 for the purpose of applying the provisional capping criteria which I announced to the House on 14 December. It may be convenient for the House if I deal first with the settlement proposals.

As the report states, I propose to set the total standard spending, or TSS, for the next financial year 1993-94 at £2,599·8 million. That includes the £35·9 million in additional resources which has already been announced for the new responsibilities that local authorities will assume for care in the community from 1 April 1993.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Many of us believe that the right hon. Gentleman has given our councils a very poor deal over care in the community. Community care involves some of the most vulnerable in our society, not least the elderly and the disabled. There is concern in my constituency about services in the new financial year at the Melrose centre. Is he prepared to visit the centre, which does magnificent work but which will suffer serious cuts in the new financial year unless he can give the county a better deal than he is to announce today?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member will agree that it is for the local authority to determine its priorities. I have just announced confirmation of an allocation of £35·9 million for those additional responsibilities. As I recall, Clwyd county council will receive £6·6 million out of that £35·9 million. At the end of the day, it must be for the local authority to determine its priorities. I shall come to the point raised by the hon. Gentleman in a moment. I shall ensure that the figure for Clwyd county council is checked, although I believe it to be £6·6 million.

In addition to the £35·9 million is a further £1·6 million in resources in respect of changes to the independent living fund arrangements. Those additions to spending are fully funded by central Government through aggregate external finance or AEF.

The TSS for 1993-94 also takes account of the transfer of responsibilities for further and residual higher education services to the Welsh funding councils and of the phased transfer of school inspection functions to the Office of Her Majesty's chief inspector (Wales), all from 1 April this year. The TSS represents a 3·1 per cent. increase on the level for 1992-93 when allowance is made for the education-related functional adjustments. The increase is slightly higher—3·5 per cent.—when the additional community care resources are taken into account.

I propose to set aggregate external finance for 1993-94 at £2,344·2 million. That is an increase of 1·7 per cent. on the level of AEF for 1992-93, again after allowing for education-related functional adjustments. The level of increase is slightly higher when the additional community care resources are taken into account. The AEF package comprises, as the House may recall, three elements, including revenue support grant and distributable non-domestic rates. The RSG is £1,669·3 million, and distributable non-domestic rates amount to £470·2 million. There are specific and supplementary grants of £204·7 million. The Welsh non-domestic rate poundage for 1993-94 will increase by 3·5 per cent. in line with inflation at the appropriate time to 44p.

In setting AEF for the coming year, I have had very much in mind the point made to me by the local authority associations—that the proportion of revenue that local authorities in Wales can raise from local taxation should be increased. The lower level of increase in AEF relative to that for TSS means that local authorities should, on average, raise 10 per cent. of their income from the council tax, which is an increase of about 1·3 per cent. on last year. My plans will mean that 90 per cent. of all local authority revenue expenditure in Wales will be funded by central Government support.

Those figures will enable local authorities to spend just over £900 for every man, woman and child in Wales. I shall provide through Government support more than £810 towards that expenditure of £900. I believe that that is welcome news for the people of Wales, and it should ensure that council tax bills are kept to reasonable levels for the coming year.

I have received many representations on my settlement proposals, and I have chaired two meetings of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, or WCCLGF. At those meetings settlement matters have been discussed in detail. I am the first to acknowledge that the settlement for 1993-94 is not easy, and that local authorities will face some difficult decisions in determining their spending plans for next year. I wanted to place that point firmly on the record, because I have often recognised, individually and collectively with the local authorities concerned, that local government will face some difficult decisions.

Local government is not alone in that regard. Central Government, businesses large and small and individuals all face tough decisions. We cannot spend what we cannot afford, and that is particularly the case for central and local government, as they can spend only at the expense of the taxpayers they serve.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the Secretary of State believe that the fact that village schools all over rural Wales now face the real threat of closure, and that local authorities are now having to take very hard decisions is an acceptable price to pay for Government policy? Does he also believe that it is right that, as a result of Government policy, care in the community for some elderly people means care in a community very distant from their own?

Mr. Hunt: Local authorities must determine their priorities. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is, in reality, talking about TSS. The overall level of TSS in Powys has risen by 21 per cent. since 1990-91. The hon. and learned Gentleman must recognise that that is the background to the current settlement. The 21 per cent. increase is at the bottom end of the range of increases, which average 25 per cent. over the past two financial years, and although the 21 per cent. increase appears to be a good figure, I recognise that it nevertheless presents Powys county council with some difficult decisions.

However, at the end of the day, the local authority must determine how it will deal with those difficult decisions. I will not seek to override any decisions that are taken, because that is a matter for Powys county council.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I will give way in a moment.

The local authority will appreciate, as will the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, that the restraint of public revenue expenditure must be of paramount importance as we build for the future. If we are to stimulate investment and ensure a soundly based economic recovery that will bring with it better long-term prospects for jobs and services, we must restrain public sector expenditure. Pay restraint is a key component in holding down the level of spending; that is why I wanted to stress once more that my settlement plans are based on the assumption——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I will give way in a moment, after I have responded to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger).

My settlement plans are based on the public sector pay restraint assumptions announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement on 12 November. I urge local government to keep pay increases within the zero to 1·5 per cent. limits set out in the autumn statement, because excessive pay increases can be met only at the expense of jobs and services. Only by exercising restraint now will we be able to benefit from economic recovery.

Mr. Ainger: In response to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), the Secretary of State referred to the fact that Powys had received a 21 per cent. increase in its SSAs over two years. I am sure that the Secretary of State will tell me that Dyfed received a 25 per cent. increase in its SSAs over the past two years. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there was not a 25 per cent. increase in services? The increase was intended simply to cover the pay settlements for the fire brigade, police and teachers, all of which had been set by central Government, not local government?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that Dyfed has received 25 per cent. increase in total standard spending over the past two years. However, he is wrong about the reason for that increase. There has been a substantial increase in total standard spending—the total figure that is allocated—which includes several components in addition to pay.

It is not possible to close a school in the public sector without the local people exercising the right to approach the Secretary of State. Against that background, I hope that the hon. Member for Pembroke will recognise that I cannot intervene in respect of individual spending decisions. However, I am the ultimate court of appeal with regard to decisions of that nature.

Mr. Rowlands: The Secretary of State is referring to restraint in public revenue expenditure. Is he aware that the results of the settlement and the cuts in revenue expenditure have meant the virtual halting of all capital expenditure in many of our counties? I refer, for example, to expenditure on new roads and refurbishing schools, improvements in respect of pavements and street lighting —the very capital expenditure which could create jobs and which I thought was meant to be the publicly led capital growth that the Secretary of State is after.

Mr. Hunt: Let me deal with that point straight away. On capital spending, the amount available for basic credit approvals has reduced by £8·9 million, but that is to take account of the transfer of further education institutions. However, overall Government support for all local authority capital expenditure is up by 4 per cent. on 1992-93 to £484 million. That is a real-terms increase of £5·7 million. It allows for gross spending of £620 million, which is a real-terms increase of £45 million. Given the ability to utilise in full capital receipts realised during 1993, and the availability of——

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: If I may make this point to the hon. Gentleman, there are also additional resources available to cover expenditure to be reimbursed by grants from the European regional development fund, so I expect all authorities to be able to proceed with their planned capital programmes. I make that point absolutely clearly.

Mr. Rowlands: If Mid Glamorgan is an example to go by, fear of capping has caused a cut in revenue expenditure. The council is now so scared of spending that it has cut almost every new capital expenditure programme. The revenue consequences of capital expenditure are now preventing capital expenditure from going ahead.

Mr. Hunt: I do not want to intervene to try to second-guess what the hon. Gentleman is saying about Mid Glamorgan. It is for Mid Glamorgan to reach those decisions. Again, it will reach them against the background of one of the highest increases in total standard spending over the past two years. In the case of Mid Glamorgan, that is an increase of 26 per cent. in TSS. I ask the hon. Gentleman to look at the figures.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Does the Secretary of State accept the truth behind the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands)? The right hon. Gentleman cannot avoid responsibility, because his settlement and his capping regime are putting county councils in such a position that they have no alternative but to cut their capital programmes. Why does he not accept that that is an inevitable consequence of the settlement and the capping regime that he has introduced?

Mr. Hunt: The figures that I have used are the figures. I see that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) does not dispute them. They make it possible, I believe, for local authorities to maintain their capital programmes. That is my judgment. I look forward to seeing what happens in reality, but I believe that, in so far as local——

Mr. Rowlands: Are we discussing reality?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, we are discussing reality. As the year progresses, we shall see capital programmes being maintained. Certainly the figures show that they can be.

Education has been mentioned. If one looks back over the past three years in Wales, one sees an underspend on the capital education spending programme. Already this year, provision for education capital spending is £63 million. The latest forecast is £59·8 million gross. In the financial year 1991-92, provision was £66·6 million. The actual spending was £56·4 million. There was a 15·3 per cent. underspend. I very much hope that those capital programmes to which I attach high priority are also regarded as a priority by the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am reluctant to intervene a second time, but I am trying to be helpful. If the Secretary of State realises the importance of the capital programme, if what my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney has said comes about, and if it transpires in April, May and June that the counties must entirely disband their capital programmes, will he undertake to review the settlement at that time?

Mr. Hunt: I see that the hon. Gentleman still does not challenge the figures. The figures are there. They enable local authorities to attach a high priority to capital spending. What I am saying is that I hope that local authorities will attach a high priority to capital spending. Last week, I was able to announce a record capital spending programme for the Welsh Office. I have already mentioned the facility afforded by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the utilisation of receipts this year. The mechanism is there for capital programmes to be maintained, and I hope that they will be maintained.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen) *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: May I proceed for a moment? I am anxious that the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) gets an opportunity to deliver his speech. Of course, the hon. Member may still be in the process of constructing it. He has just received it, so I shall give way.

Mr. Murphy: The Secretary of State talks about the capital programme for local authorities. How does he square his statement with the fact that there has been an 18 per cent. reduction in capital spending for districts in 1993, which is a total of £22 million?

Mr. Hunt: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the correct figures. Government support for local authority capital expenditure is an 18·5 per cent. increase on 1992-93. The hon. Member for Torfaen may have seized upon the wrong 18 per cent. The figures are absolutely correct. As I pointed out, the settlements for this year and last year increased total standard spending by 25 per cent. That is a substantial increase. With the increase of 3·1 per cent. for next year, total standard spending will have increased by almost 29 per cent. since 1990-91.

Many of the representations I have received have been more about the disparity in the levels of increase between county councils and district councils. The average increase in next year's standard spending assessments for district authorities is 9·8 per cent. For county authorities, it is 1·6 per cent., after taking account of the further education adjustments. Additional community care resources raise the level of the county increase to 3·6 per cent. The Assembly of Welsh Counties and individual county authorities have expressed considerable disquiet at the comparatively low level of increase in county resources. We discussed the matter at the meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 12 January.

The principles underlying the allocation of total resources between the county and district authority tiers have been the subject of long-standing agreement between the local authority associations. The methodology has remained virtually unchanged since the early 1980s. The starting point is the aggregate level of expenditure by each tier for the financial year three years preceding the settlement. For 1993-94, the base year for the tier share calculation is 1990-91.

The agreement of the authorities that the usual methodology should be used for 1993-94 was sought in September 1992. Early agreement is needed, because the tier share calculation cannot be undertaken until relatively late in the settlement timetable. When the result of the exercise for the coming financial year was known in December, the Assembly of Welsh Counties asked that I reconsider the arrangements. I said that I was perfectly prepared to so if both associations—the counties and the districts—could agree on proposals for change. I was told that, sadly, it was not possible for agreement to be reached.

I did not consider it appropriate that I should intervene to break with precedent and prescribe the allocation between tiers, especially at such a late stage. I suggested to both associations that we should make an early start on the methodology for 1994-95, and they have agreed.

The tier share arrangements, together with the arrangement for distributing resources between individual authorities within the tiers, show that local government has an active and positive role to play in the annual settlement in Wales. As the House will know, it is a much more direct role than is played in England. I am proud of the fact that we can reach agreement on many of these matters with local authorities. It is a role which I am anxious to maintain.

Neither I nor any of my predecessors has seen fit to intervene in the tier share arrangements. If I had tried to rewrite the arrangements on this occasion without the agreement of both the associations, it would have been contrary to the spirit of co-operation and partnership which we have built up over many years.

The SSAs for 1993-94 set out in the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) have been determined, as in years

past, in accordance with the distribution methodology that has been agreed with the associations through the consultative council. I would like to pay tribute to the associations for its work in achieving fully agreed conclusions. The work load has been particularly onerous this year because of the need to consider the best means of distributing the additional resources for care in the community.

My Department, county councils and the health service in Wales have worked together closely in making the necessary plans for implementing the new care in the community arrangements. I gave careful consideration to the need for the Secretary of State to make special arrangements for the distribution of the new community care resources; but, in view of the close working relationships that have been built up and the arrangements that we are making for monitoring progress on implementation, I decided not to introduce special grant arrangement in Wales.

With the agreement of the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the resources are being distributed through the settlement but with the amounts for each county authority clearly identified, as I pointed out to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). I shall keep the position under review to ensure that the resources are used for their intended purposes.

The functional changes for 1993-94 to which I have referred this afternoon, and the changes to financial arrangements arising from the Local Government Finance Act 1992, mean that it is not possible—for capping purposes—to make a direct comparison between budgets set by local authorities in 1992-93 and budgets set for 1993-94. That is why I have exercised my statutory powers to specify for each authority in Wales a base position, known as a relevant notional amount, to measure budget increases for the purposes of applying capping principles. The relevant notional amount that I propose to specify for each local authority in Wales is set out in the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales).

I announced details of provisional notional amounts together with my provisional capping principles on 14 December. Local authorities were invited to make representations on their provisional notional amount figure by 19 January. Seven authorities responded with requests for amendments. I have given careful consideration to these representations and made revisions to the provisional figures, for six authorities—four in respect of county, further and higher education expenditure and two in respect of district collection fund interest expenditure.

Counties have until 28 February and district authorities have until 11 March to finalise their budgets for 1993-94. I urge them, notwithstanding the difficulties that some will face, to budget prudently and in line with my plans. My provisional capping principles will assist authorities in this task. In recent years, Welsh authorities have, on the whole, budgeted responsibly; although some have set their budgets at a higher level than I would wish. I have not considered it necessary to use my capping powers to date and I hope that I will not need to have recourse to them in 1993-94.

My settlement plans should mean that all local taxpayers in Wales receive reasonable council tax bills in the next financial year. Bills will vary depending on the budget decisions of individual authorities and the valuation band of the property in question. For the purposes of distributing revenue support grant, as hon. Members will see from the report, I have identified a council tax figure for council tax spending for each property band.

The figure for band C properties is £231—£35 less than the average community charge for two adults in 1992-93, even after relief through the community charge reduction scheme is taken into account. What is perhaps even more important is that it is less than the average domestic rates bill in Wales was in 1989-90. Two thirds of properties in Wales fall in band C or the lower A and B bands. In view of that, I announced on 26 November that I considered transitional arrangements for the introduction of the council tax to be inappropriate.

My decision has been welcomed by the local authority associations. Individual council tax payers will benefit from a range of discounts. For example, single adult households will benefit from a 25 per cent. discount; those on income support will pay no council tax; and those on low incomes will receive council tax benefit on a sliding scale. Benefits for people on low incomes, including income support claimants, is estimated at more than £40 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): In the standard spending assessment, is the Secretary of State making allowances for district councils to be reimbursed for the tremendous increase in the take-up of housing benefit and rent allowance schemes? For example, last year Swansea council assisted 5,235 of its people with rent allowances, and the net cost to the council and community charge payers—after the Government subsidy—was £703,000 extra. Is he going to help such councils in view of those difficulties?

Mr. Hunt: Allowance was made at the outset, and I have no plans to change the formulae, which are well understood by local authority associations. I have some information, if I might move on to collection of the community charge.

I am most encouraged by the latest information supplied by local authorities on collection of the community charge. I am pleased to announce that they estimate a surplus of £16 million in their collection funds at 31 March 1993. It is clear that districts will collect more than 100 per cent. of the community charge that they budgeted to collect at the start of the financial year—*[Interruption.]* I think that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) might have said that the poll tax was therefore a good idea after all—but perhaps he did not.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Just to put the record straight, I said that the Secretary of State used the same advocacy for the poll tax when he promoted that as a local government Minister. I hope that he is more correct about this form of local government finance than he was about the poll tax.

Mr. Hunt: The £16 million is a real figure, and I can tell the council tax payers of Wales that it will feed straight through to reduced council tax bills next year. For a tax payer in a band C property, that will mean on average a council tax £15 less than it would have been, and £17 less for those in band D properties. That is thanks to the diligence and efficiency of the authorities in collecting the community charge.

[Mr. Hunt]

I will give careful consideration to the budget set by each local authority for 1993-94. In doing so, I will refer to my provisional capping criteria. In making my decisions on whether to cap individual authorities, I will take into account all relevant considerations. However, local authorities should not doubt my resolve to protect local taxpayers from unreasonable council tax burdens through use of my capping powers if that should prove necessary.

The settlement for 1993-94 provides Welsh authorities with a realistic level of funding in the current economic situation and should achieve reasonable council tax levels for the people of Wales. I commend the report to the House.

4.34 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): First, I thank the Secretary of State for the co-operation he showed to the Opposition, who have sought to ensure that these debates are held at a reasonable hour. The allocation of the full three hours is appreciated.

I am rather surprised that the Secretary of State has not taken the opportunity of his first appearance at the Dispatch Box since the memorable day at Cardiff on Saturday to express his congratulations to the Welsh rugby team. I must speculate that he was perhaps less enthusiastic about the result than my hon. Friends.

Mr. David Hunt: I always believe that actions speak louder than words. I thought the hon. Gentleman would have noticed the Welsh schools rugby union tie and the Welsh rugby union emblem that I am wearing. I could not have been more delighted by that result and I join him in paying tribute to a magnificent match and a tremendous Welsh victory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I thought that they were worn but not mentioned in respect for the Chair.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that there will be an opportunity for further discussion on that match, but not today.

I wonder what world the Secretary of State lives in, because his speech gave the impression that the settlement is a model one—generous even, and widely accepted in Wales. He talked about the consultations that he had and claimed that various increases in expenditure are available now. He implied that the settlement is reasonable, that it had been carefully worked out and that it was supported by a broad consensus. The reality is quite different.

The settlement is flawed both in its methodology and in the overall level of money available. The reality is that all Welsh local authorities have united in opposition to it. It is clearly inadequate, because it will not be able to guarantee the retention of vital public services. At a conservative estimate, it will destroy about 2,500 jobs in the public sector in Wales.

The settlement represents another step in the remorseless undermining of the financial base on which local democracy stands. It has come from a Secretary of State who gave us the poll tax and justified it by saying that he wanted to see local government made more accountable. On 9 March 1990, he said of the poll tax:

"The whole purpose of the community charge is to make councils accountable to their electors."

What accountability is there now, when all local government spending and the provision of more than 90 per cent. of local expenditure is determined by one man? There is nothing accountable, democratic or local about that.

The Secretary of State, whose Government have no mandate in Wales, who does not represent a Welsh constituency and who has been rejected by the people of Wales at the ballot box, has reached the level of taking even more powers to himself in defiance of public opinion and in the teeth of opposition from Welsh local authorities. In doing so, he has imposed, for the first time, capping limits on democratically elected public bodies. That decision reverses his previous principles. He has set those limits to ensure that his will is imposed, not on behalf of the people of Wales, but on behalf of a Tory Government whose financial and economic policies have brought the country to the brink of ruin.

Let the Secretary of State be in no doubt about the weight of feeling against the settlement among Welsh local authorities. He has claimed that additional resources are available, but that is not true. There has been an overall increase of 4·6 per cent.—£115 million—in the standard spending assessment, but the right hon. Gentleman has pointed out that that includes £37·5 million to meet the new statutory responsibilities relating to care in the community. With that figure removed, we are left with 3·1 per cent. over the 1992-93 standard spending assessment —but last year's provision was itself inadequate and far removed from what local authorities actually spent on delivering services.

When compared with budget figures—that is, what was actually spent—the increase is down to 0·2 per cent. When the revised figure is compared with the agreed estimate of both Welsh local authority associations of what is required to meet inflation costs directly incurred, and additional responsibilities, some measure of the severity of the settlement can be seen.

The local authority requirement was for a further £130 million. That represents the lowest provision—or under-provision—in the reports. In particular, £70 million is required to meet the balance of pay awards, previously agreed in 1992 and effective only recently in the case of police and fire services. Implementation of the Children Act 1989, the national curriculum and waste management are all new responsibilities, but have not been allocated commensurate new resources.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman clearly stated that he was against capping local government expenditure. How would he like local government expenditure to be controlled—or would he simply give local authorities a free hand?

Mr. Davies: Let me make it clear to the hon. Gentleman and to the Secretary of State that we are debating the Secretary of State's proposals for financing local government. If the hon. Gentleman can persuade the Secretary of State to arrange another debate—here or upstairs in Committee; in Westminster or in Cardiff—I shall be happy to discuss the subject. I am prepared to discuss it anywhere, any time, any place. Today, however, we are debating the Secretary of State's proposals, and his under-financing of Welsh local authorities. I am not going to let the right hon. Gentleman off the hook. *[Interruption.]*—We are discussing a capping report and

Labour Members oppose that capping. If the Secretary of State or the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who is sitting behind him, wants suggestions about how local government finance should be arranged, I shall be happy to respond in debate. *[Interruption.]*

The Secretary of State can shout at me from a sedentary position as much as he likes. Let me make it clear to him that he can have a debate if he wants it, but he will have to find the time for it. Now is not the time.

The Secretary of State must explain why every major central Government Department has been given an increase of over 3·1 per cent..—and why his Department has been given an increase of 8·7 per cent.—over planned provision for 1992-93. Local government, which is providing services directly, faces severe cuts in real terms. While quangos multiply and flourish, elected authorities —responsible and accountable to the public, with high standards of financial propriety ensured through internal and external audit and full public scrutiny—are being denied essential resources.

Over the past decade, Wales has suffered a decline relative to the United Kingdom as a whole and to Europe. The economic recession places further burdens on local authorities—housing the homeless, providing support for the unemployed and disadvantaged and caring for the poor and elderly. If we emerge from the slump, it will be due in no small measure to public expenditure on infrastructure—on new roads and development programmes—to investment in education and training and to the provision of jobs in the building of new homes, schools and roads and the improvement of the environment. Both to deal with the casualties of recession and to escape the recession, we need public sector-led growth, but, instead of growth, we have been given a programme that will accelerate decline.

Let us examine the choices with which Welsh authorities have been faced. One of the grimmest local government documents that I have ever seen is Mid Glamorgan's report entitled "1993-1994 proposals for a reduction in services". I do not want to go into all the details, but let us consider the choices facing Mid Glamorgan's elected representatives. They have been told to cut £5·5 million from its education budget, over £1 million from highways expenditure and over £1 million from social services—a total of £15 million. That presents the authority with unacceptable choices. Such cuts undermine and destroy the present fabric and the future care of our communities.

I am surprised that the Secretary of State did not answer the question put to him very directly by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). The right hon. Gentleman must accept that the tightness of the provision being made for Mid Glamorgan, together with the threat of capping, confront the authority with a grim choice. Either it maintains its capital budget or it must sack teachers. It is not surprising that an authority faced with such an unenviable choice wants to hold on to what it has, and decides not to sack teachers.

The Secretary of State should understand the inevitable consequence of the provision that he has made—that a capital programme will not be honoured. I hope that he finally appreciates that. I hope that, when he returns to the Welsh Office, he will talk to Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and all the other counties that face the grim choice and the loss of their capital programmes.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Gentleman mentioned a report from Mid Glamorgan, which he has clearly studied in some detail. Perhaps he can tell us whether the report makes any reference to the number of surplus school places in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Davies: I am happy to debate surplus school places. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that the way in which to get rid of them is not to do what was done in the case of Gwent: when Gwent tried to get rid of surplus school places, Cwncarn secondary school—which was destined for closure if that happened—was bribed to opt out of the public sector, to ensure its maintenance. I have done my homework in the case of Mid Glamorgan; I hope that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) has done his in the case of Powys.

Mr. Richards: Answer the question.

Mr. Davies: I have given a very clear answer.

Let me make clear to Conservative Members the damage that they will be doing, not only to the structures of local government—although that is bad enough—but to families, if they vote in favour of the settlement. Let me read a letter, addressed to the Secretary of State, from a resident of Milford Haven—a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger):

"I am writing to you as a result of discovering last week that Dyfed Education Authority has been forced to stop all discretionary grants for 1993-94. When I 'phoned my local Education Office to enquire about grants for both my daughters they told me that I could apply for a grant for my elder daughter because she has a place at University. My second daughter has always had a poor deal educationally. She is dyslexic and has had only the most minimal help and that only in recent years . . . Despite this, being a hardworking girl, she took the courageous decision to return to school, for this year, to try and improve her results. Her plan was to take the B tec . . .. This would give her the opportunity, at a later date to be considered for teacher training. Now that the grants have been stopped there is no chance of that. What do you suggest I tell her? 'Sorry, Louise, I know you're only seventeen but you are on the scrap heap'. I have spent the last fourteen years bringing up my daughters alone. I have had only the minimum of help from government sources. I have taught both children that if you work hard you'll succeed in the end. Now your policies show them that what I have taught them is a cruel joke. The present situation in the country shows John Major's announcements about equal opportunity for all to be a myth . . . Please don't insult me by blaming our local authority. They have no real choices because of things like capping. The continual 'robbing Peter to pay Paul', simply can't go on. It is destroying lives in all parts of society. I see it every day in my job as district nurse. More and more of my time is spent on trying to help people overcome social problems that are affecting their health. I will end by saying that I despair for all us as long as this is allowed to continue."

That was written to the Secretary of State for Wales and copied to the Secretary of State for Education and to the Prime Minister. As of last Friday, neither the Secretary of State for Wales nor the Secretary of State for Education nor the Prime Minister had had the courtesy to respond to the letter.

What price, then, the citizens charter? What price the parents charter or the students charter? Throughout the counties of Wales the pattern is repeated: £12 million of cuts in Clwyd threatening 300 teachers' jobs, and more than £3 million in Gwynedd. The right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) and the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) will vote for that tonight. In South Glamorgan and Gwent, £8 million and £11·5 million respectively are to be cut, with service cuts across

[Mr. Davies]

the board. The hon. Members for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) will vote for that tonight. In Powys, there will be more than £3 million-worth of cuts in education, highways, social services and fire services. And there is to be the tragic loss of Storey Arms because of the cuts in South Glamorgan's budget. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor will vote for that tonight.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way he is nailing responsibility to its rightful place—the door of the Welsh Office. People throughout South Glamorgan are appalled by the way in which the Secretary of State has forced our county to make cuts, in music, in choirs and bands and orchestras, in outdoor pursuits and in local youth services. Those cuts will leave many hands idle. Is not it appalling that the quality of life in our communities is threatened by the decisions of the Secretary of State for Wales?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes his own compelling case and I am grateful for his support.

I have not yet mentioned the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), who is sitting with a quizzical look on his face—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends are making some helpful suggestions to assist the hon. Gentleman with his decision making. I suggest that he does as he always does when he has a crisis of conscience —what the Whips tell him to do.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the position of Storey Arms. He will know that in my constituency there are 10 such outdoor education centres run by county councils, some of them Welsh. The only county council threatening to sack people is the Labour-controlled South Glamorgan county council, which is drastically reducing the budget for Storey Arms and engaging in a political stunt by trying to direct the blame for that towards the Secretary of State, rather than where it should go under political accountability—to the people who made the decision in the first place.

Mr. Davies: I have heard that argument before, so I took the trouble to discuss it with the treasurer of South Glamorgan and the chairmen of the finance committee and the education department. I was told that the choice facing South Glamorgan is to comply with its statutory duties and make cuts of this nature or to put itself in breach of the law by cutting back on its statutory provision.

I understand the great difficulty that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor faces. He may have 10 such facilities in his constituency, but by voting for these reports tonight, he will ensure that there are nine. If there are a succession of such reports he will find that he ends up with far fewer.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres and other related associations have been strenuously lobbying members serving on the Education Bill Standing Committee, because it is not just Storey Arms which will go. If the Government's education policies continue, all these centres will be lost in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Davies: These are the clear choices facing hon. Members in the Lobbies tonight. It is just a pity that the people of Wales cannot vote on the record of the Secretary of State. It is also a pity that the right hon. Gentleman does not have uppermost in his mind his responsibility to work with local authorities to improve the quality of Welsh life, instead of choosing continually to undermine them.

The right hon. Gentleman sought, for instance to divert attention from these cuts and their consequences by dividing the counties from the districts, seeking to achieve by presentational trickery what he could not do in open debate. He wanted to hide from the people of Wales the direct consequences of his policies. Today he tried to suggest that there was an agreement of sorts—that the tier share was unfortunate this year, but that that was some historical accident which did not matter because counties and districts had agreed.

That is just not true. I should like to read into the record a letter that I received from the secretary of the Assembly of Welsh Counties, written on 5 February:

"Dear Mr. Davies

1993-94 Tier Share of Standard Spending Assessments

With reference to your inquiry as to whether the Assembly of Welsh Counties had agreed the 1993-94 tier share of SSAs, there is no justification for the Secretary of State making such an assertion, unless he attempts to rely on discussions held last September between Welsh Office officials and officers of the Assembly"——

Mr. David Hunt: That is right.

Mr. Davies: Fine. I continue:

"If the Secretary of State opts for this argument, then it is only fair to point out that at the time of the alleged officer agreement no figures relating to the 1993-94 grant year were available, and the minute of the meeting records that further discussions would take place when the relevant data became available.

As Secretary of the Assembly of Welsh Counties and also on behalf of the Financial Adviser and other officers present representing the AWC at the meeting with Welsh Office officials on 28 September 1992, I give the categorical assurance that no agreement was signified at that meeting to the use of the tier share methodology for the 1993-94.

D. Hugh Thomas"

That is a clear repudiation of the Secretary of State's position, and I hope that he will reflect on it.

Mr. Hunt: I agree with the words used by that honourable public servant—with every word. I confirmed earlier that the agreement reached in September was reached in the context in which Mr. Thomas has put it, and the minutes record an agreement. I accept that Mr. Thomas genuinely believed that agreement had not been reached. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman will move on from what could be a very divisive issue. If he proceeds to give the view of the Council of Welsh Districts —I do not know whether he has consulted it—he will no doubt tell us that it takes an opposite view to the one expressed by Mr. Thomas. Such discussion does not further relations between local authorities, the Government and the Opposition, and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does not carry on with it.

Mr. Davies: That comes ill from a Secretary of State who, after the meeting at which he sought to divide the counties from the districts, went out to the steps of the Welsh Office to brief the press and said, "If they can agree among themselves, so be it. If they cannot, let them fight it out." So who is talking about divisions and consensus? I will not have a Secretary of State who has done all he can

to cause division and undermine local government telling me or any of my hon. Friends who have spent years in local government about divisiveness.

Of course I have consulted the districts closely. It is true that they have done relatively well this year compared with the counties. There is certainly disagreement on the formula used to calculate the tier split. Even so, the pattern of cuts for the districts is exactly the same. There is a £12 million cut in the housing programme, economic development budget cuts in Swansea, 30 per cent. of the urban programme schemes have been axed in Cardiff and the urban renovation projects in Blaenau Gwent have been scrapped. I have a direct answer to the Secretary of State's question. We have consulted the districts closely and found that the pattern of cuts is exactly the same as that for the counties.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): It is a bit rich for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the Secretary of State is fomenting differences. The hon. Gentleman spoke about Storey Arms, an issue which I took up with the South Glamorgan council on behalf of a number of constituents. I am still awaiting a reply, but I do not complain about that. South Glamorgan council has a discretion in the matter: for the hon. Gentleman to try to put the blame for every action by a local authority on the Secretary of State is plainly stupid.

Mr. Davies: I mean no reflection on the hon. Gentleman when I say that that issue was discussed about 10 minutes ago. He has only just managed to work out his question. The hon. Gentleman is the only hon. Member I know who thinks that being called a diligent constituency Member of Parliament by the Secretary of State is a compliment.

There is a great variation, especially among the districts, in the range of budget increases allowed under the new draconian capping rules. Districts such as Newport and Cardiff are restricted to increases of under 2 per cent. Islwyn, Aberconwy, Torfaen and Swansea will be restricted to increases of between 2 and 3 per cent. As we have seen, those represent substantial cuts in real terms and will lead to drastic cuts in services. The areas to suffer will include some of the most deprived communities in the United Kingdom, and the severity of the cuts will mean that in many cases even the reduced capital programme cannot be undertaken. That will directly undermine the thrust of the Government's revised economic policy that was announced in the autumn statement.

What is the logic or the justice of penalising the former mining valleys while the relatively more prosperous areas do so much better? Monmouth does best with an increase of over 25 per cent. Dinefwr, South Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen have increases above 20 per cent. That irrational pattern is repeated year after year. How can local authorities be expected to plan ahead, and make long-term financial decisions when next year's allocation is always in doubt, and especially so this time, when Welsh Office uncertainties and inaccuracies have resulted in the severest delays?

On 29 January, the *Western Mail* reported that the Secretary of State said:

> "I am the first to acknowledge that my plans present some councils with difficult budgeting decisions."

He can say that again. He continued:

> "Nonetheless, this settlement is the most that the country and local taxpayers can afford in the present economic circumstances."

There it is in a nutshell. The Secretary of State acknowledges that after 14 years of government by his party, after the receipt of billions of pounds from asset selling, the one-off windfall of North sea oil, the succession of brilliant reforming Chancellors and consensus-seeking Secretaries of State for Wales, the Government do not think that we can afford to house people decently, to care for the elderly or educate the young. The Secretary of State might think that that is good enough for the people of Wales. We do not, and that is why we shall vote against the motions.

5.4 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I should like to concentrate on the way in which the proposed rate support grant settlement will affect my county of Clwyd. My constituents and I depend on my county for a wide range of essential services which are best provided by local government. I shall describe what the cut in funding—for that is what it is—for county-based services will mean. Despite what the Secretary of State said, it is a cut on a cut and on many previous cuts. He cannot seriously expect the residents of Clwyd to believe that the elected representatives of whatever party would happily agree to cut budgets and therefore services by £3 million last year and £12 million in the coming year.

Clwyd has the unhappy problem of the Welsh Office treating standard spending assessments as figures cast in tablets of stone, which results in Clwyd having an assessment of £37 per head below the all-county average. Leaving aside the principle of using a figure which was always intended as a guideline for precise financial control, it is obvious that a county with rural and urban problems has uniquely synergistic circumstances. Its use means that Clwyd faces a cut of £12 million, if the threat of capping with the same criteria as last year is maintained.

As a result, the community development budget in Clwyd will be reduced by £374,000. That will lead to cuts in libraries, an 80 per cent. reduction in adult fiction and rationalisation of the mobile library service, which is a godsend in a rural area. While those proposals imply a poorer service, they are at least preferable to the option of closing 15 static libraries to reach the same target.

Development and tourism will have to be cut. There are proposals to reduce the development and marketing budget, which critically affects the capacity of the county council to assist in building up the county's economic infrastructure at a time of recession. Revenue for education will be reduced by £7 million. The aim has been to reduce the impact on school budgets through central support services taking a higher percentage of the reductions. As a consequence, target savings have been reached in Clwyd by increasing the cost of school meals and school transport charges.

With 70 per cent. of the education budget delegated to schools, it is inevitable that, despite the protection afforded, there will be reductions in teaching staff. That will mean the loss of more than 200 jobs. The areas of environment and protection cover emergency planning, the fire service, the planning department, the registration service and the trading standards service. The cuts in those services amount to £216,000. Target reductions of just under £500,000 were required, but such savings could not

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

be found, because there is already a shortage of firefighters and cuts would have made it impossible to maintain the proper level of fire cover. Despite that, the service budget is to be cut by £156,000.

In highways and transportation, the proposed cut is £1 million, and that will affect highway improvements. Capital resources for that purpose will be switched to structural maintenance to ensure that the rate of deterioration in the fabric of the county's highways does not continue to increase. The switch not only affects the council's capacity to improve the county's infrastructure, but will have an impact on local employment.

The policy and financial resources area of Clwyd county council faces a reduction of £500,000. That will require efficiency savings, income generation and 21 job losses. The social services budget will be reduced by £1 million, and that is the worst cut. The proposals for Clwyd lead to reductions in capacity to implement in full the requirements of the Children Act 1989. There will be increases in home care charges, meals on wheels charges and luncheon club charges for the elderly, as well as increases in charges for day centres attended by those with learning difficulties.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Does my hon. Friend agree that Clwyd county council also estimates that many jobs may be lost in many other sectors? I am particularly concerned about the projections for Theatre Clwyd in my constituency. Our concern is that cuts in revenue support grant will lead to further closures and job losses and perhaps to the loss of centres of excellence. I also support my hon. Friend's comments about library services. I visited the mobile library in my constituency three weeks ago and found a valuable service to rural areas which is threatened by cuts. Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituency in particular, which covers the shire towns of Clwyd, faces job cuts which will have knock-on effects on the local economy?

Mr. Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend and I thank him for his intervention. I did not mention Theatre Clwyd, but it is a centre of excellence which attracts jobs and investment to the area.

As the Secretary of State said, the community care moneys will be increased by £6·6 million. That is all very well, but the committee is still underfunded to meet the obligation, as most of the transferred moneys will be used to replace a loss of Department of Social Security income in residential establishments. The committee is short of its target reduction figure by £640,000, the only alternative which would have enabled the committee to come in on target being the closure of yet more elderly persons' homes —three in all.

The reductions that I have mentioned give only part of the picture in terms of the scale of the problem. Budgets were already overstretched before the Secretary of State's guidelines and standstill budgets have been the norm for some years, which means that there has been little scope to develop services or to keep pace with the increased demand for services by customers and the increased responsibilities imposed on local authorities by central Government.

Furthermore, at a time of severe recession, reductions in the services provided by local authorities affect most severely those who are most vulnerable to changes in economic conditions. In having to make cuts in services, with the inevitable job implications—perhaps as many as 400 jobs are at risk, and the knock-on effect must also be included—the county council is having to help worsen the situation for those people for whom it has responsibility. Rather than being given the capacity to offset the worst effects of the recession and to plan for the future, the county council's expenditure reductions mean that it has a reduced ability to promote the long-term welfare and economic well-being of the people of Clwyd.

What does all this mean in terms of democracy, employment or even common sense? First, in terms of local democracy, it means that councils cannot make up shortfalls in central taxation of funding by Government —that is what we are debating today. They cannot raise local taxes because of that expensive fiasco, the poll tax. As the Secretary of State said, 90 per cent. of funding comes from central sources, and the local element is capped anyway so there are more insidious effects. Councils are now reluctant to fulfil the wishes of their electors by turning down even the most obnoxious planning applications—waste tips, opencast quarries and so on— because most are subsequently granted by the Secretary of State after an expensive appeal paid for by the council. That effectively removes any genuine local democracy.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: We do not have a lot of time, but I will give way.

Mr. Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that any local authority in Wales is so far in dereliction of its duty that it is granting planning permission and not discharging its proper statutory obligations to consider plans on their merits and according to policies?

Mr. Jones: No.

That effectively removes any local democracy and allows developments of the kind that I have mentioned in places where they could not and should not be allowed —for example, at a site such as Pen y Bont in my constituency, where a waste tip is bordered on all sides by a river which carries water to my constituency and that of the Secretary of State. The plan was turned down by the county council, but was granted by the Secretary of State after an expensive appeal paid for 90 per cent. out of central Government taxation and 10 per cent. by my local constituents.

There are two employment considerations. There is the first and immediately obvious direct effect of the loss of 200-plus jobs in teaching, 50-plus jobs in social services and 21 jobs in shire halls. Secondly, the ability of the council to attract jobs will be reduced. Clwyd county council has persuaded 87 companies to set up there, with the creation of 3,172 jobs. The attack on Clwyd's grant will damage economic development. It needs more money to promote such schemes, but it is getting less.

That leads me neatly to the lack of common sense in the whole business. The cut will mean a reduction in home helps, more expensive meals for the elderly, cuts in transport and in day care for the mentally handicapped. It will mean that Clwyd will not be able to meet the conditions of the Children Act 1989, or the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Where is the common sense in legislating for such

provisions and then not giving the agencies which have to implement them the wherewithal to carry out the required tasks?

To make matters worse, the differential between the districts and the county suggests that, although the settlement is not over-generous, the services that they provide are valued more than those provided by the county.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I have been listening to my hon. Friend, and it is clear that Clwyd county council is in terrible straits. Although the Government do not have a mandate in Wales, where they had a derisory vote in the last general election, they are in office here in London for four years and will continue to screw down county councils. Is not the lesson to be drawn from that that the Secretary of State should get on with reorganisation of local government as quickly as possible to put an end to the county councils and introduce unitary authorities to restore the power and freedom of action that local authorities used to have in the Principality?

Mr. Jones: As a supporter of unitary authorities, I agree with my hon. Friend, but there will be elections before that—a point to which I shall be coming.

The difference in funding between the districts and the counties is strange, given that the upheavals created in education and social service provision by the Government's legislation has affected local government functions. Where is the sense in that? The Government would deny that this is cynically designed to cause even more chaos in education and to drive schools into opting out. It would be interesting to know where they would get the money to fund every school directly if all decided to go for direct rule from Whitehall via Cardiff, which is what grant-maintained status means.

Lastly, I shall cynically speculate that those enforced cuts in county council spending are nicely timed to force Labour councils to reduce services and make unpopular choices under the threat of capping just before the next county elections. It might also have more than a little to do with the fact that the council tax has every chance of bringing enormous bills through our letter boxes once more. The poll tax is dead: long live poll tax 2. Or perhaps, "Nightmare on High Street 1" is being superseded by "Nightmare on High Street 2", subtitled, "The Council Tax".

5.17 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): During the debate, we have heard of an outdoor education centre that is based within my constituency and run by South Glamorgan county council. As I said earlier, it is one of 10, all of them run by local authorities, including three London authorities, three in Wales and Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Essex. Those centres are greatly valued, not only in my constituency but by the 17,000 pupils all over the country who visit my constituency to benefit from attending the centres.

We have heard an attempt to pin on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales the blame for a decision that has so far been only recommended, and has yet to be made by South Glamorgan county council—that to close the Storey Arms centre. In the circumstances, it is important that we look carefully at the background to the matter. It is interesting that the proposals that are to be considered by the county council involves not just the change to Storey Arms but also affect two other centres of learning outside the county council boundary at Llanover and Porthcawl.

In the case of the Storey Arms centre, as I understand the proposal, it is not that it should be closed altogether, but that the amount of money being provided by way of funding to South Glamorgan county council from the Secretary of State is so insufficient that there should be a cut in its budget and it should become self-financing, inviting pupils to pay £180 a time to visit the centre.

I have a letter that was sent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales by Mr. David Morris, the Labour Member of the European Parliament for Mid and West Wales, who draws attention to the prospective decision. In the final paragraph, he states:

"I would, therefore, appeal to you to provide South Glamorgan County Council with an extra allocation of funds to save Storey Arms from closure."

In other words, Mr. Morris invites my right hon. Friend to find sufficient money to save that specific centre. That demonstrates that South Glamorgan county council has embarked on a political stunt.

It was wicked to have contemplated such a course of action, especially because it dreadfully embarrasses Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). In an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) he referred specifically to the representations that have been made by the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres.

The hon. Member for Bridgend will know—I am aware that he has tirelessly been doing his duty considering the Education Bill in Committee—that the association has been making representations on a clause that would convert outdoor education centres to free-standing status. It is proposed that there should be a two-year transitional period, but that is not the position of South Glamorgan county council. Indeed, it has pre-empted that debate. It has said that the scheme will come into operation on 1 April. That means that the Storey Arms will have two months in which to acclimatise itself to a new financial regime.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The hon. Gentleman shows a partial understanding of the situation in which the outdoor education centres find themselves. It is clear from all the representations that I have received from them that, under the local management of schools system—a system which directs considerable funds to individual schools—the centres throughout England and Wales are generally in great difficulty already. They are saying that the spread of grant-maintained status would finish them off. Storey Arms is suffering earlier than the rest, but they are sure to suffer as well.

Mr. Evans: That intervention demonstrates the limited understanding of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis). That comes as some surprise to me, because he is a member of the Committee that is considering the Education Bill.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, along with Mr. McMorrin—he is active in Wales and is a constituent of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans)—has said

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

that the existing system of financing the local management of schools is putting pressure on outdoor education centres and that clause 224 of the Education Bill represents the last nail in their coffin. They say that South Glamorgan county council's decision—it has been forced to take it because of its financial predicament—to pre-empt clause 224 is not an isolated one. There are Conservative-controlled authorities in England—in Cumbria—that have already mothballed outdoor education centres. The position of South Glamorgan county council is not unique.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman makes my point for me. He has referred to the clause in the Education Bill that has been the subject of representations both by the association to the Minister and by myself. He well knows that the action that is being taken by South Glamorgan cuts the ground from under his feet when he comes to argue these matters in Committee, and specifically in the context of Storey Arms.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned other outdoor education centres. He knows that within my costituency there are nine other such centres, many of which are run by Conservative authorities. They are not, however, under the threat that faces Storey Arms, whatever difficulties are arising. We are seeking to address these matters in terms of the switch to the local management of schools.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: I should like to make some progress, but I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jones: I have been taking children to the outdoor centre at Dol-y-Gaer over the past decade and more. In the past few days I have had conversations with Clive Roberts, the manager of Dol-y-Gaer, and with Mr. Pugh, the manager of Storey Arms. The difference between Storey Arms and many of the other nine centres in the hon. Gentleman's constituency is that Storey Arms has almost 100 per cent. usage by school children from the county. Other authorities are having increasingly to find finance from companies and other sources to pay for the use of the centres. The problem is trying to turn round Storey Arms, as it were, within the time scale that South Glamorgan county council has in mind. It is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is becoming a speech.

Mr. Evans: South Glamorgan county council has to consider, in the context of the funding that has been made available to it, whether the facilities can be kept available for the school children of South Glamorgan. My primary concern is to keep Storey Arms centre open. I have very much in mind the employment of 14 of my constituents who work at the facility. The key feature is that South Glamorgan county council is making a decision that will damage 2,000 children from its area who visit Storey Arms centre each year. It is clear from the cacophony of protests from Opposition Members that the decision has been made by South Glamorgan county council and that it is not attributable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I have had the opportunity to speak to South Glamorgan county councillors about the matter. They have told me that the financial problem that faces the county council could easily be addressed. It seems that that has not happened because of the political difficulties that we have heard about from the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones). Within the Ely area of Cardiff there is a surplus of secondary school places, which means that savings could be made. Unfortunately, South Glamorgan county council is fearful of making such a decision, for political reasons. It seems that it is prepared to carry the cost of surplus places and to make a political stunt decision that is designed to pin the blame on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

That example clearly illustrates the thrust of the Opposition's approach to these matters. They are not prepared to consider the facts of life and to take proper but tough decisions. Instead, they wish to pin the blame on someone else. It is extraordinary that we are receiving daily from the National Union of Teachers cards that tell us about the wonderful system of accountability that we have with our local education authorities. On the contrary, LEAs and too many other authorities and individuals in local government wish to disclaim accountability. We must surely pin accountability to where it lies, and in this instance there is no doubt that South Glamorgan county council is responsible.

5.28 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Perhaps we can now return to the subject after that extraordinary diatribe, which had nothing to do with the settlement. I remind the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) that about an hour ago the Secretary of State said, "We are discussing reality." I suggest to the Minister that the Secretary of State was discussing only his perception of reality, rather than the reality that counties and districts in Wales are having to face.

What sort of reality is it, 14 years after Lady Thatcher quoted St. Francis of Assisi on the steps of No. 10 Downing street, that leads to the situation that I am about to describe? I shall take the real example of Miss J., who lives in a village in my constituency and whom I visited a few days ago. She has a 95-year-old father. She and her father lived alone in a council house until very recently. They have no car and rely on the good nature of friends to drive them around.

Miss J's father is in hospital in Newtown. It has been decided that he should be removed from hospital to a place in the community—somewhere where he can pass his last few years. But in what community? He has been offered one place in Shropshire, far away from public transport, and another place in Shropshire even further from public transport. He is not even allowed to die quietly in his country, Wales. His daughter, who is neither young nor in the best of health, will hardly be able to visit him—perhaps once a fortnight through the kindness of her friends.

The destruction that this version of care in the community is bringing to the daughter's life and that of her father is self-evident. It arises because there simply is not the finance available in Powys to ensure that an elderly gentleman, born and bred in his own village, can pass the rest of his days in close proximity to the village from where his daugher can have reasonable access to him.

What kind of reality is it when the chief executive of Powys county council, for understandable reasons, is leaving, partly because of the uncertainty that faces local government in Wales? He has gone to a very good job. Our

loss is Shropshire's gain. He is an extremely able chief executive, but I do not doubt for a minute that his decision was made partly because morale in local government in Wales is very low. Indeed, just before the end of last year, the council's director of education took early retirement, saying openly that he was doing so because of declining morale in local government and the uncertainty of the education system under this Government. The deputy director of education took early retirement, too: his spirit was sapped by what had been happening in local government.

What kind of reality is it when, after years, decades and in some cases more than a century of providing not only good but essential service, the village school in Pontrobert in my constituency, which has adequate buildings, high education standards and excellent teachers, is facing closure and is fighting for its life, led by its redoubtable chairman of governors, Mr. Huw Gwalchmai? What kind of job is it to be the chairman of governors of a school, especially a village school?

In what kind of reality is Powys county council and its high schools being asked to meet the requirements that will rightly be made by the Welsh Language Bill when it becomes law? Why are staff at Caereinion high school in my constituency riven by dissension about the way in which they should deal with the problem of education through the medium of Welsh? It is because successive Governments have not ensured that the problem was properly tackled throughout Wales.

What kind of reality is it that leads to the most inconsistent administration of trading standards law that we have seen in the past 25 years since the enactment of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968? In one county, shoddy and defective goods may lead to a prosecution; but in another there is no money even to consider a prosecution. The uncertainty goes further than that, because the Secretary of State, in the foreplay to his extraordinary dance with the White Paper on local government reform, seems to have changed his mind at least once already about what will happen to trading standards in Wales.

What kind of reality is it when we hear that Theatre Clwyd, a great centre of excellence which has brought a new level of cultural attraction and achievement to north and mid-Wales, faces cuts that will mean a reduction in the availability of performing arts, in the availability of participatory arts and in the availability of the often neglected visual arts for the northern half of Wales? I do not think that that is a reality that the Secretary of State should be proud of.

I do not much care—and neither do the people of Wales—which quadratic equation is applied to the funding of local government in Wales. We have heard the Secretary of State's version of the quadratic equation. On the Labour side, we have at least one expert on the quadratic equation from Wrexham. Each could produce their own formula, for what it is worth. What matters much more than the formula is what happens to people.

What kind of reality is it that leads to the public in Wales having to drive over potholed roads; or to find that there has been a bailey bridge on a well-used road between Welshpool and Montgomery for the past 20 years? These are the realities which people should not have to face.

It is a matter of shame, which the Government should recognise as their own shame, that, 14 years after Lady Thatcher stood quoting the words of generous hope and concord of St. Francis of Assisi, the level of public service through local government in Wales has declined, that the quality of democracy in Wales has declined and that public uncertainty has increased.

I call on the Minister to answer those questions when he replies to the debate, because without answers the people of Wales will remain rightly dissatisfied with the performance of this Government and their current viceroy from an English constituency.

5.38 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Perhaps we can now return to the reality of this debate, after the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), whose face becomes increasingly unfamiliar to Conservative Members as the years go by.

I know of no problem that the Labour party cannot solve without spending more money. Indeed, for the Labour party it is as easy as signing an IOU. It fails to realise and recognise that more money spent on local government means less money spent elsewhere on health, on benefits or whatever. The Opposition fail to recognise that one cannot run the country as they ran it in the 1970s. They spent and spent and spent without realising their obligations to the country at large.

Mr. Ainger: The hon. Gentleman says that the previous Labour Government spent and spent and spent; but what is the projected public spending borrowing requirement for next year?

Mr. Richards: That is precisely the point. It is because the projected public sector borrowing requirement is so high—about £30 billion—that Government spending must be constrained. It is a point that the Opposition have failed to understand this year, as they have always failed to understand it. Indeed, every Labour Government have failed to understand that fundamental aspect of governing a country. Government spending must be placed in the context of Government income, which has to be put in the context of the economy of the world. As the Opposition know, the economy of the western world has been in recession.

I have seen many crocodile tears from the Opposition who recommend that the Government should spend more on this, that or the other. However, they have not mentioned the waste and corruption in local authorities, usually those run by Labour. There are scandals and corruption from Lambeth to Liverpool, from Monklands to Manchester, and in Sheffield——

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you make it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman that we are debating the revenue support grant orders for Wales? None of the local authorities that he mentioned has anything to do with Wales, and neither of the reports that we are debating will affect local government in the areas that he mentioned, so his references must be wholly out of order.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me rule on one point of order at a time. I assume that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) is alluding to those authorities in relation to the reports. If so, he is in order, but if he develops his argument, he will not be in order.

Mr. Carlile: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Gentleman to accuse local authorities of criminal offences and of corruption without naming those authorities and without having evidence on which to base his accusation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members are responsible for what they say in the House. The Chair has no responsibility for that.

Mr. Richards: The last authority that I mentioned was Sheffield city council. The Opposition will be aware that that council is providing offices rent and rates-free to five Labour hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I made it clear that allusions were in order, but the hon. Gentleman is not to develop them. The order is clear—let us return to the subject of Wales.

Mr. Richards: I referred to those authorities in England because I wished to draw an analogy with the Labour party in Rhyl in my constituency, which appears to have modelled itself on Lambeth. That is no surprise, because it is run from Liverpool city council.

Some members of Rhyl Labour party have applied to Clwyd county council for funding for what they call the Rhyl West community resource team. The team requires resources of about £80,000 from public sector funds. However, it means nothing other than jobs for the boys of Rhyl Labour party, because it will offer the good people of west Rhyl nothing more than advice and information——

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not wish to make another point of order, but it is clear that the hon. Gentleman's scurrilous and unprovoked attack on individuals in his constituency is outside the debate. He is referring to individuals——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Davies: Let me put my case, if I may.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has already put his case, because he has spoken for several seconds. He said that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West was out of order, but I have been listening especially attentively in the light of the previous points of order, and so far the hon. Gentleman is in order.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The £80,000 allocated by Clwyd county council to such a project means £80,000 less for another project.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that, when the Opposition get excited, it means that one has hit the nail on the head?

Mr. Richards: My hon. Friend has also, characteristically, hit the nail on the head.

The so-called resource team offers to do no more than established organisations already do. It will do nothing but duplicate services already being provided by citizens advice bureaux. The bureaux and the library information service would like more funding from Clwyd county council, and they already provide the advice and information that the resource team would duplicate.

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman was talking about an application that had been approved by the local authority, that would be within the terms of the debate, but as he is talking about an organisation which has merely made an application to the local authority, he cannot be in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I understand it, we are debating the financial year 1993-94, and I presume that applications for that year have not yet closed. I assume that the organisation is applying for local government funding, so it must be covered by a debate on expenditure.

Mr. Richards: I am trying to highlight the fact that the Opposition do not use public funds in the best possible way. I mentioned citizens advice bureaux and the library information service, which would like more funding. A benefits advice shop already exists in Rhyl, so the resource team which has applied for £80,000 will merely duplicate the existing services. It is absolutely scandalous.

I, and, I am sure, many other hon. Members, have corresponded with people who are involved with the mentally handicapped in Clwyd, and Clwyd social services department has cut the resources available to them. It is outrageous that the Opposition should use funds to duplicate services when other services, which the county council is cutting, need more funding.

We shall take no lessons from the Opposition on underfunding or on any other aspect of funding until they put their house in order and ensure that their local government representatives properly represent the people who elected them.

5.48 pm

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): I was expecting the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) to continue his speech for much longer. I am most grateful that he did not.

Following the election, the Secretary of State has imposed capping criteria in Wales for the first time. The capping has not been imposed gradually, as may have been the case in England. In Wales, the axe has fallen especially suddenly, severely and unfairly. By the autumn, it became clear that there would be a £200 million shortfall in the amount that county councils would be allowed to spend. The final settlement confirms that only £78 million has been allowed for inflation, for increased demand and for the problems associated with an increasingly elderly population. It was believed that £262 million was necessary. The additional sum allocated for community care is recognised by everyone within the service as completely inadequate for the increased demands put on it.

I know that local authorities argue constantly—and with good cause—for more funding. This time they can with justice claim a crisis of cash shortage. Vital services, in the real sense of the word, are being put at risk. I am talking not about library services but about vital services such as the social services and the fire service. I am not being alarmist in saying that people will die as a result of the cuts. Essential functions in education and in highways will be severely affected. Many valued provisions will cease to exist.

The cuts are also unfair because they are not evenly applied. Districts, as we have been told, will be allowed a

10 per cent. increase in spending, but the counties will receive only a 1·5 per cent. increase. Is this another of the Secretary of State's attempts to divide and rule? He has no mandate in Wales, and he seeks to put those who have a mandate at one another's throats.

In my county of South Glamorgan, £8 million will have to be cut from the budget this year. Up to 600 jobs will be lost, at a time of huge unemployment. Almost 15 per cent. are out of work in my constituency alone.

The cuts are being made when there is an unprecedented imposition of what should be taught in schools and how it should be taught. Counties such as South Glamorgan are forced into an ever-narrowing curriculum. The Gradgrind, Dickensian view of teaching is in the ascendancy among Conservative Members and is now to be pushed on the people of Wales.

In South Glamorgan, we have the nationally acclaimed South Glamorgan youth orchestra, which is now under severe threat. Music is to become an optional extra in schools, available only to those who can pay. That may not be of great concern to some Conservative Members, but Labour Members believe that a subject such as music should be available to all, because it enriches all people.

Youth and community education is to be decimated at a time when it is most needed. There is 30 per cent. youth unemployment in parts of South Glamorgan, yet youth and community education faces a cut of £750,000.

There has been much discussion about outdoor pursuit centres and about the centre at Story Arms. All the outdoor pursuits centres, not only those run by South Glamorgan county council, are in danger of closing.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Jones: Yes, they are. The hon. Gentleman should talk to people at more of them. All outdoor pursuit centres now have to compete for the same area of the market. They are all trying to get companies to spend a lot of money on sending their executives and directors on leadership courses, because those people can pay.

The outdoor pursuit centres were established to give an essential part of education to the pupils who should receive it as a right and not because they could afford it. I used to take groups of biology A-level pupils to the Story Arms centre. Field studies are an important part of the geography A-level course. I also used to take disabled children to the centre. It is a great thing to see the satisfaction and sense of achievement that those pupils can get from outdoor pursuit centres. That opportunity will be denied them by Conservative cuts.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman has put his points forcefully to the House. Has he put them to Russell Goodway, the leader of South Glamorgan county council?

Mr. Jones: Yes, I have. I have urged Russell Goodway to try to find cuts in other parts of the budget. I know that that will mean that someone else suffers, but because I have a personal interest in the matter, I have made that suggestion. If Councillor Goodway tells me that he cannot find extra funding and that he cannot find any other area to cut, I shall understand his position.

Storey Arms needs a little more time in which to try to win a reprieve. That will not help the people of South Glamorgan who want to use the service. If it survives, it will do so because it takes in more external funding, and it will have to cut the service it now provides for children in South Glamorgan schools. From that point of view, they will still have lost.

Economic development in South Glamorgan has had to face cuts. What a time to do that! The county council has been one of the foremost in developing links with industry. Unfortunately, there will have to be cuts in economic development.

Some £400,000 must be cut from discretionary awards to students, which means that the poor will no longer be able to afford to take up many important courses. Taiwan now sends more people to university than Britain does, yet we shall have to cut discretionary awards, which will mean that students cannot take up courses.

The council is being forced to cut care for the elderly and for those with mental health problems. Those least able to cope are having to pay the price for the Government's mismanagement of the economy.

Even the fire service does not escape the cuts. A new fire station is due to be built in Pentwyn in my constituency, but the project is now to be delayed. The fire service in parts of east Cardiff will no longer be able to meet its statutory attendance times. That is why I said that some people will die as a result of the cuts.

It is shameful for the Secretary of State, who has no mandate from the people of Wales, to come here to impose cuts on us. I hope that Conservative Members will have the courage to vote with us at 7 pm.

5.56 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): To listen to Opposition Members, one would think that the Secretary of State for Wales had imposed on Wales the most swingeing cuts imaginable. The reality is that, over the last two years, there has been an increase of 25 per cent. A further increase of 3·1 per cent. is scheduled in the forthcoming year. That is hardly a brutal cut in services.

I heard the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) suggest that a Conservative Member of honour would vote against the Government on this occasion. I make it perfectly clear to him that I thoroughly support the Government's plan and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said. Given the stringency with which the Government need to approach spending in general, my right hon. Friend's announcement today is suprisingly and reassuringly generous.

Mr. Dafis: I point out to the hon. Gentleman that the difference between the standard spending assessment allowed by the Welsh Office to Dyfed county council and the budget that the council requires to maintain standard services at last year's level is £20 million.

Mr. Sweeney: That makes one wonder how that local authority has run its affairs in the past. The perception of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) differs from the reality. It is rather like George Orwell's slogan in "Animal Farm":

"Four legs good, two legs bad."

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to a heart-breaking case known to him. I am sure that we could all look into our postbags or reminisce about our surgeries and refer to hard cases that would help to illustrate the difficulties facing local and national Government at the present time.

As Conservative Members are well aware, unfortunately we cannot spend money that we do not have. It is

[Mr. Sweeney]

because we have been attempting to do that—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members cannot have it both ways. If they do not like us borrowing so much, they must accept that it is natural to take a grip on public spending. Local government must share part of that burden.

If local and national Government do not take a grip on public spending, private individuals will have to shoulder the entire burden. People have made it clear to me in correspondence and at my surgeries that they cannot shoulder a growing burden of Government debt. They cannot and will not do that. If they are pushed, the result will be job losses. The wealth creators will be driven under, and that cannot be good for any of us. In the long term, there would be a reduction in the services which Opposition Members complain that we are jeopardising.

This is a fair settlement that is in the interests of the Welsh economy and the Welsh people. To attack my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for not being Welsh and for not representing a Welsh constituency is cheap in the extreme and irrelevant. The public will appreciate that, as usual, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has driven a hard bargain in the interests of the people of Wales, and has done a good job for us today.

6.2 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The best measuring rod of whether local government finance is fair must be whether it responds to people's needs. I have always believed that investment and finance should go where the need is greatest. The Welsh Office has recognised that my constituency of Blaenau Gwent is the second most deprived borough in Wales. If one were to visit my constituency, one would see high levels of unemployment. Those who are employed are on low wages. We have some of the worst housing stock in Wales, and some of the most severe health problems.

I want to highlight the poverty and deprivation in Blaenau Gwent. In 1991-92, 30 per cent. of the children in Blaenau Gwent received free school meals. In 1990-91, nearly 97 per cent. of the families with children at one school in Blaenau Gwent received income support. The 1991 census showed that pensioners in my constituency were more likely to be without a bath, shower or inside toilet than anywhere else in Gwent.

The unemployment rate in Blaenau Gwent is higher than the Welsh average. Young people in particular have tremendous skills, talents and creativity, but they are not being allowed to use them to benefit the communities that comprise Blaenau Gwent or to benefit the great industries in which they should be working.

Some people might say that local government finance should not concern itself with employment as it is really about providing public services. However, we all recognise that employment and public services are interlinked. I was reminded of that some weeks ago, when the local authority announced that many housing grants were being ended. The authority was approached by building contractors, who highlighted the adverse effect that that would have on housing in Blaenau Gwent. The contractors also stressed that many of their employees would be made redundant.

It is not just the contractors and people who build and repair the houses who are affected. A building supplier told me that, because of the contraction in the building industry and the fact that the local authority was ending many housing grants, he would have to make many people unemployed.

Many of our services, particularly housing, have been affected. Blaenau Gwent has some of the worst housing stock in Wales. As a result of the Government's policies, Blaenau Gwent has been unable to build one new council house in the past nine years, even though there are 4,000 people on the housing waiting list. As I have said, in recent months the authority has announced that there will be even greater housing problems in future as a result of the cuts in housing grants.

With all those problems and many more, one would have expected the Government to respond positively to the problems of communities like Blaenau Gwent. However, that has not happened. The Welsh Office recently told Blaenau Gwent that its SSA for 1993-94 will be lower than the provisional figure that it issued just a month ago.

The borough will now have to make savings of £171,000 in addition to the cuts of £2·1 million that committees are being forced to make on the basis of the provisional spending limit. That equates to approximately £70 per household in the borough of Blaenau Gwent. The people who already face considerable deprivation will experience even more deprivation in terms of job losses and cuts in services.

Not only is that unfair: it is the economics of the madhouse. Government cuts in provision to local authorities in the middle of the recession will not save the Exchequer a penny. While the Government take money away from local authorities with one hand, they must with the other hand provide the Treasury with more money to meet the costs of unemployment. We now know that every unemployed person costs the state about £9,000 in benefits and lost taxes. That figure does not take into account the increase in the number of free school meals, housing benefit and many other social problems which increase as unemployment increases.

The Government do not believe in public expenditure. However, I believe in it, and I am committed to it. Public expenditure can be a liberating force which can allow young people to do something useful with their lives. It can bring dignity to the unemployed, the homeless and people experiencing sub-standard education. It gives them the opportunity to do something good with their lives.

Public expenditure also helps to transform our communities—the garden festival in my constituency is a classic example. That area would not have been transformed without public investment. The lesson we should learn is that we need a higher level of public expenditure if we are to regenerate those communities. What is more, decisions relating to that public expenditure should be taken increasingly by people who are elected, accountable and as close as possible to local people.

In contrast, over the past decade there has been a process of increased centralisation. In respect of that, there has been an increase in the use of the power of capping. That will obviously affect communities like Blaenau Gwent, which already suffer so much deprivation, adversely in the months to come. In addition to the centralisation of powers, those powers are also being hived off to Government quangos, to unelected and unaccountable business men and, occasionally, business women.

Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) quoted the *Financial Times*, and said that unelected quango boards

"are now responsible for a fifth of all public expenditure—at £42,000 million, more than the total spending of local government, and a figure which has increased three times since 1979."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 344.]

The movement away from accountability, linked to decisions which are increasingly to be made by bankers under the Maastricht treaty, will increasingly force people to ask, "What is the use of voting if the people we vote for have no real decisions or real influence over decisions that affect our lives?" The system of local government finance, as stated by the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) last week, is

"unfair, unjust and deliberately tailored to shackle, rather than free, local priorities and local enterprise."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 363.]

The hon. Gentleman was speaking about England, but the debate shows that, tragically, the situation is no different in Wales.

6.10 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I welcome the settlement. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) almost gave the game away by saying in terms that Monmouth had done well this year. He is for once—almost uniquely—correct. However, table 1.6 shows that Monmouth's public expenditure per head of population is still the lowest of any district council in Wales—£123, as opposed to £194 in Blaenau Gwent.

In the peculiar system of standard spending assessments, until this year there has been a bias in favour of urban Wales and against rural Wales. In particular, in Monmouth it was felt very strongly in the past few years that a low-spending rural authority which happens, of course, to be Conservative-controlled, having extra costs as a result of not being an urban authority—for example, it costs much more to collect domestic refuse in the country—has been penalised in the past but not this year. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement and I thoroughly welcome it.

It is not satisfactory to say that, somehow or other, the announcement is miserable and mean and that it will cause enormous anguish, although that argument has been articulated with brilliant skill by various hon. Members. The point at stake, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) has said, is that we must look at the announcement in the context of the past three years which, including the year that we are discussing, show an increase of no less than 29 per cent.

A few hon. Members who are present happen to represent constituencies other than Welsh constituencies, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is again to be congratulated on achieving in Wales a better deal than obtains in England. The total standard spending in Wales per head is £901 in the year that we are talking about, as opposed to £856 in England, and the aggregate external finance per head in Wales is £812, compared with £698 in England. That is an enormously important benefit for the Welsh economy and for Welsh local government. It should be recognised as such, and my right hon. Friend should be congratulated.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) addressed us with eloquence and passion, but I fear that in the exuberance of his passion he paused to cast unnecessary scorn upon quadratic equations. The curious feature of the debate among the critics has been an absence of any analytical critique of the way in which standard spending assessments have been calculated. The method of calculation has an enormous effect on distribution, which affects each and every local authority in our constituencies.

I am probably more critical than many, but, there is an attempt to measure social and other needs, on analysis, and costs and to average out Government expenditure so that everybody receives a reasonable and fair share. Hon. Members have expressed the needs of their local authorities, but I am most surprised that critics of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have not aimed their fire at the basis of the system. Perhaps that is because it commands general support.

I welcome the second paper, which relates to capping. It is a matter of great regret that it is necessary, but Conservative Governments have or should have learnt from the experience of past years. You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we had a rating revaluation in 1963 and we lost a general election in 1964; we had a rating revaluation in 1973 and we lost a general election in 1974. That was largely because local authorities of another political persuasion proceeded to increase expenditure, exercising their local powers to do so. Indeed, we saw that strikingly with the poll tax in Gwent, when Gwent county council was elected in 1989 for four years. In its first year of poll tax, it showed very little reticence in raising the figure to unacceptable levels.

Local authorities cannot have it both ways. They spend an enormous proportion of public money. There must be some accountability to the Treasury for the burdens on the taxpayer and on the economy. At the same time, local authorities cannot escape responsibility for their spending decisions. It is all too easy to threaten cuts in the most essential, desirable and poignant services when a much more critical examination of how they run their affairs would be appropriate. I support both measures.

6.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): There appears to be a hidden agenda for Newport borough's finances and rate support grant settlement. Last Saturday morning, as I was thinking of getting ready to go to Cardiff for the international to witness the eclipse of England, I started to open my post. One of the first letters that I opened was from the Welsh Office. It informed me that the Secretary of State had accepted the findings of his inspector, Mr. R. Davies, following a public inquiry in October 1991 into the application by the American concern, Browning-Ferris Environmental Services Ltd., to build a waste disposal plant in the Lliswerry area of Newport.

That disgraceful decision was made by a Welsh Office Minister representing an English constituency. The findings on page 40, paragraph 9.226 of the report even seem to acknowledge that Newport in south Wales will be seen as a dustbin for the receipt of waste from all over the world. Page 41, paragraph 9.30 of that report points out that there is a risk of noticeable pollution, but that is qualified by stating that the risk is negligible.

Mr. Sweeney: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. That remark does not appear to be at all relevant to the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): So far as I can gather, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) is talking about financial matters which fall within the general ambit of the debate.

Mr. Hughes: This matter will affect the finances of Newport borough council.

The public will rightly question whether the vapours pouring from the stack at the plant will be cancer-causing. That is a natural fear. What is not in dispute is the company's proposal. The report states:

"The proposal would be a facility for the reception, storage and treatment of aqueous and oily wastes using a variety of well-established non-thermal treatment techniques, such as neutralization, oxidation, reduction, de-watering and chemical demulsification. The wastes would arise from the South-west Region and would include inorganic sludges and oily wastes from the automobile and steel industries . . . food wastes: usually classified into 4 waste types (a) sludges, (b) acidic wastes, (c) oily wastes and (d) other aqueous wastes requiring specialized handling or treatment."

Mr. Llew Smith: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the firm, Browing-Ferris, to which he referred has been taken to court in the United States, prosecuted and found guilty of breaking environmental legislation? Can he also confirm that Browing-Ferris has connections with the criminal world in the United States?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear to me that the hon. Member is starting to go wide of the financial implications. He must stick with that to remain in order.

Mr. Hughes: I appreciate what my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Smith) said. I shall make a brief reference to the point that he made.

I have outlined what I would call a nice cocktail which is close to a heavily built-up area. Then there is the record of the company involved. A while ago, Greenpeace sent me a dossier on Browning-Ferris. According to that dossier, toxic waste in the United States is closely linked with organised crime, and Browing-Ferris is right in the thick of it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Member is now going out of order. He must return to finance.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Obviously, my hon. Friend is raising a serious issue—the pollution which could be caused by the plant. Does he know whether Newport borough council, in preparing its estimates for the coming financial year, took into account all the extra work which would be required by the environmental health department and other Departments to police the plant? Those departments opposed the plant. More importantly, has the Welsh Office taken any account of that extra work in the money that it is giving to Newport?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend illustrates the point which I am trying to make. What if charges similar to those already made against the company were to happen in Newport? I shall give some examples. In 1984, in Williamsburg, Ohio, investigators charged that Browing-Ferris officials poured contaminated rain water directly into a tributary of local drinking water. In 1985, a grand jury indicted BFI, CECOS and their former employees on 96 counts of violations at the hazardous waste pits. There are many more examples of similar charges made against the company. Such charges certainly impinge directly on the finances of Newport borough council and the revenue support grant settlement. For example, there would be the cost of more environmental health officers and the need for extra police for such a questionable plant.

I have a letter dated 4 February from Mrs. C. R. Jones at the Welsh Office, authorised by the Secretary of State, to Messrs. Davis Llewellyn and Jones, chartered architects and town planners in Cardiff who act on behalf of Browing-Ferris. Mrs. C. R. Jones says:

"A further letter will be sent to you in connection with your clients' claim for an award of costs against Newport Borough Council."

That is relevant to the financial aspect. In rejecting the company's application, the council was merely acting in line with the wishes of the town's charge payers. Their disquiet was expressed through mass meetings, an all-night vigil, petitions, and so forth. Where is the democracy in all that? Will the Welsh Office meet the cost of the public inquiry and so on?

There are many risks involved for farmers with cattle and agricultural products, and there is a traffic hazard in the conveyance of the waste matter. The council has gone out of its way to make Newport a more attractive place to live. At a stroke, that is all being put in jeopardy. Property values will drop and people will want to move out of the area. Are those matters not relevant to Newport borough council's finances and its revenue support grant settlement?

The decision will blight the whole of south Wales. Proud south Wales, which produced the coal that fuelled the industrial revolution, is now to be reduced to a dustbin for the receipt of waste from all over the world. The people of Newport do not want the plant, and neither does the council. This thoroughly undemocratic decision is an indictment of the Government and, more particularly, the present incumbent at the Welsh Office. The Secretary of State has failed to speak up for Wales. If he has any conscience left, he will resign.

6.26 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On 12 November 1992, the Secretary of State set the scene for the current settlement. He said:

"I consider my proposals to be realistic in the current economic climate. They give a level of settlement above predicted inflation."

For all I know, the Secretary of State might genuinely believe that. If he believes it, it is self-delusion on a grand scale. He also said:

"I recognise that local government in Wales will have to make hard choices about spending priorities if authorities are to stay within my plans."

How right he was. That passage is an absolutely classic understatement.

The Secretary of State said that his capping criteria are designed to ensure that essential services are maintained and taxpayers are shielded from unreasonable levels of council tax. That is all laudable. However, the people of Wales are not reassured when they realise that those were the words of advice and direction of a member of a Government who were, at least notionally, at the helm during the stormy seas of Black Wednesday.

If the millions of pounds that were thrown away on a hopeless exercise were available to local services in Wales, we would be facing a much brighter future. As always, the Government say, "Do as I say, not as I do."

Earlier, when the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was referring to the closure of rural schools, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West

(Mr. Richards) was grinning like a Cheshire cat. He can grin; he sends his child to a public school in England. That shows how much care and concern he has for Wales.

Mr. Richards: I point out to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that all three of my childen have gone to Ysgol Gymraeg Ynisgedwyn in Ystradgynlais.

Mr. Llwyd: Is there a child currently at an English public school?

Mr. Richards: There is a child currently at an English public school and there are still two children at Ysgol Gymraeg Ynisgedwyn primary school in Ystradgynlais.

Mr. Llwyd: The Meirionnydd district council and the Aberconwy district council are the two councils in the constituency which I have the honour to represent. Earlier, the Secretary of State said that councils largely agreed with his criteria. Unfortunately, those two councils are certainly not in agreement. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made the point earlier and I will not dwell on it. The point is well made and I support it.

In discussing the position of Meirionnydd district council, it may assist the House if I mention one or two facts. That council has strong misgivings about the use of standard spending assessments as anything other than a crude way of measuring need and, consequently, about their limited value as a method of determining the level of expenditure.

The formula for calculating the SSA is relatively simple and the number of factors contained in it are relatively few, but it can produce only a general answer. As we know, it affects not only the revenue support grant but the level of expenditure.

Tax capping is both undemocratic and damaging to the interests of the public. The 1993-94 settlement contains a permitted increase of only £59,000 in Meirionnydd's budget. That represents 1 per cent. Is that the only way to ensure adequacy of service? It certainly is not. It may save a few pounds here and there, but it will inevitably mean savage cuts in services. The net effect of the proposals will be to render the district council a mere puppet of central Government. That is in line with the thinking of the Tories, who wish to impose their will on Wales via the Welsh Office.

However, the councillors are at the sharp end. They have to face public disquiet about cuts imposed by this cowardly Government. Undoubtedly, the tax-capping proposals in Meirionnydd will result in a loss of jobs. I am told by officers of the council that there will be job losses of up to 8 per cent. in the non-manual work force. That is a savage and bitter blow to our local economy. Worse still, it is a blow which is entirely avoidable.

As a responsible authority, Meirionnydd raised the matter with the Secretary of State, only to receive a bland reply which was economic in content and negative in tone. I told the Secretary of State on 14 December in this Chamber that members of the local authority who visited him and his officers returned with an overwhelming feeling that the Welsh Office would not listen to them. Perhaps that is what the Welsh Office wants, but it is clearly not what my constituents and the people of Wales want. They all deserve better.

Aberconwy borough council tells me that the criteria will mean a cut in current spending plans of some £1 million. That will inevitably translate into lower levels of service, job losses and the cancellation of capital schemes. The council will also have to look to reduce spending. That could affect jobs at the sharp end of service provision—for example, in parks, gardens, maintenance and so on.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Llywd: No. I am sorry, but I have limited time.

A major point to consider is that inevitably the level of available finance will be lower. That will cause the council serious problems in fulfilling its statutory duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and all that it entails, the Children Act 1989 and the care in the community provisions which are to be implemented soon.

In addition, the commutation of loans for improvements grants does not appear to reflect the intention to be neutral on budgets. It is of the utmost importance to Aberconwy to ensure that the borough is attractive to tourists and visitors because much of the economy relies on tourism. The lower level of provision could easily affect the attractiveness of the area which, in turn, will affect hotels, guest houses and so on throughout the borough. Of course, residents will be adversely affected, too.

The serious problems that district councils face are almost nothing compared with the problems that county councils face. The way in which the SSAs are calculated means that the counties will lose £28 million this year. The county SSAs are set to rise by only 1·6 per cent. That is an average figure for Welsh counties; the figure for Gwynedd is only 0·4 per cent. The mere £35 million allowance for the introduction of care in the community represents nothing like the real cost.

It is disheartening to note that, during the debate on 12 February last year, my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), among others, made a special plea to the Secretary of State for additional funding if care in the community was to be introduced with any confidence. Alas, those pleas and the pleas of others fell on deaf ears. It is evident from the current plans that the Government do not want to listen.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Jones) said during the last Welsh Question Time, as a result of the capping criteria Gwynedd county council will have to cut £3 million from its standstill budget. That is not a measure which will ensure the provision of essential services.

Gwynedd county council has been hard at work in the past two years finding 3 per cent. cuts each year. Only recently it had to face the appalling prospect of closing a specialist home for the elderly infirm when it had no other place to house them. Thankfully, that cut was averted, but I keep thinking of that little boy with his thumb in the breached dyke. How long can the council hold on?

The highly professional team of officers and conscientious councillors in Gwynedd are desperately worried, and rightly so. They must now consider cuts in nursery education. Looming on the horizon we have the appalling spectre of wholesale closures of rural schools, with the consequent damage to countless communities, the culture and the language.

The people of my constituency have had enough. If ever there was an easy time to explain the need for a fully

[Mr. Llywd]

accountable and powerful assembly in Wales, this is it. If the Government persist, they will pay for their callousness and folly at the next election.

I wish to raise two specific points. The first is the poundage rate for non-domestic rates in Wales. It is unrealistically high. It means that small businesses in my community and elsewhere are under continuous seige. The so-called party of small businesses is selling those businesses down the river in exactly the same way as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did 18 months ago. He pledged that the hill livestock compensatory allowance payments were safe in his hands, but now he wants to cut them by 26 per cent. They are the kind of Government with whom we are dealing. Why cannot the Government recognise the plight of small businesses and scrap the uniform business rate? In the short term, why do not the Government introduce a more equitable poundage?

The second specific point that I want to raise is the 12·5 per cent. non-collection factor used to arrive at the tax base rate. It is unrealistically low. That means that £261 for band D is too low. That should be revised as a matter of urgency. The Secretary of State's pledge to maintain services at a reasonable cost is an empty platitude.

Support for the Tory party in Wales is at an all-time low. That is no wonder. The day of reckoning will soon be here when Tories disappear completely off the Welsh map. I look forward to that day in the interests of social justice and decency.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Paul Murphy.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When is it possible for representatives of the biggest county in Wales and the one most savagely affected by the cuts to participate in the debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is always a difficulty when more people seek to speak than it is possible to call in the time available.

6.36 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I appreciate, even with an extended debate, the inevitability of the shortness of time for the important issues that have been raised. Certainly the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) about Mid Glamorgan will have been noted by the people in that county and in the Principality.

The debate highlights the constantly shifting sands of local government finance in Britain and Wales. The House should realise that the Conservatives have passed 152 Acts of Parliament affecting local government since they have been in office. Virtually every one of those measures adversely affected the functions and services offered by our councils, and virtually every one was opposed by the people of Wales.

The theme of the debate has been that the Conservative party has no mandate from the people of Wales to impose its will on the local authorities and their budgets. The Government have produced an unstable local government finance system. Within the short space of four years, the people of Wales have gone from the rates to the poll tax and then to the council tax. The poll tax was abolished 355 days after it was introduced, yet the Conservative party lectures our local authorities about financial prudence.

The instability of the system, combined with its super-complexity—with talk of SSA, RSG, AEF and all the rest—have made it inevitable that there is no longer any public confidence in the local government finance system in Wales or England.

During the past few years, there has been tremendous uncertainty over the annual settlements in Wales, which —I am sorry to say—has been made worse by the constant dithering about local government reform. I understand that a report about the transitional costs of such reform has been placed in the Library today, and I am sure that that will not help Welsh councils.

Last year, the district councils were badly hit. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said that environmental health monitoring of chemical waste plants will be affected. In my constituency, the ReChem toxic waste plant was badly afected by cuts in district allocations last year.

This year, the county councils have been affected. Even though there have been quarrels over the so-called tier split, the Welsh district and county councils are united in their opposition to the settlement and disagree with their increasing lateness. Hon. Members will recall that, four or five years ago, we debated settlements as early as December or November, but it has got later every year. The authorities are also united in thinking that the business rate has been reduced for no apparent reason, which will cost local authorities millions of pounds.

The publication of the original figures that the local authorities received lacked care, and was sloppy and badly managed. The collapse of Municipal Mutual Insurance, which the Government did not aid, has meant that many councils have had to budget for increased insurance costs.

The settlement is inadequate; it follows the tradition of underfunding Welsh local government, which has led to the long-term neglect of our roads, schools and houses. One county treasurer said:

"The settlement is the most severe imposed on county councils in recent years, and appears to be based on adherence to a formula which penalises budgetary prudence, and rewards those local authorities which paid least heed to Government guidelines in 1990-91."

The treasurer of Swansea district council said:

"This is the worst settlement in my 12 years experience as Treasurer."

Both agree that the revenue settlement is at least £132 million short of what Welsh councils need.

The districts have come off better this year, with a 9 per cent. increase, but one third of all Welsh districts will have difficulty in setting their budgets; five have provisional increases of less than 2 per cent., and seven have increases of less than 5 per cent. Our two greatest towns, Cardiff and Swansea, coincidentally must make cuts of £3·5 million each.

Mr. Rogers: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Secretary of State has been a little disingenuous when talking in terms of the district and county councils working together and coming to an agreement? In fact, he set out to pit one against the other. The suggestion that they would go along together is about as likely as putting two ferrets in a sack and getting them to kiss.

Mr. Murphy: My experience of ferrets is very limited, but I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about the general principle.

When he opened the debate, the Secretary of State referred to local authority capital spending and said that it was up. That does not apply to the districts. There has been an 18 per cent. reduction in the districts' BCAs. The housing budget is down by 19 per cent. and other approvals by 37 per cent., as my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) pointed out.

The urban programme has been cut in Wales, and in England it has disappeared. All those reductions are a result of the fact that the Welsh Office wants extra money for European supplementary credit approvals. They have robbed our districts to pretend that they have additionality rules for our European moneys.

Many of my hon. Friends have mentioned capital receipts, which still need to be used. I know that they have been used for 1993, but we need a commitment today that their use will be extended until 1994 and beyond.

The Council of Welsh Districts also wants at least £200 million of the set-aside receipts in council coffers released during the next three years, because the districts have suffered a reduction of about 60 per cent. in capital money since 1990.

The capital budgets of Colwyn, Torfaen, Cynon Valley, Rhondda and Cardiff have all been substantially reduced. As most of my hon. Friends have said, Welsh county councils have been hit by massive revenue reductions. My hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), for Delyn (Mr. Hanson), for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) have all rightly referred to the fact that education—the largest part of local authority spending—has been decimated by the settlements. It is a great irony that I and some of my hon. Friends have spent the past three months in the Education Bill Committee, wasting our time talking about grant-maintained, opted-out schools and the rest of it. That is a supreme irrelevance to the provision of education for the people of Wales.

All that time wasted and all that money squandered, yet discretionary grants in Wales have been cut and cut again. Support for the Welsh language, peripatetic music services, the education psychology service and school building and maintenance systems have all been cut, at a time when people are beginning to understand that it is the provision of education services for young people in Wales that is important and not the pursuit of dogma and doctrine.

Social services are also suffering from the county council cuts. For example, Gwent has had to cut its toy library, playground equipment and child abuse publicity. The police have not escaped and there have been cuts in training, vehicle maintenance and operational equipment. In Gwent, my police authority, 13 police stations are threatened with closure. That is happening at a time when vigilante groups roam Wales and crime is on the increase.

All that affects our jobs, as my hon. Friends the Members for Blaenau Gwent and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said, since for every 10,000 jobs lost, £900 million is lost to the taxpayer. To deny job losses, as the Secretary of State and the Minister do, is to live in cloud cuckoo land —like their belief that the average band D council tax in Wales will be £262. It is more likely to be well over £300, and will range between £270 and £380.

Doubtless the Minister will say that he will not hesitate to use his capping powers, but this is the first time that capping criteria have been published for Wales. The former Secretary of State, Lord Walker, and the present Secretary of State have both said, in speech after speech in the House and in Wales, that there was a consensus in Wales between local authorities and the Welsh Office that there was no need for capping criteria to be laid down because, on balance, Welsh local authorities have had a responsible attitude towards spending and have been nothing like the examples given by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who was describing a totally different world. Why is it necessary to sour relations between local government and the Welsh Office by laying down unnecessary capping criteria?

The settlement does more than that. It is part of the Government's erosion of Welsh local democracy. Why can quangos get money at the drop of a hat? Contrast that with the impoverishment of our services and the adverse effects on the quality of Welsh life that will undoubtedly flow from the constant underfunding of Welsh local government and from the settlement in particular.

The Government cap our councils, cut off their finances and restrict their powers. At least we know that, despite that, our Welsh local authorities will continue to provide services to the people who elect them. They will protect those people from the dogmatic excesses of the Government and they still remain the best hope for effective and representative democracy in Wales. I urge the House to vote against the motion.

6.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I rush to acknowledge the only point in the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) with which I could agree. I join him in congratulating the Welsh rugby team on its achievement on Saturday—at the very least 10-9 is a statistic on which none of us could disagree. I even welcome his suggestion that we might have further discussion about what happened on Saturday. I am sure that all hon. Members would find that more productive than today's debate.

If I was charitable, I would describe the standard of debate from the Opposition as, at best, wishful and typically negative—no new ideas, the same old sterile debate. The hon. Member for Caerphilly came out with his predictable wish list for spending. Of course he complained about the capping proposals, but it was most significant that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) asked him what he would do in the same situation, answer had he not. When my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) asked him what he would do about surplus places in schools, answer had he not.

Instead, the hon. Gentleman resorted to a ritual attack on what he chooses to describe as quangos. Such criticism is rich from a party that favours the ultimate quango, a Welsh assembly, which the people of Wales have rejected decisively. It is typical that the Labour party favours the introduction of such an assembly—another socialist, centralist body that would take powers away from local councils.

How quickly is the illusion of Bournemouth ripped away. The vain attempts to put a Clinton mask on the face of the Labour party is all as nothing 24 hours later. To put

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

it in a proper, or rather historical, context, Labour Members should be properly identified as the Bourbons of France—they learn nothing, they forget nothing. Little wonder that the editorial in the *Western Mail*—the national newspaper of Wales—after the general election acknowledged that the present Labour party was unelectable.

Despite the impression that some Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Caerphilly and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), seek to give, the economic difficulties we face are not confined to this country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West pointed out, economic problems are experienced throughout the world. This is not the occasion, however, for a discourse on the state of the world economy; the House is well aware of the problems.

It would be irresponsible to set a settlement level that the country cannot afford. I find it difficult to reconcile arguments for a higher level of resources in the current circumstances and the concerns I have heard expressed about the possible level of the council tax in Wales. Opposition Members do not appear to appreciate that it is the taxpayer who must foot the bill for public expenditure. Fortunately, the Government appreciate that; that is why we have had to make the necessary decisions on public spending—decisions that affect central Government, too; it is not just local government that is having to face up to hard choices.

The settlement package that we propose gives local government an increase in resources above the rate of inflation, which continues to decline, before the £37·5 million additional resources that we are providing for care in community are taken into account. It gives local authorities scope to raise a higher proportion of revenue from local taxation. It should also keep council tax bills at reasonable levels.

The settlement provides a sound basis for the introduction of the council tax in April. Despite the gloomy prognostications of Opposition Members, the tax will be welcomed by the people of Wales, who will see it as a fair and balanced system of local taxation. Bills will be based on the valuation band of the property in question. Single-adult households will receive a 25 per cent. discount on their bills, and householders on income support will pay nothing. Those on low incomes will be eligible for council tax benefit. A range of other discounts and exemptions will also be available.

If local authorities budget in line with our plans, the majority of Welsh households will pay less than they did under the community charge, and subsequently less than they did under the old domestic rating system. The prophets of doom underestimate the Government's determination to see the new system work and the high degree of professionalism that local government in Wales will bring to its administration. Local authorities have invested an enormous amount of energy and effort in preparing the new tax. They are ready for 1 April and I commend them on their achievement.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) was naturally concerned about his own country, and he echoed the concern raised by the hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) about care in the community. The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West rightly reminded us that Clwyd county council is receiving an additional £6·6 million for care in the community. That is part of a total increase in spending for care in the community which amounts to £35·9 million. That sum is not simply what the Department of Social Security would have spent—around £28 million: we have found an additional £8 million to cover the extra work involved.

The distribution of money for care in the community follows the existing patterns relating to Department of Social Security spending, but it also reflects the need to achieve more flexible forms of community care. Exceptionally, we will identify the amounts needed for care in the community in each county in Wales. I want to ensure that the situation is monitored to ensure that our desires are realised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor spoke movingly about outdoor centres, 10 of which are in his constituency. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many private conversations going on.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I thought that it was significant that my hon. Friend was able to observe that, out of the 10 outdoor centres, only one, owned and operated by South Glamorgan council, is threatened with closure—the other nine, which are owned by English or Welsh councils will continue to operate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor, together with the hon. Members for Cardiff, Central and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke about the provision of music education in South Glamorgan council. I was especially struck by a letter from one of my constituents, Mr. Andrew Swift, to the *Western Mail* entitled "Silencing the Land of Song", in which he repeatedly asked what other services provided by South Glamorgan council would suffer the same level of cut as that to be imposed on the provision of music education. How can a cut of 90 per cent. in the provision of any service, particularly music education, be justified?

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jones: I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman. time is short, thanks to his hon. Friends.

If South Glamorgan council had said that a cut of between 1 and 5 per cent., or even slightly more, was intended, we might have understood, but to try to impose a 90 per cent. cut speaks volumes about the political party that is in control of that council. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth would join me in condemning that council when one considers the advances that have been made in Cardiff and the way in which my party made St. David's hall possible. The facilities for the arts in Cardiff have been expanded, but now music provision is being subject to a disgraceful attack, which is a source of great regret to me.

South Glamorgan council has until the end of this month to finalise its budget, and I imagine that it will set a budget in the region of £272 million. I hope that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth shares my hope that it will listen to all the expressions of opinion about the provision of music education in South Glamorgan. I hope that that council will yet change its mind and reverse the planned 90 per cent. cut.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery referred to a case concerning Miss J. I am sure that he will understand that I cannot discuss that case now, but if he would care to write to me, I shall certainly pursue it on his behalf. I was drawn by his oratory, which reminded us of his expertise in the courts—after all, he is one of Her Majesty's counsel. How he managed to weave into his argument references to foreplay and quadratic equations was not readily understandable until he told us that an expert in such equations was sitting behind him, the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). I hope that that hon. Gentleman will forgive me, for I had thought that his expertise related to railway timetables.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West reminded us of Labour's deplorable public expenditure record, both past and present. He made a strong case for the many deserving local causes for which he would advocate council funding. I was disturbed by the admittedly alarmist observation by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central that people would die. I have checked with Welsh Office officials, and have found no such representations that have been made to us, in any such terms, by any council in Wales. I fear that the hon. Gentleman will wish to reflect on his ill-judged comments, and on his sweeping condemnation of everyone involved in Welsh local government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) was right to remind us that we must get a grip on spending. He pointed out that the most obvious consequence of uncontrolled spending would be the burden of increased job losses——

It being Seven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to order [29 January].*

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 239.

Division No. 142] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 412), which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the remaining motion on local government finance (Wales).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notions Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-1994 (House of Commons Paper No. 413), which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

British Railways (No. 4) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.14 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I put down a blocking motion to this Bill, but I have since withdrawn it, having been given assurances by British Rail that the parts of it to which I objected would be withdrawn. The Bill before us, however, still contains those parts, although a statement has been issued to the effect that British Rail will no longer pursue the parts of the Bill in question—work No. 1 and work No. 1A. I should like assurances that, if the Bill is passed, those works will not be put back in the Bill if it reaches Committee. Can the Chair reassure me about that?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I am afraid that the Chair is not in a position to give any such assurances. Second Reading must take its course, whereupon alterations can be made at the Committee stage.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not extraordinary that the House should be invited on Second Reading to consider the Bill in this form while we have in our hands a statement from the promoters to the effect that certain clauses will immediately be removed from the Bill once it has been given a Second Reading? Surely the promoters have a duty to present the House with a Bill all of whose provisions they want enacted. It is rather insulting to the House to take up its valuable time in this way when the promoters have said—last Friday—that the Bill which will ultimately be enacted will be different from the one presented to us today.

In my time, I have brought one or two private Bills to the House. Had I told the House before one such Bill had even been debated that by the time it received Royal Assent it would be quite different from its appearance on Second Reading, that would have been regarded as an abuse of the private Bill procedure. I therefore submit that there is a case for reintroducing the Bill in the form that the promoters want.

Madam Deputy Speaker: If it is an insult, I gather that it is an insult which happens from time to time with private Bills. This is not a matter over which I as the representative of the Speaker, have any control. The Bill must be allowed to take its course; no doubt those points can be made in the course of Second Reading.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is worth noting that what the promoters say in the letter in question is that the part of the Bill which would allow more imports of coal will be taken out. I suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you were correct to say that this is not an unusual method. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) knows only too well that when a private Bill to allow the importation of coal came before the House on another occasion he seemed quite happy with changes to it being nodded through.

I hope that the promoters in this case will carry out what they have promised. I am pleased that my hon.

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) has placed the matter on record so as to ensure, if the Bill reaches Committee, that it has been made clear in the House right at the outset that we expect the promoters to honour their agreement not to implement the part of the Bill which would allow more imports of coal to Britain.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think we must now move on to the Second Reading itself.

7.18 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Although there is nothing unusual in the processes that we are discussing, in a few moments' time I should be able to give assurances which will satisfy those hon. Members who have raised points of order.

The Bill, which has 37 clauses, was deposited in January last year, so it has had a fairly lengthy gestation. It is short and uncontroversial, but its provisions are important not only to enable British Rail or any successor body to operate a safe and reliable railway but to enable the efficient use of land by others by better integrating the railway with adjoining land uses. I shall explain the Bill's main provisions.

When the Bill reaches Committee, British Rail will seek to withdraw works Nos. 1 and 1A and all associated provisions in the Bill. These were originally included to facilitate the carriage of imported coal from a deep sea port at Immingham to power stations in the Aire valley. However, the scheme for the coal terminal was abandoned and the needs of BR's customers no longer dictate those provisions. I hope that that assurance satisfies the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes).

The promoters will also seek powers to withdraw clause 24 and associated provisions relating to a replacement car park at Macclesfield. The clause was included in the Bill to obtain land consequent upon the loss of existing car park capacity at Macclesfield station. However, the land in question is subject to the Macclesfield Inclosure Act 1796, which authorises the holding fairs. In view of that factor and Macclesfield borough council's representations, the board has agreed not to pursue the clause and to withdraw its provisions. Over the past few days, considerable interest has been expressed in the Macclesfield Inclosure Act. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has a copy to hand. I am sure that he will be disappointed to learn that clause 24 is to be withdrawn in Committee.

Work No. 2 is to allow the diversion of approximately half a mile of the line between Cardiff and Aberdare through Mountain Ash on the south-east of Town bridge. This proposal originates from the Mountain Ash development study, jointly commissioned by the Welsh Development Agency, Mid Glamorgan county council and Cynon Valley borough council, and examines ways of revitalising the town centre.

The study concluded that, with a series of road works, river straightening, a sewer diversion, and the diversion of the railway, there would be an area of land suitable for redevelopment. The council has already obtained planning permission for those works, which have the backing of the Welsh Development Agency and the co-operation of the National Rivers Authority and all the other undertakers involved. It now awaits only the railway diversion to complete the necessary authorisations for the project. The development project at Mountain Ash hinges on the railway diversion taking place and, if the British Railways Board is not granted those powers, the project may fall. The entire project, including the costs of diverting the railway line, are to be met by Cynon Valley borough council and the Welsh Development Agency.

The remainder of the Bill is mainly concerned with infrastructure operations and land use. Those include the closure of a bridge to road traffic at Hunslet East, Leeds. This follows Leeds city council's stopping up of Fewston avenue over the freight line between Osmondthorpe and Stourton to proceed with a residential development. The closure of this bridge is sought to prevent fly tipping and other unauthorised usage. The western footway over the bridge will be retained for the use of pedestrians.

Another provision concerns the closure of Wheal Bois level crossing, Redruth, over the main London to Penzance line. This is a scarcely used route. I understand that there is only one regular vehicle user on the route and its closure is sought on safety grounds. A foot crossing will be retained for pedestrians.

The closure of a private roadway over a bridge near Hartford beach, Cheshire, is also included. This closure is sought as the structure is in need of expensive repairs. The bridge was originally built to provide vehicular access but it is no longer used for this purpose. The access over the bridge is not a public right of way and is reduced to a little used and unsuitable means of passage for pedestrians.

The Bill provides for the purchase of land at Ranskill in the district of Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire. This is to enable land to be used for a passing loop to carry the longer freight trains which will use this line after the opening of the channel tunnel. Without these passing loops the channel tunnel freight trains would need to be held farther south, thereby causing delay to this traffic. This, in turn, would mean that the board would not be able to offer as good a service to businesses in the north wishing to take full advantage of the economic opportunities that will be available when the channel tunnel opens.

A further provision relates to the purchase and temporary use of land to permit the strengthening of the railway embarkment at Brigg, on the Gainsborough to Grimsby line. British Rail proposes the construction of a berm along the embankment between the old and new Ancholme rivers. This is considered a desirable improvement to an embankment which has had a history of instability. On either side are two sites which have been earmarked for development and can only benefit from improved arrangements. While the local authority has expressed various concerns about these works, these are directed to matters of detail and not to the desirability of the works themselves.

Mr. Michael Brown: What sort of traffic does British Rail think will use that railway line? Why is BR prepared to invest so much of its additional resources from its limited budget on those two works? My hon. Friend said that the British Railways Board does not intend to proceed with the new chord line which, in conjunction with the works at Brigg, would have made sense because it would have provided a through service for freight traffic from Immingham to Sheffield and beyond. If the chord line at Shaftholme is withdrawn from the Bill, why is it necessary

for British Rail to spend money on the works at Brigg? I cannot imagine what kind of traffic will use that line as a result of the improvements.

Mr. Waller: I have said that the embankment has a history of instability and that the reason for carrying out the works is that, essentially, two sites are earmarked for development on either side. This would be an appropriate time to improve the embankment to prevent further instability. We must bear in mind the fact that those developments may take place at some time in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Waller: It might be helpful if I were allowed to continue with my speech. I may be able to satisfy my hon. Friend after he has dealt with this point in his speech.

Mr. Brown: The Bill directly affects my constituency and I should like my hon. Friend to appreciate the importance of the works to my constituency. My constituents, especially in Brigg, are anxious to pose some questions. They want to know how it is that, today, on 8 February 1993—just three years after British Rail proposed to close the line from Brigg to Gainsborough, until my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and I created a rumpus which caused BR to think better of it—it suddenly and miraculously proposes to spend so much money on these works.

Mr. Waller: I am surprised that my hon. Friend is complaining about the fact that the line is not being closed. His usual practice is to complain that a line is being used less well than he thinks it deserves. The embankment has a 25-year history of instability and there have been several major slippings. As the remedial works which have been undertaken have not proved successful, it would seem natural to repair the line by improving the embankment. To do so it is necessary to acquire a certain amount of land which is not within the ownership of British Rail. That requires the provisions of the Bill, and that is why it is included in it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Once the embankment has been improved, the speed limit of 30 mph can be raised to 70 mph, which might provide British Rail with a good route to coastal resorts and thus garner traffic from further afield. Would that not ensure the future of the railway rather than placing a question mark over it?

Mr. Waller: It is true that there is a severe speed limit restriction along the line which, as British Rail wishes to provide a good service to its customers, it would be sensible to avoid. That is another good reason why British Rail wishes to proceed with the works.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): How much time will be saved if the Bill is passed? The statement from British Rail says that speed will be reduced from 75 mph to 30 mph, so how much time will be made up?

Mr. Waller: I cannot say exactly how much time will be made up, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be an improvement to the service. It may be that, before the end of the debate, I shall be able to provide him with more detailed information about the timetable improvements which may be made. Glanford borough council has expressed concern about the works, but BR is in discussion with it and is confident that the problems can be settled satisfactorily.

The last main provision in the Bill concerns the temporary use of land at Queen Adelaide way, Station road, to allow the improvement of a superstructure bridge over the Great Ouse at Ely, Cambridgeshire. With electrification of the line to King's Lynn completed, the bridge, which has a 20 mph speed restriction, is now over-stressed for traffic requirements on the line. The remaining clauses are standard to all private Bills introduced by British Rail and I am sure that the House is familiar with them.

It should be remembered that the Bill was introduced as part of British Rail's continuing efforts to maintain the railway networks, with due regard to economy, efficiency and safety. Regardless of ownership, our railways must be allowed to develop, with improvement of the services provided. The Bill does not form part of the proposed privatisation of the industry nor set up powers for matters other than important operational purposes. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading to enable its provisions to receive early consideration in Committee.

7.33 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): It may be helpful if I intervene now to give the House the Government's view on the Bill. The Government have considered the content of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the railways board. The Department has no points outstanding on the Bill.

It is for the promoters to persuade Parliament that the powers that they are seeking are justified. The Committee will be held in a better position than we are tonight to examine the Bill in detail. Therefore, I hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Can my hon. Friend give us any idea of the Government's view on the increase in speed that the Bill will allow on the Gainsborough to Grimsby section? Have they taken into account the effect on people living close to the line of the increased noise that will result, just as we take such considerations into account when debating road and air transport?

Mr. Norris: I had hoped to gallop through the last sentence of the most anodyne statement that I have ever made to the House without interruption, but I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity in preventing me from doing that. I know that the matters that he raises are important to him, but they are matters better raised in the Committee, where they can be given the thorough airing that they need. If that satisfies my hon. Friend, or, frankly, even if it does not, I hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading and allowed to proceed to Committee in the usual conventional way for the detailed consideration that he obviously believes that it needs.

7.35 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I offer the support of the Opposition for the Bill. It is an historical oddity that such a minor Bill, dealing with relatively minor works, has to come before Parliament. We do not debate such Bills in respect of any other form of transport. The important point is that several of the measures proposed in

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

it are aimed at improving safety. Anybody who stands in the way of such measures because of the issues that are, at best, peripheral to the substance of the Bill carries a heavy responsibility.

Nothing in the Bill is contentious. I hope that it receives its Second Reading. I only regret that we have to play out this farce for the next two and a half hours before we find whether there are 100 Members of Parliament to vote on it.

7.36 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made a somewhat odd point. I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to ask a question about noise. That was a serious intervention, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not considered what effect trains travelling at 75 mph rather than 30 mph between Gainsborough and Grimsby will have on people living close by.

Mr. Wilson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be aware that none of the owners or occupiers along that part of the line has petitioned against the Bill. I suspect that all of them know more about it than I do and definitely more than he does.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt agree that, on many occasions when we have debated travel, not only by train but by motor car or air, we have found that people who have become affected by the actions of an airline or by the building of a new road did not petition at the time. Perhaps they did not know the consequences of the action taken by the authority or the company concerned and did not understand the effect there would be on noise levels.

There has been no study of the possible increase in noise resulting from the Bill. Despite the fact that not many people may have complained about the noise level, a train travelling at 75 mph rather than at 30 mph must have an effect on the people who live close by. Furthermore, at the moment only three trains a day travel on that track, and the implication is that a number of extra trains will travel along it at a much higher speed.

Given the cost of the measure, and the works done to the line to increase the speed, I hope that British Rail has fully taken into account the alternative—I would suggest, better—uses that can be made of any money that it might decide to spend on that part of the track.

I can give an example of why I feel that British Rail is misusing public money by improving that piece of track. I come from a part of the country, Fylde, which has been affected by the axing of the direct line from Euston to Blackpool. The train stops at Preston and people have to get on another train to travel to Blackpool. It was decided that it was not a good use of public money to have a direct service from Euston to Blackpool. It has been determined that that service is too expensive and that it is better for it to stop at Preston, where it is necessary to leave one train for a far inferior one to travel on to Blackpool. When examining the use to which public money is put, we must scrutinise carefully whether British Rail has it right.

If the Bill makes its way to consideration in Committee, I hope that it will be examined in great detail over a fairly lengthy period. Even tonight, however, we should spend a few minutes considering noise, the proposed extra speed and the cost to the public purse of making the proposed changes.

I have a reasonably good track record on environmental matters. Over the past six years. I have introduced four Bills relating to such considerations. We shall have increasingly to consider the environment when we decide what sort of rail, road or other transport infrastructure we are to have. Not for the first time, I do not believe that British Rail has given close enough attention to environmental matters in producing its proposals.

The original link between the channel tunnel and London is an example of British Rail's having failed to take into account the consequences of its suggestions. Despite extensive work—probably at great expense to the public purse—it managed to put the route straight through a new housing estate. Surely any reasonable man would consider that a most unreasonable thing to do. If the proposal had come to fruition, it would have caused considerable inconvenience, including noise, to those living on the estate. Environmental considerations should be given a full hearing when British Rail decides that it wants to proceed with new measures or schemes.

In another context, we hear repeatedly of the problems that are caused by heavy lorries. An area of transportation with which I am relatively familiar is aviation. A proposal that there should be one extra flight into Heathrow, for instance, would lead to an insistence on a huge number of environmental assessments. Huge sums—rightly, in my view—would be spent to ascertain whether the extra flight would have an effect on the everyday lives of those living close to the airport. The same principle should apply to those who live close to a road or, in this instance, close to a railway line.

Noise and the environment generally should receive close attention in the context of the proposals in the Bill. If such matters are not discussed reasonably fully this evening, or if they are not given a good airing in Committee, it will be necessary to return to them at a later stage. That means that British Rail may once again have to scrap its original proposals and think of a better way of achieving what it desires.

I have great doubts whether the measure is needed. What are the real benefits of increasing the speeds of trains from 30 mph to 75 mph along a particular piece of track? If the necessary money is available for what is proposed, I think that it could be better spent elsewhere. For example, we could return to the direct service between Euston and Blackpool, which my constituents and I enjoyed until September. It is vital that the environment receives close attention when we come to consider this measure in greater detail.

7.44 pm

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said that there is nothing in the Bill that should divide us. That may or may not be so, but I am concerned with what is missing from the Bill. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) talked about efficiency, economy and safety, which stem from clause 1. I referred to the second edition of the "Oxford English Dictionary" before I entered the Chamber. Efficiency is described as an "operative agent" or "efficient cause". It seems that it is now used in that way only in a philosophical sense. That is fairly appropriate.

The dictionary definition of economy refers to rules that control a person's of living. That is right as well. What is safety? I found that it is the state of being safe. It is exemption from "hurt or injury" and "freedom from danger".

We have received a supporting statement from British Rail. It states:

"A Petition from the Glanford Borough Council complains about the purchase of land by the Board which is required in order to strengthen the embankment at Brigg carrying the railway between Gainsborough and Grimsby. The state of this embankment is such that traffic is forced to reduce speed from 75 mph to under 30 mph with the result that services take longer to reach their destination thereby causing delay and inconvenience to the Board's customers."

I have no doubt that that is the position.

I have a letter from Mr. Aidan Nelson, the director of the north-east region. He wrote as a result of the withdrawal of the stop at Rotherham on the route which goes through to Cleethorpes. He wrote:

"Thank you for your recent telephone call to our Parliamentary Affairs Manager at Euston about the stopping pattern of the new Manchester-Cleethorpes service. I am replying, since Rotherham comes within my area of responsibility.

In setting up the revised train service which has applied since 11 May, we have considered very carefully how Rotherham should be served. The introduction of a semi-fast through service between Manchester and Cleethorpes was achieved by separating the local stopping service between Sheffield and Doncaster from the longer distance trains—the previous Sheffield-Cleethorpes service having called at all stations over this section of line. As a result of this, at most times of the day the frequency of trains at Rotherham has not changed significantly, although the through facility to stations east of Doncaster is now much reduced.

We did, in fact, give serious thought to the inclusion of a Rotherham stop in the Manchester-Cleethorpes service, but reluctantly reached the conclusion that this could not be achieved without either significant additional costs or detriment to customers elsewhere on the network."

I suggest that the Bill offers an opportunity to put that decision right so as not to inconvenience other customers on the network as well as those of my constituents who are customers in the Rotherham area. Mr. Nelson continues:

"Moreover, an additional six or seven minutes would be added to the journey time, which with less than 20 minutes turnround time at both Manchester and Cleethorpes does not allow sufficient time for servicing trains adequately."

That turns on the point made by the hon. Member for Keighley. If the seven or eight minutes that could be saved is taken in conjunction with stopping time, the train could surely be allowed to stop at Rotherham and thereby service the people I represent.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Gentleman might like to point out to British Rail, in support of his argument, that many of his constituents have traditionally taken their holidays at Cleethorpes, and continue to do so. One of the original reasons for the line passing through Rotherham, particularly in the earlier part of the century, was to offer people the opportunity to get to the east coast quickly by public transport. The ho. Gentleman has the support of not only Glanford borough council but Cleethorpes borough council, because we are delighted when his constituents visit Cleethorpes. If the train were to stop in Rotherham, many of his constituents would be able to enjoy the delights of Cleethorpes in the summer and even perhaps the colder months, and we welcome people from that part of the world——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. This is a very long intervention.

Mr. Boyce: I agree that it was a long intervention, but it was very relevant. It has become a tradition for my constituents to hop on a train in Rotherham and spend their holidays in Cleethorpes. Manchester also suffers under the Bill, because instead of catching a direct train passengers will have to change at Sheffield.

One of the more comforting points in Mr. Nelson's letter says:

"Meanwhile we firmly believe the introduction of the Manchester to Cleethorpes service does benefit Rotherham residents, in that interchange into these trains is readily available at both Meadowhall and Doncaster".

That is no benefit to a single parent who is trying to get perhaps three or four children on to a train.

Earlier in its letter, the board mentioned efficiency. Whose efficiency and whose safety is it talking about? What economies is it talking about—economies of time, of money or of efficiency? I have no idea, because it does not define efficiency. It certainly is not an efficient mode of travel when it comes to taking a wheelchair or perhaps a couple of upset, screaming kids off and on a train.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman is making an incredibly good point about British Rail's claim that changing trains improves efficiency. I alluded earlier to the west coast, where the same has happened. Someone travelling from London to the premier tourist resort in Europe—Blackpool—has to stop at Preston, take all the children out of the train——

Mr. Michael Brown: And miss their connection.

Mr. Mans: Exactly. As my hon. Friend says, it is easy to miss the connection at Preston, because passengers have to move three platforms and, as a result, they often miss their connection. The point that I am making is that it is nonsense to suggest that making passengers change trains leads to a more efficient service.

Mr. Boyce: I agree entirely. How can it be efficient to stop and swap, rather than carry on through? I am sure that people in Blackpool will be as annoyed as people in Cleethorpes—and rightly so.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: My hon. Friend is talking about efficiency. I am sure that he will agree that these days efficiency seems to mean close it down, move it somewhere else or wind everything down. I am sure that he will agree that the word "efficiency" is misused. I know that many of my constituents have travelled on the line to Cleethorpes to have a good summer holiday—and still do so; the traditional holiday is not dead. I am sure that many of my constituents in Doncaster, North miss meeting their friends from Rotherham and joining them in their holidays at Cleethorpes.

Mr. Boyce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the friendship that exists between our constituents.

The British Railways Board says that it wants to run an efficient service, but on 17 June 1992 it told me that my constituents are well served because they travel to Meadowhall

"by car and local bus as well as rail."

My constituents either have to have a car or get all their kids on to a bus, off the bus again at the railway station

[Mr. Boyce]

and on to train, up the stairs, down the stairs and in my lady's chamber. I say that because it appears to be directing the people of Rotherham in every which way.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the same problem applies with even greater force to disabled travellers? Disabled visitors to Blackpool, South will have to change at Preston station —I have no doubt that disabled passengers will experience the same problems at Meadowhall—which increases inconvenience for them.

Mr. Boyce: I was going to deal with that extremely important point later, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman referred to it now. It is of the utmost importance that disabled people have access with the minimum of inconvenience.

Meadowhall is perhaps the largest shopping complex in the country. Many people shop there—I wish it well; I have no reason to wish it otherwise—but it is served very well. It has 12,000 parking spaces. Almost every bus that leaves Sheffield heading in that general direction stops at Meadowhall. Almost every train heading in the direction of Rotherham stops at Meadowhall. Why cannot the Manchester to Cleethorpes line miss Meadowhall and stop at Rotherham? I have not received a satisfactory answer from the board on that point.

I return to the suggested time saving of eight or nine minutes. Could not the board use that time to allow the train to stop at Rotherham Central? The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) makes a different objection from me about additional noise, but could not that disbenefit, which certainly exists, benefit somebody else, such as my constituents in Rotherham?

Mr. Mans: I do not want to mislead the House or the hon. Gentleman. In the end, there may be a benefit to travellers if the stipulations in the Bill are enacted. I was trying to say that before we proceed with the measure, it is important to take into account the effect on the environment. However, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: after we have carried out the appropriate environmental impact study and all the other devices that we now associate with environmental improvement, the result might be that, on balance, it would be a good idea to go ahead, thus bringing some benefits to travellers.

I would not want the hon. Gentleman to misinterpret the qualifications of my support for the Bill on environmental grounds. After the studies have been carried out, we might be able to proceed, but the studies have not been carried out and from the response that I received from the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is an excessively long intervention.

Mr. Boyce: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I did not intend to misquote, him. There may be a disbenefit, but could it not be turned into a benefit elsewhere?

Mr. Nelson's letter states:

> "A key constraint in serving Rotherham is the fact that to reach Rotherham Central station, trains must pass over the Holmes chord line, which is a section of single track to the Sheffield side of the station. This currently is used by at least three trains per hour in each direction, and if we were to add to this number there is a real risk that congestion would occur, with consequent delays to all services."

I can readily accept that.

The letter further explains that, with the good offices of the South Yorkshire passenger transport executive, Regional Railways is discussing

> "how services can be improved and developed in the years ahead—although unfortunately the PTE have intimated to us that it is unlikely in the foreseeable future they could afford conversion of the Holmes Chord to double track, which would undoubtedly do much to facilitate better services."

However, the Bill states that almost as much money as is necessary will be forthcoming. For example, clause 9(3) states:

> "Any person who suffers loss by reason of the extinguishment under this section of any private right shall be entitled to be paid by the Board compensation, to be determined in case of dispute by the tribunal."

That is all very well and good, but what about the people who are being disadvantaged, the general public who have no right of redress under the Bill? Almost any clause specifies the spending of money, yet there is no money to spend on the improvements to the track which are necessary to stop the inconvenience to the people of Rotherham.

Like the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), I hope that the Bill as drafted will not receive a Second Reading. The board should make a new statement about its intentions, rather than trying to amend the Bill in an ad hoc manner. Until or unless a stop is included at Rotherham, I have no alternative but to oppose the Bill.

8.3 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I am worried about the remarks made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). He described the parliamentary scrutiny of the measure as purely an historic oddity. I believe that parliamentary scrutiny of all railway measures is very important because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) said, it gives hon. Members the opportunity to question whether British Rail management is spending taxpayers' money in the right way.

I am worried about some aspects of the Bill. Following the comments made by hon. Friend the Member for Wyre, it seems that public money could be much better spent than is suggested by British Rail in the Bill. I agree with much of what many hon. Members have said. There is a commonality of purpose between the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) and the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) on the importance of the sensible spending of public money on rail lines, especially when it involves those used by people visiting holiday resorts.

Several hon. Members, including my Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) have spoken about the line that will affect people travelling from Yorkshire to Cleethorpes. It is clear to us all that travellers from Yorkshire may decide to go to east coast or west coast resorts. Hon. Members will agree that there has always been a tremendous amount of tourism from Rotherham and Doncaster to my constituency of Blackpool, as there has been to Cleethorpes in my hon. Friend's constituency. The issues affecting travel to our two resorts are exactly the same.

British Rail has a particularly poor record of mismanagement of cross-country—east-west—services the length of the country. I am thinking in particular of the

closure of the Oxford-Cambridge line: the Cambridge-Bedford section was closed entirely, and another part, the Oxford-Bletchley section, was kept open only for freight. The only part left for passenger as well as for freight was the Bletchley-Bedford line. First, the link was reduced, and then it became of no use at all. That is an example of an east-west rail link which was chronically mismanaged.

It is perhaps the worst example of a closure following the Beeching report. It later became clear that the figures had been fiddled to make the economic case that there was no reason to keep the line open. If the Bill is not scrutinised carefully, we run the risk that that will happen again.

I am especially concerned that constituents of the hon. Members for Doncaster, North and for Rotherham who wish to go to Cleethorpes or to Blackpool should be able to do so without having to make an inconvenient change of train. They should not have to change an inconvenient change of train. They should not have to change trains at Meadowhall, which the hon. Member for Rotherham mentioned, or at Preston, which my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre mentioned. There is often a problem of changing platforms or of insufficient links, especially for disabled passengers. That is particularly so at Preston, where there are flights of steps.

British Rail closed the direct link to my constituency. Incidentally, I travelled on the last through train because I wanted to see what a valuable service was being lost. I use the line most weeks, twice a week. I am very concerned that opportunities for holidaymakers to go to the biggest holiday resort in Europe—about 15 million visitor stays each year—are being reduced.

People who campaign for the disabled are worried that, months after the direct line was withdrawn, there were still no proper facilities at Preston for people in wheelchairs to get from the main line platform to the branch platform from which British Rail are now proposing to run the train. Not only are there insufficient links between platforms, especially for disabled people, but the trains now being run for the link from Preston to Blackpool do not have sufficient luggage-carrying capacity. They are not suitable for holidaymakers, whereas the previous through trains were mainline trains on which holidaymakers could travel easily, and on which there were facilities for wheelchair users.

If the Bill is not carefully scrutinised, the same problem will apply for holidaymakers travelling from the constituencies of Opposition Members in South Yorkshire to Cleethorpes in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. I urge Opposition Members to continue to press the concerns that they have expressed this evening. I share those concerns. The experience of my constituents and of people visiting my constituency over the months since the direct link was lost has been that British Rail management have not been sensitive to their needs. I very much fear that the Bill will lead to the same problem.

I have relatives in Yorkshire who want to be able to travel to Blackpool and to Cleethorpes on through trains. It is of great concern that historic tourist routes are being damaged by the insensitive British Rail management.

There is considerable concern about some clauses. Clause 19 especially relates to the north-west, where my constituency lies. The clause makes provision for stopping up a length of road which is British Railways Board property. It is carried by accommodation bridge number 127 over the Altrincham-Chester railway near Hartford Beach. We know from paragraph 5 of the statement on behalf of the promoters that petitions were deposited by individuals who complained about the stopping up of the bridge under clause 19. It is pointed out that the bridge

"was originally provided as an accommodation structure for the benefit of owners of certain land on one side of the bridge. It is now gated and unused by vehicular traffic, and is seldom used by pedestrians."

"Seldom used" does not mean that it is never used.

The House must be extremely cautious about accepting the promises made by British Rail. So often when it has been charged as a public body to look after the rail transport needs of the country, it has taken a cavalier attitude to the interests of those who live near the railway and who wish to cross it. That point is of especial concern to me, because over many years I have seen the cavalier attitude in practice.

Bridges have been torn down although people still want to use them, especially because of the speed at which trains now travel. With the safety aspects of crossing railways, it is a cause for great concern that British Rail proposes to get rid of a bridge that has been protected by Act of Parliament, although it cannot say that no one uses the bridge any more.

In paragraph 5, the promoters say that those who use the bridge

"would not appear to be among the limited number of people who are entitled to do so."

It is of great concern that British Rail uses words such as "would not appear to be".

One wonders to what extent British Rail has checked that point.

British Rail says:

"The structure of the bridge is such that it is in need of considerable repair but the costs of necessary maintenance and the consequent disruption to the railway are such that the money would be betteer used to demolish the bridge."

"Better used to demolish"—once again, that shows the mentality so often exhibited by people in British Rail. They would rather close things than reopen them, and they would rather demolish things than ensure that a service is provided to the public. My concern is clearly shared by hon. Members of all parties.

I am especially anxious that British Rail should be made to understand that it is its responsibility to market its services imaginatively, to provide a service that the public want to use and to ensure that as much freight as possible is transferred from road to rail. As many of the lines that are dealt with in the Bill carry freight, we need to consider the prospects for rail freight.

It is a matter of enormous concern not only to me and to other hon. Members, but to millions of our constituents that far too much freight is carried by road, with the consequent environmental damage from heavy lorries. When we consider a British Rail private measure, we need to check carefully that the maximum possible scope is given to British Rail to ensure that the maximum amount of freight is transported by rail rather than by heavy lorries.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Last week, the hon. Gentleman voted to give a Second Reading to the Railways Bill. Whenever rail policy is debated in the House, an 8 per cent. rate of return is imposed for rail freight. No other transport body has such an onerous obligation. It has led to a number of companies, which

[Mr. John Prescott]

used to transport thousands of lorryloads by rail, putting their freight on the roads. That is a result of Government policy and not of British Rail management policy.

Mr. Hawkins: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I have a long record of speaking on railways which dates back over many years, long before I came to the House. He knows that I have consistently called for more freight to be taken off the roads and put on the railways. I have been a member of groups calling for that for many years. The debate so far has not been a matter of party political controversy. However, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has raised the point, and I am grateful for the opportunity to deal with it.

The hon. Member must be aware that his policy has been simply to ask the Government to write a blank cheque with taxpayers' money to subsidise rail freight. I call for a more level playing field between road freight and rail freight. If he asks me, for example, whether I support the greater use of environmental taxation to ensure that rail freight has the opportunity to compete, I tell him that I am very much in favour of that.

However, the hon. Member must consider what we are discussing in the Bill. We are talking about whether British Rail, which is in charge of the management, is using its powers sensitively to encourage more freight on the railways. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at the evidence given to the Select Committee on Transport by those charged with these matters at British Rail. Hon. Members of all parties asked about the downward spiral and about the way in which BR is failing to attract traffic off the roads on to the railways by its insensitive management.

Much of the evidence to the Select Committee was given by freight operators who, if all other things had been equal, would have wished to have freight transported by rail rather than by road. Those people did not blame Government policy, which is not yet in force: they blamed insensitive railway management.

A company in my area of Lancashire which used to use rail extensively has said that its services could not be delivered on a number of occasions. Even if a train was originally on time, the company would find that the driver was nearly at the end of his shift and that he would have to hand over to another driver. The train was consequently delayed. The company needed to deliver goods to its customers within half an hour of the order being required. The train was sometimes 24 or 36 hours late. That is not a result of Government policy; it is the responsibility of British Rail management.

Mr. Boyce: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that many air pollution problems are caused by the increasing level of road traffic. Between 1980 and 1990, emissions from road transport increased. Emissions of black smoke increased by 75 per cent., emissions of nitrogen oxide by 72 per cent., emissions of sulphur dioxide by 50 per cent. and emissions of carbon monoxide by 46 per cent. That is a direct result of the increase in road traffic.

The increase in emissions leads to ill health among children. We are now witnessing the highest ever rate of asthma—I agree with the point made by the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins).

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his most helpful intervention. Anyone who has children, as I have, must be very concerned about the pollution of the atmosphere by gases from heavy lorries. When one is talking about rail freight——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that asthma and pollution by heavy lorries have much to do with the Bill. I realise that the Bill is drawn fairly widely, but I do not think that it goes as far as that.

Mr. Hawkins: I was talking about the importance of getting freight back on to the railways.

Mr. Michael Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that the main purpose of the Bill as deposited, according to the explanatory memorandum, was to construct

"a new chord line at Shaftholme, South Yorkshire"?

Paragraph 3 of the statement says:

"The Board has since decided to withdraw from the Bill Works Nos. 1 and 1A",

because the needs of British Rail's customers have changed.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the clause relating to Shaftholme was designed to ensure that freight was transported along that railway line? It would appear that BR is to withdraw that clause, presumably because it imagines that the freight that was once moved by rail will now be transported by road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be the case, but it has nothing to do with asthma.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that point to the attention of the House.

In relation to the intervention of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, the company to which I referred explained that, on several occasions, the locomotive, which was to transport its products by rail, had to return to Wigan from Clitheroe, as it was nearly out of fuel and the closest fuelling point was near Wigan. That caused enormous delays and is yet another example of unimaginative management and poor service to customers.

Regrettably, rail freight in Britain has been declining for many years. British industry has moved away from the older, heavy, smokestack industries, many of which were served by rail, to light manufacturing industry, which is served by road. I believe that there is no inevitability about that process. I believe that many companies would prefer to have their products transported by rail. When we examine a Bill like this, we must be aware of the need to encourage BR to provide facilities for that to happen.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The irony about the Bill is that the clauses which might have achieved my hon. Friend's objective of moving freight from road onto rail—and my hon. Friend has a well-known track record for calling for freight to move from road to rail—have been removed. The Bill might have achieved what my hon. Friend called for until it was presented today. The clauses that would specifically help the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) were those that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said that BR intends to remove in Committee.

Mr. Hawkins: I am aware of the important point that my hon. Friend has raised; that is one reason why I wanted to refer to the freight issue tonight.

The ideal market for rail freight is one in which a small number of large industrial plants distribute products to a small number of large outlets. The problem is that BR's management have adopted a frame of mind that enables them to deal only with that kind of situation. Moving coal from pit to power station is currently the bedrock of BR's trainload freight operation. I believe that BR should consider the matter more flexibly. One hopes that some of that traffic will continue. High-volume products like coal, steel and aggregates have been the key to rail freight economics for many years.

I welcome the fact that, in recent years, BR has gradually improved its management's ability to allow operators like Foster Yeoman, which has bought its own locomotives at very high prices and which has invested heavily in rolling stock, to travel over BR metals. For more than 20 years, BR was not prepared to countenance such use over its rails. That drove a great deal of freight away from BR.

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Select Committee on Transport and he knows that what he has just said is wrong. Foster Yeoman wanted more powerful engines, but BR could not afford to buy them and it provided two or three under-powered engines. That was unsatisfactory. British Rail had no resources because the Government had starved it of cash. Therefore, Foster Yeoman offered to buy its own rolling stock, and it now has a much more effective service. It has achieved that because BR could not afford to provide the engines.

Mr. Hawkins: We are now considering an interpretation of history. My interpretation is different from that of the hon. Gentleman. If the hon. Gentleman talks to the people who run the company that we are talking about, he will discover that their interpretation is closer to mine than to his. However, I leave it to the hon. Gentleman to discuss the matter with the chairman of the company.

Market outlets for freight in Britain today are widely dispersed and require a distribution network which can move relatively small volumes quickly, flexibly and frequently. That trend has culminated in what are known as the "just-in-time" delivery systems. That market is now dominated by road haulage.

Rail is clearly best at trunking freight over long distances. We must decide whether the Bill assists in that regard. The need for trunking rail freight over long distances has led to the development on the continent and in the United States of America of what is known as combined transport. The idea is to aggregate traffic so that goods can be trunk-hauled. In such circumstances, rail has a competitive edge. Does the Bill do anything to encourage the movement of more freight to rail by means of a policy of combined transport?

Collection and delivery at each end can still be carried out by road. The use of containers or swap bodies helps to reduce handling costs. However, the transfer from road to rail and then back to road imposes costs and time penalties which are offset only on long hauls. Clearly, the distances involved in the United Kingdom are shorter than in the United States and Europe.

I am extremely concerned that a Bill of this nature should ensure opportunities for passengers and for freight, and that there is more traffic on rail. I am not satisfied that the Bill achieves that at the moment. I am also concerned about the effect on people who live near affected lines.

The Bill affects historic lines like that in the south Wales coalfield of Mountain Ash, which was previously served by the Taff Vale railway before the grouping in 1923, and which was one of the most efficient and profitable private railways—the kind of railway to which, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East knows, I would like us to return. Clause 18(5) relates to the Great Western railway and proposes changing the Great Western Railway (General Powers) Act 1909. That important Act will be repealed in so far as it relates to the Wheal Bois crossing in Cornwall.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend has just glossed over the provisions of the Bill that relate to Cornwall. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), who sadly cannot be with us tonight, has given me authority to raise the issue on behalf of his constituents.

The provision in clause 18(5) does not simple amend an old Act. It proposes the stopping up of a level crossing for vehicular access and reducing it to the status of a footpath. No motor cars will have access across the railway line at Wheal Bois. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne has told he that that is an extremely irksome matter for the people who live on either side of the level crossing. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) does not believe that clause 18(5) is just a little bit of tidying up by BR of an old Act of Parliament. It will cause great inconvenience to the people of Redruth.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. I apologise if I gave the impression that I was seeking to gloss over the matter. I intended to make the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has just made. These matters are of enormous importance to the people who live near to the lines that are affected: that is precisely why I referred to Wheal Bois.

British Rail frequently deals with such matters in a couple of lines in an amorphous Bill like this. It fails to address the real concerns of the people who live beside the lines. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes for raising the matter. He reinforces my earlier point that BR management does not consider such issues sensitively enough.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) referred to the matters that affect his constituency and mine. I am concerned about the Bill, because I believe that BR will not make a sensible use of taxpayers' money. It should reintroduce the direct through service to my constituency on InterCity, which was so wrongly and unjustifiably taken away last autumn, and it should reintroduce the sleeper services that are so vital to business people in my constituency, to and from Preston.

8.28 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): This is a very innocuous-looking Bill, and I dare say that it does not exercise too many hon. Members, but those who have had the opportunity of listening to Back-Bench Members tonight will agree that there is far more in it than meets the eye. I, of course, have a direct constituency interest in the Bill. It impinges directly upon railway services in my

[Mr. Michael Brown]

constituency, because part III relates to works near Brigg. I shall raise that matter because it causes great controversy in my constituency.

In no sense do I make any complaint against my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who does a fine job in commending legislation. Even when it is bad legislation, my hon. Friend commends it to the House in a very agreeable way. However, I make a complaint against the promoter of the Bill, the British Railways Board. It should be pulled up by the House authorities, and certainly by the Ways and Means Office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for bringing before the House a Bill, whose principal clauses relate to works at Shaftholme in South Yorkshire, according to the explanatory memorandum.

On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, even though it is in his charming way, says that the British Railways Board does not intend in Committee to press on with works Nos. 1 and 1A and that it does not intend to press clause 24, which relates to land at Macclesfield which will be relieved of the burdens placed upon it by the Inclosure Act 1773, a copy of which I have obtained for ease of reference. The implication is that no hon. Member need to concern himself with anything other than what British Rail seeks to include in the Bill when it eventually comes to the House on Third Reading.

We know the procedures of the House; the Bill will be considered in Committee. It is not for British Rail to say to the Private Bill Committee, "We do not want to press this clause, that clause, this schedule or that part of a clause." It will be making its case to members of the Private Bill Committee who are nominated by the Committee of Selection. What is in the Bill is what is of concern to us tonight, not what British Rail is saying through the sponsor of the Bill. Perhaps the Private Bill Committee will not accede to the board's request to have withdrawn from the Bill the provisions regarding Shaftholme and the new chord line. Perhaps the Committee will look at the Bill in its present form and decide whether to recommend that it should come back to the House for Third Reading.

I address you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your capacity as the Chairman of Ways and Means as well, because you have certain responsibilities for private legislation. It is extraordinary that, if the Bill is passed and it goes to the Private Bill Committee, most of the amendments that are likely to be made will be made by the promoters of the Bill, who ask to have taken out of it clauses that they have written in.

Mr. Boyce: We are not even given an explanation of why the clauses should be taken out. Were they necessary in the first place? If they were, why, with such ease of purpose, are the promoters proposing to slide them away? They are either relevant and should be discussed in Committee or they are irrelevant. The promoters cannot have it both ways. The House needs a proper explanation before it sends to Committee such weak explanatory notes.

Mr. Brown: I shall attempt an explanation later, because the hon. Gentleman's question is very important. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would be slightly more inclined to support those clauses of the Bill or support amendments to withdraw them if an explanation had been given to him. It is a very controversial political explanation. It is a disgrace that British Rail should bring before the House private legislation that hinges upon political developments elsewhere. British Rail has a duty, in providing railway services, when using the valuable time of the House, which has great pressure on it in respect of private legislation, to make sure that the legislation that it wants to change will endure for a long time ahead. To introduce a private Bill based upon ephemeral, temporary market opportunities is quite wrong.

I have not forgotten the point of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce), but I have structured a number of points, and I want to start with my own constituency. The main point is that if the Bill is passed in its present form, the clauses relating to Shaftholme will still be in it before it is considered by the Private Bill Committee. Amendments, we assume, will be proposed. The amendments will be proposed, we assume, by the promoters. Members of the Private Bill Committee will listen to the promoters' arguments about why they want withdrawn clauses that they themselves deposited at the Private Bill Office only a few months ago. That is a disgraceful way to carry on.

We shall have to consider the Bill as it is tonight. I shall ensure that my remarks relate to parts of the Bill that still exist. Quite frankly, the Bill should have been withdrawn by the promoters at the point when they were taking out clauses willy-nilly, without a by your leave, until the explanatory note was placed before the House last week. The promoters should be made to withdraw the Bill and present it exactly as they want on the statute book. That should mean that they would be obliged to redraft the Bill and come before the House with a Bill exactly as they wanted it to be in the first place.

Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rumpus that there would have been last year, when I was promoting the Associated British Ports legislation, if I had walked into the House with a Bill that was very contentious between the two main parties—the way in which Opposition Members responded to the Bill was entirely legitimate, and I certainly do not raise any complaint about their tactics—and indicated on Second Reading that certain clauses would not be pursued by the promoters when the Bill was considered by the Private Bill Committee? I would have been in an indefensible position. There would have been a riot on the Floor of the House.

I would not mind betting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that your predecessor as Chairman of Ways and Means, who was exercised about that Bill for a number of reasons, would have indicated to the promoters that they could not expect time on the Floor of the House until they presented a Bill with the clauses that they actually wanted enacted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman criticising British Rail or criticising the Chairman of Ways and Means? This procedure is not unique. What is before the House might be unusual, but it is certainly not unique. As someone who has considered private Bills in Committee, the hon. Gentleman will know that that is the situation. I should be grateful if he would clarify whom he is criticising.

Mr. Brown: There is no way that any hon. Member, who has had the experience that I have in dealing with various Chairmen of Ways and Means since 1979, would do anything other than always accept and respect the decisions of the Chairman of Ways and Means. Therefore,

there is a moral obligation on the promoters of the Bill to present to the Chairman of Ways and Means and then to the House a Bill in exactly the same form as they want it enacted.

I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you understood that there was any implied criticism of your office. That was certainly not the case. You will know that I have sponsored private Bills, served on private Bill Committees and opposed private Bills so I assure you that there was no implied criticism of the Chairman of Ways and Means or his office.

I might have the good fortune to serve on the Committee that deals with this Bill. Let us suppose that the Committee decides not to give leave for the clauses that British Rail wish withdrawn from the Bill to be withdrawn. The Bill will then have to come back on Report with those clauses still in it. Even if the Committee gives leave for them to be withdrawn, I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) will automatically table amendments to retain those clauses. It is clear from the burden of his remarks that he is anxious, in so far as British Rail makes policy advances, for BR to continue developing policies that enable more freight to be put on rail and not on the roads.

At any rate, it is likely that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South will support the retention of the clauses in the Bill. It is not given to the sponsors to come to the House tonight and to say, through my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, "We don't need to bother with the question of car parking at Macclesfield, the chord line in South Yorkshire and the works at Shaftholme because they will disappear from the Bill." It is given to the House only on Report to decide whether that will be the case.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South —because of his strong support for freight traffic—is successful in persuading the House that we should not delete the clauses and the House passes the Bill exactly as it stands today and Royal Assent is given, and then my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) decides that he wants to see the benefits that are contained in clause 24 relating to the possibility of additional car parking, what will the promoters do?

There are many problems ahead, not the least of which is the waste of time and money. That has already been referred to tonight. I believe that the promoters are wasting the time of the House. Let me tell hon. Members what the promoters have done with regard to works 1 and 1A. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley said that the clauses relating to those works would be withdrawn in Committee or on Report.

In 1993, British Rail is hard against the coal face—or, rather, the cash face—when it comes to shortage of resources. I have with me the environmental statement, volume 1, which is full of clauses and paragraphs. I shall refer to the specific works later.

To give the House a flavour, the volume that I have with me is just the idiot's guide. The real idiot's guide contains a few short pages summarising what those works require. I also have the technical annex volume 2 A and E which is the environmental statement relating to works 1 and 1A. It relates to a railway bridge at Shaftholme which is provided for in the Bill.

If I had a slide projector in the Chamber, I could give the House some indication of the cost of the environmental statement. It contains photographs and maps. Goodness knows how many architects, surveyors and British Rail administrative staff in the survey department were required to produce the document. All I can say is that there is no price on the document. On the basis that a document of this nature which is placed in the Vote Office costs about £15 simply to produce, I suspect that the cost of producing the environmental statement was horrendous.

We have the environmental statement annex, the general statement of objectives and the idiot's guide for people like me who British Rail think will not be able to understand the documents. All those documents were produced for today's debate. Last week, I went to the Private Bill Office. I went through the Bill and asked whether there were any environmental statements. I was told that there was a large series of documents and environmental statements. The Private Bill Office did not have copies of the documents, but said that it would telephone the promoters of the Bill and get the statements for me in time for this debate.

All those surveyors, architects, bureaucrats somewhere in York—I presume that it is the York regional office which is responsible—and the people at Euston house in London have worked on the environmental statement for the past year or so. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley then says. "We do not need to worry about the Bill tonight. It is a simple little Bill which will not be important. Half of the Bill will not apply. We will table amendments in Committee with which we hope that the House will agree." If British Rail thinks that I will agree on the nod to any withdrawal of clauses on Third Reading or on Report, it has another think coming.

Mr. Boyce: I should be most grateful if the hon. Gentleman could tell me whether the environmental impact studies refer to the whole Bill or the Bill as amended which the promoters have introduced. Will the costs to which you referred escalate as British Rail comes back with the proper environmental study for the Bill?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is making an extremely important point. No environmental statement has been prepared for the clauses that will remain in the Bill if British Rail gets its way. The only environmental assessment relates to the clauses that the promoters intend to seek to withdraw. That is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that British Rail knew that I had objections to the specific part of the Bill which you are talking about? British Rail never made it known to me that the environmental statement pertaining to that part of the Bill existed. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me that that is disgraceful?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The words "you and me" are inappropriate for the Chamber.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is a delight to see him sitting in the House. As he enjoys a long a distinguished career in the House, he will find that one must learn where to look for the hidey holes with regard to private business.

If a Bill is a private Bill, one assumes that an environmental statement will be automatically available alongside the Bill in the Vote Office. Last week, I went to the Vote Office. I asked for the Bill and a statement on it. That was provided. However, there were no estimates of the costs of the works referred to in the Bill. The House must know those costs which are available.

[Mr. Brown]

Other hon. Members have talked about the costs of those works. I shall deal with those costs later. One does not obtain the estimates from the Vote Office. One must walk up to the Private Bill Office which is above the Speaker's Office. Although the staff in the Private Bill Office are extremely helpful, one must specifically ask whether any environmental assessment is available. Even then, it is up to the promoters to decide whether to make the documents available and to what extent they will provide information. However, that is a well understood and accepted procedure. I am sure that if the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) carries on learning the procedures of the House as quickly as he has done in the past few months, he will soon get to grips with that side of things.

I make no complaint about the procedure that I have just described. My complaint is that Northern Environmental Consultants Ltd., based in Consett, has done very nicely thank you out of British Rail. Goodness knows how much time it spent on the documents. No estimate has been provided in the estimate of the cost of the works of how much the consultants received from British Rail for producing the documents. We are given no idea of the time and energy that it misspent for British Rail.

I do not suppose for one moment that British Rail wrote to Northern Environmental Consultants—which I understand is a division of the northern division of Environmental Resources Ltd. based in Consett in county Durham—to say that it had decided not to use that company's environmental statement. I do not suppose that it told the company that it had decided to cancel the works and that it would not pay the bill. I daresay that a nice fat bill went up to the company. I do not suppose that the company did anything other than a proper job in producing the documents for British Rail.

It is appalling that British Rail should introduce a Bill from which it intended to withdraw clauses and then present an environmental impact assessment on the clauses that would be withdrawn. It is disgraceful that the costs of assessment will be simply buried and lost.

I shall deal with the provisions of the Bill that directly affect my constituency, before I refer to those that affect the constituency of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce). Indeed, those works also affect my constituency because we are talking about one railway line. I shall refer to the House for its consideration the specific works that relate to Brigg in schedules 1 and 2. I shall then pick up the implications of the position at Rotherham for my constituents who travel to Rotherham and the constituents of the hon. Member for Rotherham who travel to Brigg and Cleethorpes. I shall then discuss the provisions of clause 24, which affect Macclesfield.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley thought that he had satisfied me when he said that clause 24 was cancelled and that was the end of that. It is not the end of that. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield is happy with the present clause 24. It is designed to make life easier for rail travellers in Macclesfield by providing additional car parking space. The clause amends the Inclosure Act 1796. After 200 years, I daresay that there are probably good reasons for doing precisely that.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is in order, in the interests of spinning it out, in dealing with a clause that has been withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are dealing with the Second Reading of the Bill before us. Such issues as may arise in Committee are not for this evening's proceedings.

Mr. Brown: I wonder what the hon. Gentleman would have said last week when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State presented the Railways Bill if he had been told that clause 2 of the Bill would not apply. I wonder what he would have said if my right hon. Friend had said, "We hope that the shadow spokesman for transport will not debate clause 2 because we have said that we will not pursue it on Third Reading." The hon. Gentleman would have replied——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have ruled on that issue. I thought that we were departing to Brigg now.

Mr. Brown: We are, indeed, departing to Brigg by a British Rail train, if they will allow us. I shall deal at an appropriate moment with clause 24, to which amendments have been proposed. I support clause 24 and I am certain that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield supports it. I am certain that he would make a powerful speech inviting the House not to delete clause 24 on Report if it was proposed to do so and would vote in the Lobby accordingly. If my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley thinks that we can dispose of clause 24 like that, he has another thing coming. We cannot dispose of British Rail's refusal to amend the Inclosure Act 1796 just like that.

The main part of the Bill that affects my constituency is schedules 1 and 2, which are referred to in clause 22. Those parts of the Bill refer to two works. The first is the strengthening of the embankment of the line between Gainsborough and Grimsby. I wish to describe that railway line to the House so that it can understand the implications of the work. I shall do so in a moment.

The other work is the strengthening of the embankment at Mill lane of the railway line between Gainsborough and Grimsby. Everyone knows that line does not go from Gainsborough to Grimsby only. The terminus of that line is Cleethorpes. Why has the Bill used the word Grimsby rather than Cleethorpes? I shall tell the House why. One day, if British Rail gets its way, it will chop the line between Grimsby and Cleethorpes. So in all the legislation relating to my constituency British Rail never refers to the line from Manchester to Cleethorpes, Gainsborough to Cleethorpes or London to Cleethorpes. It talks about the line to Grimsby.

Mr. Wilson: As the hon. Gentleman obviously intends to spin it out anyway, we might as well all join in. Will he confirm that under the Government's legislation—which, as far as we know, he supports—it will not be up to British Rail to chop any line? It will be up to Railtrack, which is a new creation. Poor old British Rail, or whichever franchise operator exists, will suffer under a financial regime that forces it to cut off services to places such as Cleethorpes, or other branches of the inter City services that have been lost in that area. Operators will have to do so not through any wish of theirs but as a result of the financial imperatives imposed upon them by the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman is tempted down that route, I must inform him that he cannot anticipate other legislation. He must consider the Bill before us now.

Mr. Brown: To keep within the rules of order, I shall describe to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) the way in which the railway service currently operates through, to and from Brigg. I am prepared temporarily to confine my arguments to the railway line between Grimsby and Gainsborough.

To set the proposals at Brigg in context, I must advise the House that a single spur railway line goes from Barnetby to Cleethorpes. One can travel by rail from Cleethorpes, through Barnetby and on to Manchester. Unfortunately, as the hon. Member for Rotherham said, the train does not stop at Rotherham. One can also travel from Cleethorpes to Barnetby and on to the second spur to Newark, or to Sheffield via the Gainsborough and Grimsby line.

British Rail says that it needs to strengthen the embankment of the line at Mill lane in Brigg and in the parish of Scawby near Brigg, because it wants to be able to run trains at 75 mph instead of 30 mph. It says that that is to enable customers to reach their destination without delay and inconvenience. It says:

"the state of this embankment is such that traffic is forced to reduce speed from 75 mph to under 30 mph with the result that services take longer to reach their destination thereby causing delay and inconvenience to the Board's customers."

Let us consider who the customers are on that line. About three years ago, British Rail wrote to me and to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to tell us that it was going to take away the service and to use the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 to engage in what is called bus substitution. British Rail intended to operate a statutory bus service because it did not consider that there was a market for the rail line between Grimsby and Gainsborough. It seems extraordinary that three years later my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley should bring before the House a proposal to strengthen the embankment on a line that was going to be closed to passengers.

How was the passenger service restored? It was because my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and I kicked up such a fuss and told my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—who was then the Minister with responsibility for railways—why we thought that it was wrong for the passenger service to be withdrawn. So it has been retained.

For ease of reference, I have obtained from the House of Commons Library timetable 29 from British Rail's all systems timetable, which gives times for trains from Gainsborough to Grimsby. The line covers the stations of Cleethorpes, Habrough, Barnetby, Brigg and Kirton in Lindsey in my constituency and goes on to Gainsborough central.

Three trains a day, in each direction, run on the line where the work is to be done. The first train from Brigg to Gainsborough Central—even if one is able to go at 75 mph instead of 30 mph—is at 11.32 am. I do not know what sort of person will want to travel at 75 mph instead of 30 mph to Gainsborough Central at that time of the morning. The journey takes until 11·56 am, which according to my reckoning is about 14 minutes. So the only type of person likely to use the train at that time——

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman should check his figures.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My secondary modern education has clearly come to the fore. I failed my 11-plus and I think that mathematics was one of the reasons. The journey from Brigg to Kirton takes 24 minutes. Let us suppose that I wanted to visit my goddaughter—the daughter of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle—and that I set off on the first train at 11·32 am. Unfortunately, due to the level of service that British Rail provides on the line, that is the only sort of journey that one can use it for.

There is no prospect of anyone using the service who works normal office or industrial hours, such as a workman or skilled worker who wants to get to the steelworks in Sheffield. They would want to use it during the rush hour. There is no way that a college student in Brigg could use the service to go to Sheffield and it is no use to children going to school. Some parents in Gainsborough send their children to Brigg preparatory school—it is a private school, so many Opposition Members might say, "A good thing, too"—but they have to drive them there.

The opportunities for passengers to save themselves a certain amount of time merely represents wasted time. Who will use the 11.32 service from Brigg to Gainsborough? What will happen if one speeds up the service, bearing in mind the fact that the trains in question will stop once between Brigg and Gainsborough?

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's constituents want to visit Doncaster to use its fine shopping facilities, particularly the market, which is open on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. They may want to visit that market to make some fine purchases.

Mr. Brown: That would be possible if my constituents took the train from Barnetby to Doncaster. I should remind the hon. Gentleman that it is not possible to travel to Doncaster on the train in question, from Brigg, on the Sheffield line, without changing at Retford. If one took the 11.32 am and changed at Retford, however, one would arrive at Doncaster at [illegible] pm. I suspect that most of my constituents would travel from Barnetby, on the Scunthorpe line, to Doncaster, which is on the Manchester line to which my hon. Friend for Blackpool, South referred earlier.

The people who will benefit from travelling at 75 mph and who will no longer be inconvenienced by delays as a result of weaknesses in the embankment at Scawby and Brigg, at Mill lane, will be those travelling at midday, for one reason or another, from Brigg, through Kirkton in Lindsey, to Gainsborough.

The next train from Brigg goes at 3.10 pm and the final train goes at 8.4 pm and reaches Gainsborough at 8.26 pm. For some reason, that same journey takes 22 minutes rather than 24 minutes. I am not sure how that is possible, but that is the way British Rail timetables work. It will never cease to amaze me how the final train, which makes the exact same journey, arrives two minutes earlier. Perhaps the fact that the driver is heading for home and the train is going to bed makes for a quicker journey. Three trains from Brigg to Gainsborough will benefit from the work outlined in the Bill.

The return journey is even more quixotic. Train No. 1 sets off from Gainsborough at 9·2 am and gets to Brigg at

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9·23. That train arrives just too late for those who may work in Brigg, especially if they have to get to work for 9 am. It is too late for college students attending the sixth-form college in Brigg, which now takes students from across the county boundary in Lincolnshire. I cannot imagine that there is any great demand for that train.

Three trains travel between Brigg and Kirkton in Lindsey, at 30 mph. Under the fine proposals in the Bill, those trains will be able to travel at 75 mph. At the moment, at 30 mph, two trains from Brigg take 24 minutes and one takes 22, but the journey in the reverse direction takes just 21 minutes. Perhaps hon. Members can use their mathematical abilities to enlighten the House. Is that the reason for the variation in the timetables?

Mr. Norris: I am following this part of my hon. Friend's speech with immense interest. I am not very good at this sort of thing, but could the reason not be that on one leg of the journey the train is going uphill, while it is going downhill on the other?

Mr. Brown: I had not thought of that. However, two minutes are still unaccounted for—the two minutes that separate the last train home to Gainsborough from the slower train that travels from Brigg to Gainsborough at the beginning of the day. I am prepared to concede that Brigg is probably slightly higher than Gainsborough on the Ordnance Survey map; there is a small incline on the road journey.

Mr. Boyce: The hon. Gentleman has already said that the trains concerned are travelling at 30 mph. Surely they will be travelling at 30 mph whether they are going uphill or downhill. I may be wrong; perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) will point out some anomalies in my theory. I have always assumed, however, that 30 mph is 30 mph, whether a vehicle is going uphill, downhill, sideways, horizontally or vertically.

Mr. Brown: I am not trying to suggest that a vehicle travels faster when it is going downhill at 30 mph than when it is going uphill at that speed. Even with my limited mathematical ability, I recognise that that is not possible. Some years ago, when I was studying for O-levels, I encountered a question on logic and scientific method in the mathematics paper—O-level papers were a good deal more difficult than GCSE papers are now. The question asked whether a ton of steel was heavier than a ton of feathers. The reference by the hon. Member for Rotherham to the speed of railway trains travelling in opposite directions strikes me as rather akin to that O-level question.

Mr. Wilson: I note that only 49 minutes remain, and I know that the hon. Gentleman has quite a few timetables to get through in that time. Will he spare a moment to tell us why he is opposed to a proposal that will make an embankment safer?

Mr. Brown: I will do a deal with British Rail. Three years ago, British Rail made a case to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and me for taking away the passenger service, and I am prepared to acknowledge that that case may have been acceptable.

Let us assume that only three trains a day are travelling between Brigg and Gainsborough, with a passenger service travelling from Cleethorpes through Grimsby, branching at Barnetby just before Brigg, down through the line to Newark in Nottinghamshire, carrying on to King's Cross—in other words, the high-speed 125 direct service, which I can still catch to my constituency, but which in some 16 weeks' time, on 12 May, my constituents will be unable to catch because the service is being withdrawn. It is rather like the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South: we too are to lose the direct high-speed 125 service.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I will give way in a moment, when I have developed the beginning of what the hon. Gentleman will have recognised is a most important argument for allowing the embankment at Brigg to continue in its present state. I am not suggesting for a moment that the line should be operated unless it is safe; but it is safe at 30 mph, whereas it is not safe at 75 mph unless the works are done.

I understand that the total cost of these works will be more than £2 million. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley will be able to tell me the precise cost of the two embankment improvements, which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North says need carrying out for safety reasons. Of course, as long as three passenger services a day run over these embankments I do not want any risk to be taken with human life—but that is not what would happen if these works were not undertaken. The services would merely continue exactly as they are, with the current speed restrictions.

Mr. Wilson: We are gradually getting somewhere, albeit at 30 mph or less. We seem to have established that this jolly jape has nothing to do with the arguments that the hon. Gentleman has been adducing but more to do with a complaint—perhaps legitimate—about the withdrawal of an adjacent InterCity service. Given that fact, and given the hon. Gentleman's protestations of concern for his constituents, does he think that good enough reason to obstruct other measures in the Bill that are for the benefit of other hon. Members' constituents' safety?

Mr. Brown: The main safety provision—the strengthening works—relate to my constituency. I am not obstructing anything. The Order Paper tells me that at 10 pm the House can come to a conclusion on this matter. I am not aware that any other hon. Member wants to address the House. I would never dream of trying to prevent other hon. Members from speaking either for or against the Bill——

Mr. Waller: I am grateful for that assurance. My hon. Friend has raised a number of legitimate points which deserve an answer. He has said that he would not obstruct anyone who sought to intervene. I am sure that he would agree that it would help the House if answers could be given it. With the leave of the House, I should like to speak again, to answer the points that my hon. Friend has raised. Bearing in mind his assurance, I should be grateful if he allowed me to do that in, say, 20 minutes' time.

Mr. Brown: I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend can catch my eye and intervene with his answers to each question that I pose. I seem to recall that at the beginning of the debate, when I sought to intervene in my

hon. Friend's speech to ask him to consider the legitimate questions posed by the people of Brigg, he was unwilling to give way. He gave way reluctantly on a second occasion.

We have massess of time in the House; there is no question of obstruction. This is a three-hour debate. That is a perfectly reasonable length of time for anyone to say what he wants to. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North wants to go home to bed early. He can do so—the debate will conclude at 10 pm, as it must under the rules of the House. I assure him that this is no jolly jape. I will ensure that his comments are drawn to the attention of my constituents.

It is certainly no jolly jape attempting to make a rail journey on the line between Cleethorpes and Manchester, via the Scunthorpe-Doncaster line or via the Gainsborough-Kirton in Lindsey line—the subject of all this expenditure—or via the line to Newark down to King's Cross. I have been doing the journey for 17 years, and if the hon. Gentleman would like to try doing it for one week he will find that it is no jolly jape.

I assure the House that I have serious, legitimate concerns about the works to be engaged in by British Rail. The high-speed 125 service was introduced in a blaze of glory in 1982, when British Rail took away four direct trains from Cleethorpes to London and introduced in their stead a single high-speed rail service. It invited me to ride shotgun with the driver, and all sorts of fancy receptions were held. Yet the service is to go now, because BR says that my constituents are not paying enough in fares to make the service pay.

Tonight British Rail proposes massive expenditure on an embankment to carry three trains—at times when people cannot possibly use the service to get to work, college or school—to run in each direction between Brigg and Gainsborough. That is not a jolly jape; it is a serious constituency concern.

I hope that, if my constituents have the good fortune to hear these exchanges tonight on their local radio or in the television programmes that broadcast our proceedings, they will understand that the hon. Gentleman thinks that this is some kind of joke. I assure him that it is not. This is a crucial policy discussion on British Rail's expenditure and appropriation, or rather misappropriation—that is the joke, although I do not think that we should laugh at it. It is a joke to go to a firm of environmental consultants and to produce an environmental assessment of clauses that the House will be invited to withdraw on Report and Third Reading.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman speaks about his constituents knowing what is going on. I wish that his constituents could be supplied with a video of this debate so that they could see the hon. Gentleman in full and glorious flight. He spoke about going home to bed. I shall not be going home to bed anyway. Like most hon. Members, I do not like to see stunts, which is what the hon. Gentleman is performing. The hon. Gentleman seems to confirm that by saying that he is not arguing against the service but is using the Bill and the issue within it coincidentally to air his doubtless legitimate grievance about the withdrawal of InterCity services.

The hon. Gentleman is complaining in dramatic terms and at inordinate length about the withdrawal of the InterCity service to Cleethorpes. He had better prepare himself for a few more one or two-hour stunts, because the logic of his Government's legislation is that many more InterCity services will be withdrawn. British Rail cannot be blamed for that. It is the fault of the Government who have imposed financial objectives on BR which require these closures, and privatisation will ensure many more withdrawals of direct InterCity services. The hon. Gentleman cannot escape from that logic and no amount of histrionics will get him off that hook.

Mr. Brown: That is simply not the case and it is not true. Under the present structure it is the nationalised British Rail which is withdrawing services and misappropriating expenditure in my constituency. Thank goodness I can look to the Government's Bill to franchise services and to come to the aid of my constituents. *[Interruption.]* British Rail has taken decisions about services in my constituency on the basis of its current standing as a nationalised corporation. British Rail gave notice in 1992, nearly a year ago, that it proposed to withdraw services from Cleethorpes to London and at that time there was no Government legislation on the table. The Government's current Bill will give my constituents opportunities and challenges which British Rail seems intent upon taking away. I look forward with enthusiasm to further debate on the legislation that was introduced to the House last week.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to clarify the hon. Gentleman's argument. Does he think that a private franchisee will reintroduce an InterCity service from London to Cleethorpes? Would a private franchisee have been more likely to introduce such a service in the first place? Many InterCity services have been pruned. Night sleeper services in some areas and some direct services from Scotland have been lost, but I at least have the sense and consistency to realise that InterCity has to do that to meet financial objectives. Neither the hon. Gentleman, who gets into an enormous lather of outrage about the loss of the direct service from London to Cleethorpes, nor any of his hon. Friends should be under any misapprehension. Enfranchisement or privatisation—call it what we will—will lead to the loss of many more direct InterCity services. If all Conservative Members feel as nervous about it as the hon. Gentleman does, we shall have many similar entertainments in the months ahead from Tory Back Benchers.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is plain wrong, but he has asked me a specific question, which I shall answer. Provided that British Rail does not operate a scorched earth policy and does not allow a gap in the timetable so that ther is no going concern between the end of the service in May and the enactment of the Bill, there is hope for the service. Along with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), I have proposed to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and to British Rail that British Rail gives an undertaking that it will retain in the timetable the services that are used by the people of Brigg far more than the services affected by the Bill. The people of Brigg are far more likely to use the railway station at Barnetby, two and a half miles to the east of Brigg, than they are to use the railway station at Brigg, because then, to get to Gainsborough, they have to go over the embankments on a delightful journey in the middle of the day, involving two or three trains.

Therefore, if British Rail undertakes to continue the direct service from Cleethorpes through Barnetby and down to Newark and on to King's Cross, in both directions, until the day that the Railways Bill receives

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Royal Assent, a franchise-run direct service between Cleethorpes and London could be a serious runner. However, I am prepared to concede that if British Rail operates a scorched earth policy and says, "We don't want to operate a direct service from Cleethorpes to London. Let's get it out of the railway timetable this May. Let's make sure that people have got used to making some other arrangements," there will be problems. People may become used to driving their cars to Doncaster or Newark to get the main line trains direct from those stations or have got into the habit of not using public transport for the journey to Cleethorpes from Brigg, Barnetby or Newark. Then it would be much more difficult for a franchise service to be successful.

Let me return to the Bill and the works in schedule 1. The main point is that money is being wasted by strengthening the embankment for a passenger service that operates six vehicles a day. The trains that operate are the new class 138—I think that that is right, but there is probably greater expertise among Opposition Members on that. I know that the 158 is the two-car service that operates between Cleethorpes and Manchester Piccadilly, and does not stop at Rotherham. If my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committe on Transport were here, he could have put us all in our place by giving us the correct numbers.

Mr. Boyce: I hope that it is in order to ask the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), through the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), when he comes to answer the financial questions put by the hon. Gentleman, to answer my question about the time that will be made up if the proposals go ahead and the trains through the link are allowed to travel at 75 mph rather than 30 mph. Earlier, the hon. Member for Keighley implied that he would answer the question and I am anxious that he does so.

Mr. Waller *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention.

Mr. Brown: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley has heard the hon. Gentleman's point and, should there be an appropriate point in my remarks that would allow him to deal with it, I should be willing to give way to my hon. Friend, who suddenly developed a desire to address the House on a second occasion even though he was a little nervous about giving way to me when he was speaking.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend on completing the first hour of his address to the House. During that period, he could have travelled approximately 30 miles on a British Rail train. Might that not have been a better way to spend his time?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. All too often, I spend an hour standing at Newark railway station, catching a cold or flu, becoming accustomed to what life will be like for my constituents at Brigg and for the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, the Under-Secretary of State for Technology. In 16 weeks' time we shall have to tolerate a change at Newark on our journey through to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Some of my hon. Friends have found the past hour or so an endurance, but I shall have to spend even more time waiting for connecting trains at Newark and Doncaster. We know that London trains have to be only 10 minutes late before a local train is sent on.

My hon. Friend feels that it is possible to travel 30 miles in an hour with British Rail, but my experience is that it is sometimes necessary to stand on a station for a long time. If anyone wishes to travel from London to Cleethorpes, he or she will have to do just that at Newark, and for hours on end. I have much in mind the way in which connections are sometimes timetabled. Those of my hon. Friends who have found the past hour or so, which I have spent drawing attention to the problems of railway travellers, an endurance test will bear in mind, I hope, that that is what life will be like for my constituents later this year at both Newark and Doncaster when they wait for connecting trains on cold and draughty platforms for hours on end.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman's analogy is false. Most travellers waiting on a station for an hour would love to be entertained for that period by a clown.

Mr. Brown: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman, who has not been a Member of this place for as long as myself, does not appreciate that some of us take private Bills extremely seriously. If I were to entertain my constituents on a cold and draughty platform at Newark or Doncaster, they would much rather be on a train—however good the entertainment—making their journey home. They would much prefer not to be on the platform at Newark being entertained by me or anyone else. They would much prefer to sit in a train travelling direct from King's Cross to Cleethorpes. The hon. Gentleman might want to make cheap and stupid points, but he should bear in mind the inconvenience that some of my constituents will have to tolerate.

As it is constructed, the Bill appears to be a waste of British Rail's valuable resources. How does British Rail have the brass-necked cheek to tell my constituents that they cannot have a service of any sort between Cleethorpes and King's Cross without changing trains? Yet it is only too anxious to improve a three-train-in-each-direction service on the line between Brigg and Gainsborough and onward to Sheffield. That demonstrates a wrong sense of priorities. I am angry that British Rail has decided to adopt that approach to "improve" railway services in my constituency. The only railway service that needs improvement is the one that is being threatened with closure. It is a service which should be retained.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said earlier, on behalf of the Opposition, that British Rail had to withdraw services such as those to Cleethorpes and Blackpool because of the imposition of Government-imposed financial criteria. That is not why Cleethorpes is being disadvantaged, even though British Rail might say otherwise. I remember the assurances that were given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and myself about five years ago about the long-term future of the service. I remember also writing to British Rail. I recall a private Bill that was considered in 1988. During the passage of that Bill I happened to write to British Rail—this was by coincidence—about the future of certain railway stations in my constituency.

I asked British Rail to commit itself to maintaining services between Cleethorpes and London. It stated in a letter that there was no threat to rail services, but my suspicious mind worked out that, one day, the high-speed 125 direct service would be taken away. In 1988, when there was no talk of privatisation, I worked out that one day BR would want to take away the men who sell tickets at railway stations to reduce manning. I received these letters from British Rail a week before the Bill was due to be given a Second Reading. It is strange that BR is prepared to give certain assurances to hon. Members, and I foolishly played no part in the private Bill that the House was then considering. This time, because of my experience, I do not believe the assurances that British Rail has given me.

BR retimed the Cleethorpes to London service. Previously I could catch a train from the House to my constituency, and Ministers frequently visited my constituency. A couple of years ago, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was a transport Minister with responsibilities for British Rail. One Friday evening, he caught the train from King's Cross to Barnetby. He left the House of Commons at about 4.45 pm, caught the 5.15 pm train and two and a quarter hours later he arrived at Barnetby. Within 10 minutes he was at his official engagement in my constituency. A year before British Rail announced that it would withdraw the direct service, it retimed the service so that it left London at 5.50 pm, arriving at Barnetby at 8.20 pm. It now arrives in Cleethorpes at 8.50 pm.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North says that British Rail is under an obligation from the Government to operate InterCity services in such a way that they are not profitable. British Rail has made the service unprofitable. People are less inclined to use the service in the evening because it now arrives about 40 minutes later than it did previously. People use the train that departs at 4.30 pm and tolerate changing at Newark because they get home earlier. British Rail has deliberately sabotaged the service by making it depart from London 40 minutes later, thereby making it very late when it gets to Barnetby, Grimsby and Cleethorpes. It has deliberately driven trade off the train.

If British Rail is saying that fewer people are using the train from Cleethorpes to Newark than two or three years ago, I am prepared to acknowledge that. After all, it is said that statistics never lie. I shall tell the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North why people are less inclined to use the direct service, and it it has nothing to do with the Railways Bill but more to do with BR's pricing policy.

British Rail used to advertise aggressively the super-saver service. In those days, the cost down to London was about £38. The super-saver ticket was available for second class passengers on the train from Barnetby to King's Cross until the year before last. British Rail then decided that no passenger could use the direct service from Barnetby to King's Cross unless he caught a traing after 9 am using the saver ticket. That meant that a large eight-coach train with first and second-class compartments and a breakfast car could not be used by some passengers, perhaps retired or less well-off people who could not afford to throw an extra £6 at British Rail. They had to wait until 9 am to catch the Regional Railways train to Newark, stand on a draughty platform and then get the main line train to London.

Mr. Wilson: Before the hon. Gentleman starts on another circuit, perhaps I can pin him down. He has obviously persuaded himself—or purports to have persuaded himself—that there has been a dark conspiracy against Cleethorpes within the upper confines of British Rail. He is clearly a little parochial in these matters, but perhaps he can elevate his sights. Is it likely that British Rail has set out to deprive Cleethorpes of its InterCity service? if not, perhaps he should consider which InterCity services should be cut so that Government targets can be met.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned 1988. Surely, given his encyclopaedic knowledge of these issues, he knows that the financial objectives to which InterCity and the rest of British Rail have had to work were laid down in December 1989 by Cecil Parkinson. Since then, InterCity—uniquely, certainly in Europe, and probably in the world—has been a profitable railway, albeit only marginally profitable. However, as there are some very profitable sectors within InterCity, which services does he suggest should be cut to meet the targets? Does he not understand that it is not a matter of Cleethorpes against the world but of Government policy?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. That was a somewhat lengthy intervention.

Mr. Wilson: I was trying to get it in proportion to the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does not follow that precept.

Mr. Wilson: Can the hon. Gentleman say which sectors of InterCity should be cut and why he supports the financial objectives for InterCity which will clearly have the effect that he has rather unconvincingly created about tonight?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman complained and seemed to suggest that I was detaining the House unduly. I have many notes to read out and I wish to refer to Redruth and to Macclesfied. I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, as he is responsible for prolonging my short speech. I have many issues to raise with the promoters of the Bill, which are directly relevant to the clauses affecting Macclesfied and Redruth. I have wanted to refer to them for some time, but the hon. Gentleman keeps detaining me by raising interesting points to which I feel it is my duty to respond. The House will know that I am always generous in giving way to interventions from Opposition Members and that I do my utmost to answer them. I am certainly prepared to answer the hon. Gentleman.

I see no reason for British Rail to have to make cuts to live up to the objectives that the Government have placed on it. If British Rail had had the imaginative management of British Airways in the past 10 years, it would have no difficulty in being able to provide, with its InterCity services, trains at times the customer wants to travel while still meeting the Government's financial objectives.

British Rail chooses to run trains at times when people do not want to travel and chooses to delay the departure of the King's Cross to Cleethorpes train. That train was used by my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) until he became a Minister. He went on to become an even bigger Minister and then Prime Minister.

[Mr. Brown]

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North should study the Order Paper for tomorrow. He will see that, during Prime Minister's Question Time, we are to discuss railway services between Cleethorpes and London, because I am to invite the Prime Minister to make an official visit to Cleethorpes by train. Tomorrow afternoon, the House and the nation, through television broadcasting, will be able to relate the proceedings on the Bill to Government policy. Between 3.15 and 3.30 pm tomorrow, the House will focus its attention on these railway services.

I hope that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North will not shout out that it is some kind of jolly jape when I ask my right hon. Friend to make a comment——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let tomorrow take care of itself.

Mr. Brown: Although that great day is only two and a quarter hours away, I leave that line of argument.

The main point made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North is that British Rail is unable to provide certain services to Cleethorpes. He asks me to accept that there is no conspiracy in British Rail against Cleethorpes. I should like to think that there is not, but I think of the way in which British Rail gave me assurances about the manning of railway stations in the Brigg area, in the Barnetby area and in the Habrough area of my constituency some years ago. BR gave me assurances about the long-term future of the high-speed 125 train from Cleethorpes to King's Cross some years ago.

I suddenly see that the Bill refers not to the Cleethorpes-Gainsborough line, but to the Grimsby-Gainsborough line. Stations such as Barnetby were denounced six months ago. The Cleethorpes 125 direct service has been withdrawn. My suspicious mind wonders whether somebody up there in British Rail has got it in for Cleethorpes.

Mr. Boyce: I have no way of knowing whether Cleethorpes has been disadvantaged deliberately. I have my own theories about what is going on. The reason may be the vociferous way in which the hon. Gentleman has sought to protect Cleethorpes. It may be because I am a new Member of Parliament that British Rail has sought to take advantage of Rotherham. I have no way of knowing, but my suspicious mind tells me that that is the case. As I am a new Member and not very used to procedure, British Rail has sought to ride roughshod over the people of Rotherham. British Rail may have made the people of Cleethorpes suffer because of the vigorous intervention of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman does himself a grave disservice. Anyone listening to him would not believe that he had been a Member of Parliament for only nine months. I honestly felt that I was listening to someone who had been a Member of Parliament for at least nine years. He eloquently convinced me of the disadvantageous way in which the Bill will affect the people of Rotherham.

I knew the hon. Gentleman's predecessor very well because we used to cross swords on steel issues when I represented the constituency of Brigg and Scunthorpe before the boundaries were altered in 1983. I knew Mr. Stan Crowther extremely well——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must keep to the rails.

Mr. Brown: Hon. Members keep sending me down branch lines. The hon. Member for Rotherham described himself as an inexperienced Member of Parliament. He is a very experienced Member of Parliament and he has quickly learnt to be suspicious of British Rail in the provision of railway services between east and west.

I shall now link the comments of the hon. Member for Rotherham with the challenge of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North. I believe that British Rail simply wants to run InterCity trains in straight lines from London to Edinburgh, from London to Glasgow and perhaps from London to Bristol and Swansea. Its cross-country service provision has always been poor.

I am prepared to concede that there is, however, one bright spot—that is, when it works, when the trains turn up and when British Rail does not send old trains which break down. The Manchester to Cleethorpes service is pretty good and it has modern rolling stock. As the hon. Member for Rotherham said, the only thing missing is for the service to stop at a town the size of Rotherham. Under the terms of the Bill, that will not happen.

I believe that it is much more convenient for British Rail to run high-speed, electrified railway trains. British Rail does not want to run diesel-electrics. We must recognise that the service from Cleethorpes to Newark is not electrified. The point that is relevant to the intervention of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North is that the Government have given British Rail hundreds of millions of pounds to provide an electrified service from London to Edinburgh.

When the electrification programme was taking place in 1988, I wondered what would happen when the train from King's Cross reached Newark and the thing—I have forgotten what it is called—that extends from the engine to the electrified wire to draw the power——

Mr. Norris: The pantograph.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister. I would expect him to know what it is called.

The pantograph is of use only on an electrified service. There is no electrification proposed between Newark and Cleethorpes and between Cleethorpes and Manchester. Therefore, we depend upon diesel electric trains.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Circencester and Tewkesbury): If, as my hon. Friend says, there is such a need for the services to Cleethorpes, are not the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport just what my hon. Friend needs? If there is a need for those services, a franchiser will be prepared to bid for the services and my hon. Friend will then get the service that he wants.

Mr. Brown: That is the point that I made a few moments ago. I could not agree more with my hon. Friend the Member for Circencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). My hon. Friend is absolutely spot on.

However, we must obtain those franchises services when services continue to exist as going concerns. When the new timetables are introduced in May, the service is to be withdrawn from Cleethorpes. The Railways Bill, which received its Second Reading last week, probably will not

reach the statute book until July or perhaps not until October or November. There will be an interregnum, during which there will be no direct service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury would surely agree that if a business is sold as a going concern, it will benefit from the new arrangements to improve that going concern. However, if a business, operation or railway service is shut down and one expects the private sector to crank it up once more, albeit under the new facilities that I welcome in the Railways Bill, that service is more likely to be a success if a new franchised service takes over 24 hours after British Rail relinquishes control and if BR does not pursue its scorched earth policy.

I object to the fact that if BR does not want to provide the service and decides to close it in May, and the new legislation does not reach the statute book until the end of the year, by that time BR will have driven people off the railways to Cleethorpes altogether and into their cars to drive to Newark and Doncaster. That is why it is so wrong for British Rail to claim that it wants to save money on that service when it is prepared to waste money.

Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury was not present earlier. I shall not go over old ground, but I shall give my hon. Friend an idea of how British Rail has been wasting money. I have with me the environmental assessment of the clauses relating to Shaftholme and the chord line in works Nos. 1 and 1A, which was produced by a firm of consultants for British Rail. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley told the House that those clauses will not be proceeded with. British Rail is prepared to waste money to pay private sector consultants to produce a report on clauses that will not be enacted, yet it is not prepared to provide for my constituents a service from Cleethorpes to London. That is the waste of money in the Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am sorry that I was not present at the beginning of my hon. Friend's concise, short speech, but has he tried to suggest to British Rail that it might operate the train to Cleethorpes at peak hours only?

Mr. Brown: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury will do me the honour of speaking in my constituency, and I hope also that he will use the railways service between now and May to do so. There is but one train a day from Cleethorpes to London in the morning and one train from London to Cleethorpes in the evening. When I became a Member of Parliament 14 years ago there were four trains in each direction. We now have only one train at peak times. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] As my hon. Friends say, that is disgraceful. The situation has deteriorated in that time, and that is why I am so suspicious of British Rail's future intentions.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has certainly brightened up the evening. I am sure that he will go down as the man who isolated Cleethorpes within the space of three general elections. However, for the hon. Gentleman it is a serious point. He will have investigated the differential cost of InterCity services operating on electrified lines and non-electrified lines. In the light of that information, he will be able to inform not only his hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) but many other hon. Members about the likelihood of InterCity services continuing after being franchised on non-electrified lines.

Is not the hon. Gentleman's message that, under any auspices, if InterCity is to be a profitable railway, or if bits thereof are to be profitable, there will be no InterCity services operating on non-electrified lines? That carries a very serious message not only for some of my hon. Friends north of Edinburgh, for instance, but for many Conservative Members, as they are about to find out during the passage of the Railways Bill.

Mr. Brown: I certainly had my suspicions back in 1988 that British Rail had no wish to have high-speed 125 trains —that is, the diesel electric powered trains that do not require overhead cables—going anywhere near King's Cross. I have heard from railway experts in my constituency, such as the Railway Development Society based in Cleethorpes, that British Rail wants to do everything that it can to run only electrified trains into King's Cross. That certainly carries the implications that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North mentioned. Any high-speed 125 train that goes to King's Cross is a vulnerable service. The service from Hull to King's Cross is certainly vulnerable. Concern has been expressed about the service in Goole, which is operated from Hull to King's Cross.

I am only just coming to my concluding remarks with regard to the provisions of the Bill concerning Brigg. I now turn to the provisions——

9.59 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): *rose in his place and claimed to move* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 83, Noes 51.

Division No. 143] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Donohoe, Brian H.
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robert[illegible]n, George *(Hamilton)*
Robe[illegible]on, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Row[illegible] Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryd[illegible], Rt Hon Richard
St[illegible], Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
S[illegible]epherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
[illegible]hersby, Michael
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter

Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Trend and
Mr. Peter Luff.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Eastham, Ken
Elletson, Harold
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hawkins, Nick
Heppell, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAvoy, Thomas
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Stevenson, George
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Whittingdale, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jimmy Boyce and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Whereupon MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for closure or for proposal of Question).*

It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned. Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 11 February

Industrial Training Levy

10.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.

I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motion:

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

The proposals—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I ask for considerably more silence?

Mr. McLoughlin: The proposals before the House seek the authority for the construction and engineering construction industry training boards to impose a levy on the employers in their industries, to finance the running costs of the boards and to fund their range of training initiatives, including grants schemes. Provision for that is contained in the Industrial Training Act 1982 and the orders before the House would give effect to proposals submitted by the two boards.

Both proposals include provision to raise a levy in excess of 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll. The Industrial Training Act 1982 requires that in such cases the propsals must be approved by affirmative resolution of both Houses. In each case, the proposals are the same as those approved by the House last year. They are based on employers, payrolls and their use of sub-contract labour. Both have special provision for small firms.

For the CITB, the rates are 0·25 per cent. of payroll and 2 per cent. of payments made by employers to labour-only sub-contractors. Employers with a liability of £45,000 or less will be exempt. The ECITB treats its head offices and construction sites as separate establishments and applies different levy rates, which reflect the costs of training particular workers. For head offices, the rates are 0·4 per cent. of payroll and 0·5 per cent. of payments to labour-only sub-contractors. Firms employing 40 or fewer employees are exempt. The rates for sites are 1·5 per cent. of payroll and 2 per cent. of labour-only payments with exemption for employers with a liability of £75,000 or less. In each case the proposals have the support of the employers in the industry, as required by the Industrial Training Act, and have the full support of the respective boards.

The House will know that the CITB and the ECITB are the only two remaining statutory industry training boards. Most other sectors of industry are covered by independent arrangements. The Government believe that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, independent employer-led arrangements are the most effective. The House will be aware that the CITB is currently under review. This has, I know, given rise to much speculation and concern.

I hope that the House will be reassured when I say that, as in 1990, we have consulted widely with the industry about the effectiveness of the board and its current funding arrangements. I am not yet able to make a statement to the House about the board's future, but I can say that the results of that consultation will be extremely important in informing our decision. Although there is still some work to be done, I hope to make an announcement shortly. In

the meantime though, the operations of both the boards continue as normal. I believe that it is right for 1993 that the House should agree to approve the draft orders before it, and I commend them to the House.

10.13 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Given the crisis into which the Government and their policies have plunged the construction industry and training within it, it is staggering that the Minister should make such a brief speech.

I remind the Minister of the debate that he opened a little more than a year ago on a similar order for the construction industry training board, when the Prime Minister's meeting with a delegation from the industry in October 1991 was described. The delegation stressed the depressed state of the construction industry to the Prime Minister, who disagreed with the delegation's gloomy forecast of when recovery in construction would begin and said that he expected the industry to emerge from recession in the middle of 1992. Many people are still awaiting that recovery, including the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who has a considerable interest because redundancies at the CITB have affected his constituents. Those redundancies have been made precisely because of the recession in the construction industry and the incompetence of the Government.

I should put the record straight: it was not the present Minister who opened the debate on the CITB in December 1991, but the then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who said then that much progress had been made by the CITB. In a sense, he paid tribute to the way in which the board had restructured its operations and he said that new measures on training had been introduced to counter the effects of the recession. Nothing could have been further from the truth, because in the past 12 months training in construction has fallen behind the provisions made in previous years—in common with training in many other areas of economic activity.

The Minister has commented on the Government's view of voluntarism, but it is important to note that Sir Brian Wolfson, chairman of the national training task force, made it clear recently, to the great embarrassment of the Secretary of State and her Ministers, that he now supports levies for all industry, not simply for the construction industry, which has its own particular problems. He believes that those levies are necessary because voluntarism has been such an abysmal failure where it has been adopted.

He also made an outspoken attack on the Goverment's underfunding of the training and enterprise council system. That was hardly surprising when we note that between 1989 and 1990, the beginning of the present recession, until 1995-96—which is as far as Government projections go—there will have been a cut of 32 per cent. in real terms in Government funding for training. That reduction will be made before the present round of public expenditure cuts are imposed. Perhaps the Minister can enlighten the House as to whether more cuts will be made as a result, or can he guarantee that the training budget will be maintained at its present level?

My guess is that the Minister will not be able to tell us one way or another, because the last people to be consulted on the training budget will be Ministers at the Department of Employment, who have failed abysmally to protect that budget. *[Interruption.]* The Whip may groan, and I should be more than happy for him to break our conventions and debate this matter with me: he is part of the incompetence surrounding those on the Treasury Bench and it is right for him to take some interest in what is going on.

The construction and engineering industries are virtually unanimous in their opposition to voluntarism. In common with Sir Brian, they do not believe that it represents a useful way forward. Many people now believe that it is time for the reviews of the CITB to be put to bed. It is disgraceful that the Minister should come to the House tonight and be unable to tell us where that review stands.

The present remit of the CITB will expire in April this year and if I were the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West, I should be extremely concerned about the future of my constituents who work for it. I know from that hon. Gentleman's previous endeavours on behalf of his constituents that he is not afraid to criticise the Government for their incompetence regarding the board's operation and their general lack of enthusiasm for what it tries to do.

The Minister should also note that an announcement from his Department stated that a government decision on the future of the CITB would be made "early next year". That was the comment of Mr. Jim Wiltshire, head of the Department of Employment's training division. He went on to say that, in that context, "early next year" meant January, rather than later in the year. I do not consider a date in February consistent with that. When exactly will the Minister allow the training board to know where its future lies?

It is not the board's apologists who are frustrated: the Building Employers Confederation, for instance, has said: "frequent reviews have a destabilising effect on training and staff morale."

The federation is right. The message is coming through loud and clear from the whole construction training side: morale is indeed at a low ebb, because people are not certain of their future. We need an industrial training board that is committed to getting the best out of the industry. Given the absence of a partner in government to help to obtain that best, the current frustration is understandable.

I should place on record the fact that, although I have prayed in aid of the Building Employers Confederation, it has been critical of some aspects of the CITB. It is certain, however, that a statutory training board and a levy are needed. The confederation's view is now shared by many other organisations. The plant hire firms, whose support for the CITB has seemed a little suspect in the past, recently stated that, if the present levy ended, there would be

"a rapid collapse in training, with less responsible companies poaching trained operatives off those who have invested in training."

Of course, the whole rationale for a levy system—not just in construction, but across the board—is the fact that poaching is what good trainers fear that bad trainers do. No Minister has been able to provide an answer for that.

It is time that the Government came clean. Do they intend to abolish the levy system and the board in what might be called an ideological spasm? The Department has failed to come up with its own ideological offering on the alter of failing Thatcherism. A reluctant Secretary of State for Transport has introduced a Bill for the ludicrous

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

privatisation of British Rail, for a number of silly reasons. Perhaps the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment wants to go down in a blaze of glory as the man who finally got rid of the training boards.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Perhaps the building will collapse on top of him.

Mr. Lloyd: Indeed, we do not know what will happen to him as he leaves the building.

Both training and construction itself are now in crisis. Between 1988 and last year, the number of housing starts fell by 36 per cent., and output generally fell by 12 per cent. It should come as no surprise to learn that, over the same period. there was a massive reduction in the number of people employed in the construction industry. Even in the one year between June 1991 and June 1992, there was a 12 per cent. cut in the number of employees in the industry, and a 10 per cent. cut in the number of self-employed. That amounts to a staggering total of 174,000 job losses in that industry in a single year.

The Minister and his colleagues should be ashamed of themselves for allowing that to happen at a time when millions are out of work. Many of the people between 16 and 24 who are currently unemployed—nearly a million —are desperate to obtain employment training in the construction industry; there is a desperate shortage of skilled operatives in the industry, and a desperate shortage of decent quality housing stock and other buildings. For economic, social and human reasons—even to get the Government off the political hook on which they have hung themselves—we ought to train people in construction. Instead, the Government's inaction has led to the rundown of the industry and the rundown of training. That is the charge to which the Minister must respond at some point.

In 1989, the last peak for the construction industry, there were some 81,000 apprentices. By 1992, the number had fallen to 59,000. That is a dramatic reduction. We know that in 1990-91 the CITB was supporting 14,000 construction trainees. By 1991-2, that had dropped to 10,500. Last year, the number was down to 8,500. So even the Government's own schemes have fallen off dramatically.

In the Government's much vaunted youth training scheme, the claims for which are that the youth guarantee works—the Minister and I know that it does not—were it not for the 2,000 places that the CITB is propping up, the Government would look even more embarrassed. Twelve thousand organisations disappeared from the CITB register in one year alone—12,000 building organisations went to the wall because of the crass incompetence and stupidity of the Chancellor and the Conservative Members who support him.

The construction industry has collapsed, and so has training. The Government have been criticised by many of the most senior and eloquent people in the industry. In recent months they have been severely criticised by the big operators which have contracted with the training and enterprise councils to organise adult training: Wimpey, John Mowlem, Henry Boot and Jarvis specialise in the retraining of adults but fear that the cash will not be forthcoming from TECs to continue with this type of training. The chief executive of the east London TEC, Ian MacKinnon, has said:

> "Whether we can continue to justify current levels of construction training we shall just have to wait and see. We must respond to market conditions."

He is not talking about whether we need skilled operatives; he is talking about whether there will be enough money in the TEC budgets to allow them to go in for this relatively expensive form of training, not the cheaper options to which TECs are being driven. The Minister must respond to the charge that the underfunding of TECs will mean a lack of skilled people working in construction.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): The hon. Gentleman has asked the Minister a great many questions, but he has not said whether his party supports the continuation of the construction industry training board. Will he be a bit more positive and praise its efforts so far, and explain why his party supports the board's continuation, if indeed it does?

Does he not realise that it is impossible for the Government to create these jobs? If there is a market, with low interest rates and with growth in the economy, building will take off. We expected it to do so last year and this year, and one day it will happen.

Mr. Lloyd: Conservative Members may have been expecting that, but we have not. We have said that the wrong Chancellor is guaranteed to produce the wrong results. The green shoots of recovery never appeared. That was true at the time of the last election, when the hon. Gentleman went around his constituency claiming that the Conservative Government would not have to cut public spending, that the social programmes would be kept intact and that there would be no tax increases under a Conservative Government. In the light of this afternoon's statement and of other events, that argument is no longer sustainable. The Government have failed the economy and the construction industry. They have sat on their hands and allowed the economy to go down the pan, and they are guilty of allowing the construction industry to go down the pan, too.

The hon. Gentleman invited me to say some kind words about the CITB. I do not come here sponsored by anyone. I come here to advocate the case for better training. I shall have something to say about the CITB in a while. We must not allow the debate to turn on the narrow question of whether the Government can claim that they are doing something worth while. Their record in training and construction is pathetic. I know that the hon. Gentleman is interested in this; he has taken part in these debates for a good number of years and I remember debating these matters with him many times. I hope that he will tell the Government precisely what he thinks about their failures and not allow them the easy ride so often allowed by Conservative Members on such important issues.

As I have said, there has been a gross failure to train, and 174,000 people disappeared from the industry in one year. From the height of employment in construction to its present depth, the most recent Government figures show that nearly 400,000 people have disappeared from the industry. In truth, the figure is much higher than that, because the Government under-records those who disappear and there is not an exact picture. Probably 500,000 people have been lost to the industry. That is a great waste of the skills and talents of people who have been trained in the past using public money and by means

of the levy system. That those skills have been allowed to dissipate is a cause for great shame and shows the monumental stupidity of the Government and others responsible.

The general view in construction is that many of those who leave the industry never return. It is certain that massive skill shortages will begin to appear early in any upturn in the industry. Last year, the industry was pressed harder than for many years. The IFF survey, ironically sponsored by the Department of the Employment. was called "Skill needs in Britain—1992". IFF describes its activities as "thoughtful research in British markets". Even in 1992, some 9 per cent. of firms had hard-to-fill vacancies in the previous 12 months. Even in the middle of a Government-inspired recession, some firms have skill shortages that they cannot easily put right. That shows that insufficiency of present skills training.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I entirely endorse the hon. Gentleman's view about the desperate state of the construction and allied industries. Does he agree that the orders should be passed so that the levy may continue for the lifetime of the existing board? There is great diversity of companies within the construction industry. Does he further agree that we need to get the right formula so that the structure of training meets the needs of all sections of the industry? I worked for many years in construction plant hire, and I declare an interest in that for many years I have been the parliamentary adviser to the Construction Plant-hire Association. Training must reflect the interests of all parts of the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech.

Mr. Lloyd: It is an interesting speech, with which I have considerable sympathy. In the past plant hire firms have criticised the CITB, but they are strongly on record as saying that they wish the CITB to continue and the review to conclude that there is a need for a levy. They said:

"If the present levy were to end there would be a rapid collapse in training with less responsible companies poaching trained operatives off those who have invested in training."

I agree with the CPA's comments to Government and others. It is about time the review ended, because it has dragged on for far too long. There may be questions about the organisations of training, but it is about time the Government concluded their deliberations with the private sector.

The Building Employers Federation has said that the CITB is too remote from the industry and needs to talk more to employers. We would say that it needs to talk more to employees as well. There must be more than lip service because major issues such as the industry's appalling health and safety record need to be addressed. That can be done only by involving both sides of the industry in the kind of partnership that we advocate.

The Minister has told us that, even after all those months and his departmental officials telling us that there would be an announcement by the end of January, we must still wait to have our uncertainty ended. That is ridiculous when training in construction is collapsing, and the future of the nation is being put at risk by the indolence and incompetence of Ministers.

I am never sure that I do the hon. Member for Macclesfied (Mr. Winterton) any favours when I say that I find in these debates that he and I have far more in common than he has with those on his Front Bench. I will pay him a little tribute by saying that that is because he seems to care, and to think, about the issues. Would that we could see some sign of that among those on the Government Front Bench.

Even last year, a significant number of firms said that they had hard-to-fill vacancies. Two years before that, when we were already well into the recession, 44 per cent. of firms in the construction industry reported that they had hard-to-fill vacancies over the previous 12 months. We know that we do not need to move into a time of boom for skill shortages to emerge, but simply into a time when we are in a recession that is not quite as severe as this. That is what happened two years ago, and the frightening thing is that, since that time, the industry has probably lost 250,000 workers, or perhaps even more.

If the Minister can explain to me, or to any hon. Member, in a believable way, why we can take on trust his assurance that there will not be skill shortages when the recession finally bottoms out, he must know things way beyond what any intelligent commentator on the industry knows.

We need something simple—a CITB that is structured in a way that suits the needs of industry, and that is a matter for negotiation. Obviously, the Government are a central play, as are the industry and the board. We cannot allow matters to drift. For example, the CITB should not be raiding its assets, as it has been for several years, because the Government have chosen to make it operate in that way. We know that, in every year since 1988-89, the CITB has operated in deficit. It spent more than £4 million above its revenue in 1988-89, £1.5 million above in 1989-90, £7·7 million above in 1990-91, £4·1 million above in 1991-92 and a staggering £20·7 million above in the present year of 1992-93.

The Minister has to think how long the board can carry on doing that. Because of the decline in the industry, the levy has fallen in the past three years from £62·8 million to £54·2 million. If the board is to continue to train at the levels of the past year, it can do so only if it continues to raid the assets that it has built up over the years, and there is a limit to how long that can go on for.

At the beginning of the debate, I said that the previous Minister had talked about the success of counter-recessionary policies. The simple reality is that while the CITB has been trying to play its own role, when it operates on its own, it does so against such tremendous odds that it cannot possibly generate the necessary levels of skill in the construction industry. The Government must accept that it is time that they did something.

Another dilemma faces the construction industry, and I hope that Tory Members will take serious note of it, because it is not trivial. When the Department of Education changed the basis of the funding of colleges of further education, it threw a little bombshell into the structure of training in the construction industry. At the moment, the Building Employers Confederation is lobbying the Government on that issue, because it is fearful that the funding mechanisms will mean that college principals and managers will decide to withdraw from construction training because it is expensive compared with courses in, for example, the liberal arts and languages —and I do not mean to denigrate those disciplines.

Roger Elford of the confederation has said:

[Mr. Lloyd]

"There has got to be a funding mechanism which gives the colleges an incentive to mount expensive course like construction."

That was made clear to me two weeks ago when I visited a college of further education. The head of the department who was responsible for construction said that he was having to consider carefully whether he could justify the continuation of construction courses because of the high fixed capital costs and high running costs which stemmed from the need for materials. He stressed that he could run cheaper courses that were much more revenue generating.

I know that the Departments of Education and of Employment do not talk to each other, but it is about time that the Minister took a short journey and told his ministerial colleagues at the Department of Education that things are going seriously wrong. Those are not my words alone. They are echoed, for example, by the Building Employers Confederation, which is seriously concerned at the collapse of construction education in colleges of further education. It is a recorded fact that the CITB depends heavily, as does the ECITB, on the courses provided in FE colleges. The collapse of the course is not trivial. We know that the numbers of students signing on for such courses are down on previous years. The Minsiter must say what he intends to do about that.

I agree with the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) that I have painted a grim picture, but it happens, unfortunately, to display the truth. It spells out clearly that the Government planned on the basis that the recession would be far shorter than it has proved to be. In other words, they were disastrously wrong. When it became clear that the recession would continue for longer than had been thought, they refused to listen. They refused to take the necessary policy decisions. Even now, the Government are refusing properly to fund training generally. We know that the cuts in the overall training budget have increased by about a third over a few years.

We need a Government who are committed to training. We need also a Government who will commit themselves to the CITB to ensure that there is a properly structured training board for the construction industry, and the same applies to the engineering construction industry. Unfortunately, the Government will not adopt that approach while they pretend that there is no problem.

When there is an upturn in the construction industry, we shall face a horrendous problem. We shall have a balance of payments difficulty greater than that which we already have on the construction account, and that is becoming a serious matter. If we are to have a construction industry of the size that we need, we shall have to import skilled labour from outside Britain. That would be ridiculous and untenable. The hon. Member for Chorley shakes his head. He must come up with something better than that. We know, unfortunately, that training has declined. Where will the trainees come from? From where will skilled construction workers emerge? If the present circumstances are allowed to continue, we shall not see those people.

Exemption has been criticised by many groups over the years. The Federation of Master Builders has stressed that every company benefits from the CITB and that every company should contribute to it. It has made it clear that the good trainers face poaching by the bad trainers. There is the anomaly created by the fact that those below the £45,000 payroll cut-off point are in competition with those just above it, which leads to unfairness.

We know that voluntarism does not work. There is evidence that in every industry throughout the country training has been cut to a greater or lesser extent in the middle of the recession. There has been a levy system in the construction industry, but the cuts have been massive.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman has told us where he thinks the Government are going wrong, but he has not said whether he would increase the levy, or what the general levy for training would be if the Labour party had its way.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister may not be aware—I sometimes doubt whether he does know this—that it is up to him and his colleagues to come up with practical and workable plans for training. The Government have deliberately chosen to underfund training and have refused to play their part in partnership with others in the industry. If Labour were in government, we would listen carefully to those in the construction industry who are saying that the levy is too low, that it does not allow those who want to train to do so adequately and that more needs to be done.

The income of the CITB has dropped dramatically. The Minister must come up with better answers than simply asking me what we would do. But I make this offer to the Minister: if he is prepared to accept cogent advice from the Opposition, we are prepared to help the Government by telling them how to run training. They have made such a disastrous mess of construction that future Labour Governments will inherit the skill shortages caused by their crass policies. There can be no graver indictment of the Government than that.

Of course we are in favour of the order. We shall not divide the House: half a loaf is always better than none. But I make it clear that this half a loaf is sabotaging the long-term future of the country.

10.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I immediately declare my interest as a consultant to Ewebank Preece, which is the 13th largest firm of consulting engineers in the country. It is based in Brighton and employs a significant number of my constituents.

In 1989, only the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board and the Construction Industry Training Board kept their levy-raising powers, because, it was argued, of the mobile nature of their work forces. If that was intended to apply to mobile workers, it surely was not intended to apply to consultants, who are not in the same category. That is backed up by a letter than was sent by the Association of Consulting Engineers to a member of another place. It said:

"The training funded and organised by the ECITB is mainly at craft and technician level and very little of it is relevant to the majority of employees of consulting engineering firms."

In 1989-980, Ewebank Preece's levy was waived. In 1990-91, it was faced with a levy of £70,000. It is now contesting the levy. In 1991-92, under the new formula, the figure is £8,000.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Eight thousand pounds?

Mr. Bowden: Eight thousand pounds.

It seems that Ewebank Preece is being forced to pay the levy when other comparable consultants are not. This raises important points. It means that Ewebank Preece is in an unfair competitive position not only in relation to the levy but in relation to other costs. The preparation of the levy, the staff and the management time involved runs into considerable sums.

The Minister will recall that I tabled some parliamentary questions to find out who pays the levy. The information was not forthcoming. Why? Is it a state secret so that the House, the industry and the public cannot know who pays and does not pay it? On what conceivable grounds can my hon. Friend justify keeping that information secret? I suggest that a list of all the payers should be published because Ewbank Preece is convinced that many comparable consultancies are paying no levy. The company cannot be absolutely certain, but it would be fair and right if all the names were in the public domain.

What about the future? I know that the Minister cannot change the orders that we are discussing, but will he re-examine the White Paper published in December 1988, entitled "Employment for the 1990s"? On page 36 it states:

"The Government will, therefore, now enter into consultation with each of the statutory Industry Training Boards and organisations representing employers in their sectors with a view to drawing up an agreed programme and timetable for becoming independent, non-statutory bodies."

That was published in 1988, but not much has happened since then with regard to the two training boards that we are now discussing.

I suggest that next year my hon. Friend should consider alternative arrangements, such as using the training and enterprise councils to a greater extent. I believe that the TECs have been allocated funds well in excess of £2 billion for the coming financial year, so, perhaps a little extra for them to carry out that role would be the way to proceed. I hope that I have proved to my hon. Friend that the present situation is not as appropriate and fair as it should be. If so, we could ensure that the money for industrial training was used more effectively.

10.51 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The debate takes place against a background that, I think all hon. Members will agree, is disastrous for the construction industry. Estimates of the number of people who have lost their jobs in the recession range from the most cautious and conservative figure of about 400,000 to 500,000 or more. One cannot open the pages of the construction industry press without seeing each week a further record of firms going bust.

This week's edition of *Building* magazine—I declare an interest as an occasional correspondent—records that Clayton Bowmore, a building firm with a turnover of £15 million a year and 240 employees, went into liquidation last week. The article states that the banks were responsible for its collapse, as was the case for A. F. Budge and Lilley, two other construction firms which also went into receivership recently. That is a regular occurrence; every week we read similar depressing stories.

The implications have been devastating for the Construction Industry Training Board. The previous page of *Building* magazine contains an article recording the CITB's 1991-92 annual report, which shows that more than 1,200 companies which had paid levies to the CITB in the previous year folded in 1991-92 compared with an average of 300 in the previous four years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said, its levy income has been cut dramatically as a result of so many firms going bust in the recession. That is the grim context in which we are considering the order.

The construction industry is vital for the future of this country's economy. Many of us believe that it is one of the keys to bringing the country out of recession. Many of us argue that the Government have been far too slow to take effective action to stimulate recovery in construction. One obvious example is the accumulated capital receipts of more than £5 billion available to local authorities which could be used urgently to stimulate building work. Another is the rapid construction of the Jubilee line, which I know that some Conservative Members have advocated as strongly as I have. That line is vital both for transport communications in east London and for our construction industry. Many such projects should be got under way far faster.

Irrespective of our argument about the lack of energy shown by the Government towards encouraging construction, we can probably all agree that it is essential for this country that we have a properly skilled labour force if we are to come out of recession and be able not just to build the roads, the houses and the infrastructure projects we need but to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive international market.

Training and the skills shortage have been serious problems for the construction industry in Britain for far too long. Before the recession, it was estimated that two thirds of operatives in the construction industry had no formal training. The number of trainees registered with the CITB fell from 135,000 in the mid-1960s to fewer than 50,000 in 1988 before the recession. Since then, we have seen the dramatic fall in training to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford has referred. The number of youth trainees fell from 14,385 in 1989 to 8,500 in 1992 —a 40 per cent. reduction. Apprenticeship registrations are down by a similar percentage.

The report that the Department of Employment commissioned on the future skills needs of the construction industry sadly produced evidence at the end of 1991 that productivity levels in Britain still compared very badly with those of our European competitors. We must tackle that problem with determination. We need industrywide training if we are to succeed.

Anyone with a serious interest in and knowledge of construction in Britain knows perfectly well that a voluntary scheme will simply not deliver what is required. That view comes from people with a trade union perspective and from people with an employer's perspective.

The Building Employers Confederation is pretty adamant on the issue. It says emphatically:

"Training in the construction industry is made particularly difficult because of the industry's structural characteristics: its national coverage; the highly competitive nature of its work; scattered sites; short-term work load horizons which limit firms that train; the preponderance of small firms; mobility of labour-intensive sub-contracting and self-employment; the wide and ever-changing range of skills needs; and health and safety requirements.

Training has, therefore, to be nationally organised to national standards to meet the industry's needs. Collective funding is, thus, essential, and can only be effected through a statutory levy grant system which shares the cost of training and rewards firms that train.

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

If the levy is discontinued training will decline sharply, skill shortages will arise and productivity will suffer.

Thus the industry view is that the levy system must be retained."

Little could be more emphatic than that.

Bearing that view in mind, it is pretty depressing to record that the whole future of the CITB and the levy with which it finances its work have been in serious doubt in recent months. The Department of Employment review, the third in five years, has been dragging on, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford rightly pointed out. That has caused, in the words of the Building Employers Federation,

"de-stabilisation of . . . training policy in the industry."

What a way in which to run training in the construction industry when the Government's rhetoric is that we are coming out of recession and when all hon. Members believe that we should be trying to come out of recession. We need a skilled, motivated work force to enable us to do that.

Mr. Dobson: It is a job creation scheme for bureaucrats.

Mr. Raynsford: It is a job creation scheme for Ministers, who are shuffling paper around while they are undecided about what to do about the scheme.

It is time to put an end to that uncertainty. it is time for the Government to put aside their foolish ideological hankering after deregulation and their suspicion of any collective action and collective ventures such as industrywide training. It is time for whole-hearted commitment to high quality training throughout the industry.

We need a Minister who will take the matter seriously; who will act with some urgency to reinforce training and to support training initiatives to give some sense of security to those involved in the process; encourage the achievement of higher standards; ensure an adequate level of funding for the levy; and see that the CITB is free from Government meddling for the next four years until the next general election.

I repeat the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford about the need to reconsider the small firms exemption, which has an extremely arbitrary cut-off point that provides for unfair competition for firms whose payroll and labour-only sub-contracting costs fall below the £45,000 limit.

We need a positive commitment, not the reluctant and half-heared, lukewarm attitude that we have heard from the Government Front Bench. We need to send a clear message that, if Britain is to come out of recession—the construction industry has a role to play in enabling that to happen—it needs a highly skilled work force, and that will be achieved only with effective industrywide training based on a proper financial arrangements.

11 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Debates on the order are an annual event. They tend to follow the same form: a few introductory remarks from the Minister and a major contribution from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, eager to make his mark and to castigate the Government for every sin in the calendar. On this occasion, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr Lloyd) spoke for 30 minutes of the 90 minutes available to us.

The contents of the order are largely unchanged, but the background against which we debate it does change. I concur that the background this year is the devastation in the building and construction industry as a result of the longest and deepest recession since the second world war. However, the idea that that is Government-inspired is absurd, and defies belief. That idea undervalues and minimises the effect of the contribution of the hon. Member for Stretford.

I am the parliamentary adviser in the House of Commons to the Federation of Master Builders to which reference has already been made. It represents small and medium-sized builders who have been particularly hard hit. The recession has naturally taken its toll. The FMB used to have more than 20,000 members, but its membership has now dipped below that figure.

Members do not have the accumulated reserves and the earlier expansive profit margins of the large contractors. They can hang in there for a year or two. However, when the recession enters its third year, as it has now, they start to go under.

The Government's stated policy, particularly in the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is very welcome, with its promise of labour-intensive major infrastructure projects, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr Raynsford), and the various forms of support for the housing market. However, the benefits tend to flow first to the major contractors and volume builders.

Work at supplier or sub-contractor level may follow from that afterwards, but only with a time lag. Small builders need work now. They are clinging on by their fingertips. None the less, the FMB fully supports the CITB and its statutory powers to raise a levy. It therefore supports the order. It believes in the supreme importance of training generally, in good times and in bad.

It is just as well that the CITB exists, because if the responsibility had been left on a voluntary basis, there would unquestionably have been a very sharp reduction in training—even sharper than has been the case. Small businesses that are under pressure will naturally look to cut corners and training would almost certainly have suffered as a consequence.

As it is, the CITB has drawn on £6·5 million of its reserves to embark on extra counter-cyclical training measures to combat the otherwise inevitable effects of recession. It has also worked closely with local enterprise companies and training and enterprise councils in joint enterprises to bring many millions more into play, as well as conducting its own grant-supported activity. That is to be welcomed and supported. Since our previous debate, I have had an opportunity of visiting its Norfolk headquarters in Bircham Newton, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is time.

No one should dispute the vital work of the CITB. After all, support for training is an expression of faith in the future. Recovery will come; the only question is when. For all those who are engaged in the construction industry, it is long overdue. Estimates have been made of the numbers who are likely to have been lost by the time recovery comes. The figure has been put as high as 600,000 construction operatives. Many of them will be lost to the industry for ever. If massive inflation in labour costs is to be avoided, we must have sufficient skilled craftsmen in place when the upturn comes.

Despite what has been said so derisively, there were signs of recovery a year or so ago. When I was campaigning in my constituency of Romford, in every street there were "house sold" boards. On the very eve of poll, on a building estate I saw the sign "bricklayers wanted". I thought that that was a sure signal that the recovery was here. As we know, that recovery was snuffed out, and it is easy to see why, by the recession in the German and American markets, which are both major markets for us. When we have a worldwide recession, it goes beyond all sense to suggest that it is entirely the work of the British Government. That has no credibility with the British public, and that is why they re-elected a Conservative Government last April.

The missing ingredient seems to be confidence. Everything else is present. We have low interest rates, low price rises, low wage settlements, high productivity and a competitive exchange rate. They mean that the formula exists for recovery to come—we must believe that it will. Nothing could be more calculated to boost confidence in construction than to see another sign saying "bricklayers wanted". It is the purpose of the CITB and the Government to ensure that sufficient skilled operatives are available when demand returns.

The principle is strongly supported, but the burden of training costs is not entirely equitable. Many small and medium sized businesses in particular would prefer to see contributions from all without exclusion. I agree with the hon. Member for Stretford, amazing as it might seem to him and to me. Those with a payroll cost of £45,000 or less secure exemption from the levy. Although there is an understandable reason for that—the need to encourage small business to emerge and to survive—those with more than three operatives see it as yet another illustration of unfair competition. In good times, one quarter of 1 per cent. of payroll costs might not seem very much, but in times as hard as these it is just one more disadvantage to carry in cut-throat competition.

Those who are struggling to survive at the bottom end of the market in a recession find themselves being ground small by upper and nether millstones. Above them they have the large contractors muscling in on their territory —one example given to me was of a major firm, almost a household name, bidding for the conversion of a house into two flats—and below them they have individuals or groups of individuals operating very largely without constraint or obligation, sometimes legally, sometimes illegally, getting work by word of mouth or small advertisements in local newspapers.

Legally, businesses operating below the VAT ceiling, for example, can undercut those above by 17·5 per cent. That is likely to be a considerable sum. As times are hard for the consumer as well as for the builder, it is a very substantial disadvantage. Nowhere else in the EC is the disadvantage so great. Our VAT threshold is at the

[Sir Michael Neubert]

maximum of £36,000. In Belgium, Italy and Spain the threshold is nil. Apart from Ireland, which has different rates for services and goods, the next highest threshold is in France, just over £7,000. That is a unique burden of disadvantage.

VAT traders can, of course, offset costs on materials, but cowboy builders these days turn up at the local DIY and are able to buy their goods so cheaply that it does not much matter to them. Illegally, small legitimate builders face unfair competition from the black economy, in which it is a case of cash down and no questions asked. That is especially resented.

The loss of VAT, income tax and national insurance contributions should be a major concern for Her Majesty's Government, and I am sure that it is. How much effort is being made to recover those losses of revenue through fraud? Such fraud is of acute concern to small builders who operate above board and who struggle to make a living for themselves and their employees. In one country at least, I have heard that it is a criminal offence for work to be carried out without proper documentation and evidence of the transaction.

Who can blame legitimate builders for regarding the training levy, relatively small though it is, as yet another burden which is not borne by their competitors? Therefore, the FMB would like to see the exemption from the levy abolished. Despite the disadvantages de minimis, an obligation on all builders would ensure the proper importance of training, especially in health and safety matters, from the start, would remove the element of unfair competition and, what is more, would bring more funds to the function of training.

11.11 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): First, I declare an interest as a member sponsored by and political officer of the EETPU section of Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union. If it will not do irreparable damage, I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on his speech. I am not sure that he drew the conclusions that the rest of us would draw, but on analysis he has clearly identified many of the problems facing the industry. That is not a way of saying that we alumni of Bromley borough council must stick together.

The hon. Member for Romford was speaking on behalf of an industry which is being sorely pressed. I am especially sorry that he did not share our expression of disappointment at the Minister's failure to make an announcement tonight. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that the Minister was not able to make an announcement about his decision on the future of the CITB.

Frankly, the matter has been dragging on for far too long. It is causing considerable concern not only to employees and those on courses with the CITB but to the industry, which obviously has to make plans slightly more than six weeks in advance. The failure to make an announcement tonight—although there had been hints that we might get something by using this debate as the mechanism—will only add to the uncertainty and gloom in an industry which has had more than its fair share of uncertainty and gloom in the past couple of years. Not only can we look backwards at the gloom in the industry, but we can reasonably look forward to another year in which the position will get even worse.

The housing starts and the downturn in work for architects' practices show that this year could well be much worse than the preceding one. The Government must bear considerable responsibility for that. Reference has been made to that responsibility. I should like to respond to an intervention made by the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover)—I am sorry that he is not in his place. He seemed to minimise the Government's responsibility or opportunity to deal with the problems of the work load.

The hon. Member for Chorley should examine the civil engineering industry, which is overwhelmingly dependent on the work from utilities and from Government Departments. The Government have a clear role and an opportunity to operate in that industry. We should not ignore the Government's responsibility in the private sector, especially in housing. Much of the downturn in the housing industry has resulted from a policy which was clearly, bluntly and explicitly expressed by a previous incarnation of the present Prime Minister, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in those famous words, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working." As we have heard in the debate tonight, the housing industry is especially hurting.

What makes the Minister's failure to make a clear statement tonight so extraordinary is that the case for the retention of the board is widely supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and by employers in the industry and the union. On a slightly cynical note, I thought that possibly the problem was that the Government listen to employers only when the employers want to disagree with the union, but if the employers agree with the union, they feel that the Government suspect collusion and conspiracy.

Mr. Frank Dobson: Like check-off.

Mr. Spellar: Yes, like check-off. If the employers agree with the union, somehow there must be something against the public interest. The position adopted in the rest of Europe is that the attitude towards the social partners is clearly understood and that therefore the Government's wish to work with them, rather than divide. Yet it is even more ironic that the major employers in the building industry are those to whom the Tory party continually trots for funds—that is when it is not going to Greek and Chinese millionaires.

The practical and realistic reasons which led the Government to retain the construction and engineering construction training boards when they disbanded others back in 1989 still hold true today. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) rightly said, taking a considerable chunk out of my speech, the reason is the inherent nature of the industry. It is not simply that the arrangements are temporarily convenient to unions and management. The reason is the basic nature of the industry. It is by definition short-term. Employers and employees move from project to project and site to site. The work force on those sites are in continual flux as one trade goes off and another comes on.

Those are the factors which led the Government to recognise those realities in 1989. It is simply unfortunate that they have not come to a speedy decision tonight. The need for the training boards has been widely articulated across the industry. The chairman of the Construction

Industry Training Board is Sir Clifford Chetwood. Apart from holding that role, he is a major figure in the industry in his own right. In his foreword to the annual report of the CITB, he stated the position clearly:

"It is therefore with some satisfaction I report that, by judicious use of reserves and by the application of a range of counter-cyclical measures"—

perhaps Ministers remember those—

"CITB has been able to maintain training at an acceptable level during this period of deep recession in the industry."

He moved on to an area which, in the light of recent comments about being paid for working and so on, might strike a further resonance:

"The Board's Youth Training and other programmes have attracted over £35 million from TECs and LECs. In addition to this expenditure, CITB has provided grant support, amounting to almost £40 million, to employers who have undertaken approved training."

Furthermore, on the development of the all-important qualifications for skills, he said:

"Our work on the development of NVQs has resulted in these new qualifications now being available . . . for 28 construction occupations."

Reaffirming the industry's support, he said:

"I am delighted that industry has, once again, confirmed its support for the policies and achievements of CITB by their strong consensus in favour of the statutory levy."

Some doubt was expressed earlier about the attitude of the Building Employers Confederation, which, it is fair to say, represents mainly the larger employers in the industry. The hon. Member for Romford spoke substantially on behalf of the smaller and medium-sized employers in the industry. It might have been though that BEC could operate better on its own and more independently. It has stated clearly:

"The Building Employers Confederation is strongly in favour of the retention of the Construction Industry Training Board and of the statutory arrangements for the collection of levy in the interests of maintaining a satisfactory level of training in the construction industry."

It outlined some of the strong reasons why it felt that the CITB was an advantage to the industry. It pointed out the unique characteristics of the building industry, which have been mentioned several times in the debate, particularly the mobile nature of the work force. It also pointed out, as did Sir Clifford Chetwood, the ability of the CITB, which was probably better placed than many individual employers, to operate a counter-cyclical policy by investing the funds that it accumulated in good times to develop training in an essentially cyclical industry so that it had the trainees and skilled men available when industry picked up.

Furthermore, the BEC stressed the problem that has faced many industries—the poaching of skilled employees by companies which do not pay the levy. That has always been a difficulty for companies in engineering and so on, but it is of critical importance to employers in the building industry, again because the industry is highly mobile. Employers need to understand that if they undertake training they will not simply provide skilled workers for another firm which will pay an extra 50p or £1 an hour and attract those workers away. It is vital to the industry that that is not allowed to flourish.

The hon. Member for Romford effectively emphasised the need for all firms involved in the industry to be covered, so that some firms are not subject to unfair competition and there is a level playing field.

I shall not labour the point, but the BEC also mentions the problems that could be faced if there were any great dislocation of the industry, as many private providers of training could go out of business.

Finally, we must consider the number of youth training recruits who have been placed in the industry. Even in these difficult times, 10,000 youth training recruits have been placed in the industry this year. Those youngsters are being brought into the industry and provided with useful work, enabling them to envisage a potential future for themselves. As a result, the Government should seriously re-think. The Minister talks about an early announcement but time is ticking by. We are about six weeks away from the expiry of the Construction Industry Training Board, in April 1993. We need an early response from the Minister, and hopefully it will be a positive response to the debate.

11.20 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): We have heard a number of important contributions. I must first declare an interest because the headquarters and the main training centre of the construction industry training board is in my constituency, as is the civil engineering college. Not only does the CITB employ many employees in a remote rural area, but many trainees come through west Norfolk who spend money on goods and services in the locality, so it is a crucial part of my constituency.

The Minister is well aware of my views on the subject. There has been unanimous support from both sides of the House for the principle of the statutory levy. The arguments have been put most forcefully and I shall not repeat them, save to say that I wholly endorse the principle because without it the CITB would be unable to carry on in its present form, which would be a disaster for the construction industry, not least for the reasons about voluntarism suggested today.

Safety has been overlooked. There are still far too many accidents and injuries—and some fatalities—on building sites, but there would be many more without the very high standards of the CITB.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) tried to goad me into rapping the Minister over the knuckles for not coming to the House with a firm decision. I should have been somewhat concerned at the lack of any announcement today, had I not already spoken to my hon. Friend the Minister on several occasions. I know him well and have great confidence in him. I am convinced that he has already made his mind up. He has not yet been able to cross the t's and dot the i's, which is why he cannot come to the House with a firm decision, but I have little doubt that he will come here shortly with a firm statement to say that the statutory levy will be kept and that the CITB will remain in place.

I think that the Minister realises that at the time of the last review the CITB was asked to do a number of things to satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements. It carried out a strategic review and I pay tribute to all the staff at Bircham and to CITB staff throughout the country who worked to the guidelines laid down by the Secretary of State three years ago and fulfilled the conditions that he insisted upon. I believe that all the conditions have been met. The CITB has worked hard during that time to fulfil the obligations placed upon it to modernise, so that it can be a leading training organisation as we move into the 20th century.

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

The board has done a great deal despite the difficulties posed by the uncertainty; the hon. Members for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) referred to the problems caused by it. I can speak with experience about the uncertainty that has pervaded Bircham Newton in the past couple of years and particularly in the past few months. The board's staff are well paid, professional people who have made a commitment to west Norfolk by making their homes and raising their families there. They are concerned about their future and anxious that the organisation in which they believe should continue. I do not doubt that the Minister will soon make the decision to end that uncertainty.

When the decision is made to retain the statutory levy, and therefore to keep the CITB in its present form, I hope that the next review will not be set for at least four years. I hope that the cloud of uncertainty does not continue to hang over Bircham Newton. Although the board employs staff of the highest standards and sets standards which are admired throughout the world, it cannot be easy for the instructors to work in such a climate of uncertainty.

I hope that the Minister will be able to say that the CITB will not be subject to a review for at least four years. I am certain that my hon. Friend will make the right decision. Such a decision is important not only to my rural constituency, because many jobs depend upon it, but for the future of our construction industry. An overwhelming case has been put for the retention of the CITB. Our construction industry will lead us out of the recession, but to do so it needs the highest possible standards and the necessary skills. It will only retain those skills with the retention of the statutory levy.

I am grateful to the Minister for what he has said today. I am sure that we shall have to wait only a short time before he makes the final decision and I have little doubt that it will meet with widespread pleasure not only in the House but throughout the industry.

11.26 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I should like to draw the Minister's attention to one part of the industry which comes within the remit of the CITB—the plant and equipment sector, which was mentioned briefly by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

My hon. Friend will be aware that we have corresponded about a particular company in my constituency, a small business with three depots, the head of which is in Tiverton.

When the CITB agrees to give grants for training, it lays down certain criteria. The plant and equipment sector feels rather aggrieved at the fact that it has had to pay the levy, but has not qualified for grant. The criteria for eligibility for grant are that the training course should be related to the building and civil engineering industry.

The director of Howden Plant and Equipment Ltd., based in my constituency, has written to me as follows:

"We do not feel that Non-operated Plant and Tool Hire companies such as ourselves should be subject to levy as we provide a service to the public and the Construction and Building Industries. We are not actually the 'Construction Industry' in the sense that the original CITB was set up to cover."

That company has two trainees on block release and a mature fitter on day release. It pays their training fees and also their full salaries while on that training. The company has been denied grant by the CITB and, to boot, is now subject to a fine of more than £1,100 for its proportion of the levy—yet no contribution from that levy went towards the training courses offered by that company.

When my hon. Friend prepares his review of the CITB, he should consider the plant and tool equipment sector carefully. As Howden Plant and Equipment states, it is a small business. Hon. Members have already mentioned the £45,000 threshold and its effect on such small businesses. Hon. Members will also appreciate that that small business, which has rightly sent its employees on the appropriate training courses for its sector of the industry, which has not received any grant aid from the CITB but which is still paying the levy and which has shown itself to be a responsible employer, still feels that it is being penalised because of its statutory obligations.

I hope that my hon. Friend will take that message on board when he comes to the House to give his decision on the review of the CITB.

11.29 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: Hon. Members on both sides of the House have shown great interest in the CITB tonight. If I cannot give a full answer to, in particular, my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) and for Brighton, Kempton (Mr. Bowden), I shall write to them in due course about the specific problems that they raised.

I am amazed that Opposition Members should complain about the time that we have taken over the review. The Labour party has seen quite a number of reviews over the past few years. First, there was Lord Callaghan's review of why Labour lost in 1979; that was not very successful. Then there was the review by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), when he first became leader of the party; then, following another election defeat, there was another review. Yet we are told by the new Leader of the Opposition that there is to be yet another. After 14 years, Labour is still reviewing things. It has come to no answers—certainly no answer which have satisfied the time scale for reviews.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: This is good knockabout stuff, but the House would also like to know then the Minister intends to announce the results of the review.

Mr. McLoughlin: As I have said quite openly, both during this debate and on other occasions, we hope to come to the review shortly. It is clearly not the case that we have only six weeks; reconstitution of the CITB will take place in May this year, so there is some time to go. However, I accept what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who has a direct constituency interest: the sooner the announcement can be made, the better it will be for everyone concerned. My hon. Friend made a number of important points, which I shall consider carefully. The review was set in train some years ago, and I appreciate the time scale problems. I cannot pre-empt the Government's decision by following the attractive route mapped out by my hon. Friend, but I shall take into account what he said when we make our decision.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) wondered whether we ever talked to the Department for Education, and expressed particular concern about the new arrangements for college funding. Of course we talk to the

Department; the points raised by the hon. Gentleman have been raised with me when I have met the Building Employers Confederation, and we shall make the necessary representations. I regularly meet the Minister responsible for higher education to discuss matters which are of interest to both the Department of Employment and the Department of Education. It is nonsense to suggest that there is no communication between the two Departments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown specifically mentioned the way in which the levy had been applied to a firm in his constituency. I shall look into that in more detail, but he willl understand that I cannot give him a direct answer now. The sort of points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton and for Kempton will no doubt be put to us in the course of the review. When there is a levy on an industry, it is right that those paying it should feel that they are well served by the training boards to which they are obliged to contribute.

In the course of the review, we shall consider all the representations made to us. My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) asked what the levy should be. I understand his point of view. Small businesses may feel that without the exemptions the levy might be too complicated and difficult to collect. Far from reducing the number of problems with the black economy, which my hon. Friend pointed out, the payment of another levy might exacerbate them.

There have been a number of representations on this very point—some arguing, like my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), that the rate should be reduced, others asking for an increase in the number of exemptions. We shall consider these ideas carefully.

We have had a wide-ranging debate on the future of the CITB, and I hope shortly to be able to make an announcement. The levy has received support from hon. Members on both sides, and I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9 December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 30 November, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INTERNATIONAL RAILWAYS TARIFFS

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (International Railways Tariffs Agreements) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 18 January, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SCOTTISH HOSPITAL TRUSTS

That the draft Scottish Hospital Trust Scheme 1993, which was laid before this House on 18 January, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community Documents

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.).

HAZARDOUS WASTE (INCINERATION)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5761/92 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 26 January 1993, relating to the incineration of hazardous waste and supports the Government's aim of ensuring that instruments of this type contain strict but achievable, and monitorable, combustion conditions and emission limits in order to minimise the risks of pollution from incinerators, which represent an important waste disposal option.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.).

PENSION FUNDS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9752/91 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Social Security on 10 March 1992, relating to the management and investment of pension funds; and endorses the Government's view that the terms of the draft Directive will benefit the United Kingdom by enabling non-United Kingdom pension funds to invest in the United Kingdom and to employ the services of United Kingdom fund managers.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Airlines (Competition)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.37 pm

Sir Keith Speed (Ashford): I am glad to have the opportunity to concentrate on some aspects of international competition between the airlines serving the United Kingdom. I do not intend to deal with internal competition or with the slot problems at Heathrow, about which we have heard a great deal in recent times. I am sure that the Minister will be glad to hear that.

I am getting tired of sections of the media, the general public and others continually saying how uncompetitive British industry and British commerce are *vis-a-vis* Europe. By and large that is not true. It is especially not true of our airlines. None of them is state-owned. They do not receive subsidies, yet they provide high-quality service both for the customers and for the shareholders, without any assistance from the taxpayer. That goes for British Airways, British Midland, Virgin Atlantic and Britannia. These and many others are doing a great deal for the United Kingdom economy.

The same, alas, is not true of some of the airlines of our European partners. Many of them are wholly or partly state-owned. Many of them have overt or hidden subsidies. Some of us believe that the creation of a single European market on 1 January this year and the liberalisation of air services in the "third package" should have brought about the conditions for real competition in European air transport.

British airlines have nothing to fear and much to gain from fair competition, but is the competition fair? All the national flag carriers in the European Community, with the exception of British Airways, have state shareholdings, and usually the majority of the shares are Government-owned. That is okay, provided that Government money is not put into the airlines without any check or accountability or an examination of the airline's viability.

It is quite clear that many of the European airlines that have received Government money are not viable and that the share subscription or loans or other funds are put into those airlines on terms and conditions that are not available to private companies. Any Government guarantees to airlines in the EC must be valued and taken into account when the whole issue is properly looked at. Mergers or substantial financial investment in other companies should be examined with special care to make sure there is a proper market strategy that is subject to scrutiny by the competition authorities. That means that there should be no question of subsidies enabling an airline in country A to have a major investment in an airline of country B.

Air France recently took a controlling stake in the Czechoslovakian airline, CSA. The deal was financed by French state banks and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Air France and its partner, Sabena, have also been able to pass on to CSA several of their excess Boeing aircraft orders. Air France, with the backing of the French Government, has managed to achieve a controlling interest in one of the emerging central European airlines.

Air France has also had new state aid for restructuring totalling some FF3,250 million. Iberia, the national airline of Spain, has had significant new state finance totalling $1.2 billion. Al Italia, the state airline of Italy, has had over 25,000 million lire in contributions and grants from the European social fund and unspecified contributions from the Sicilian authorities towards promotion and advertising of the airline. Sabena was granted just under $1 billion in 1991 by the Belgian Government and other public authorities to sort out its problems at that time.

None of those grants or aids is subject to the stringent public service obligations that should be properly examined by the European Commission and the relevant national Governments. I am afraid that the situation is no better in terms of regulatory charges, which involve quite large sums. In the United Kingdom, the Civil Aviation Authority has to recover all its costs from the United Kingdom airlines and make a return on capital. That is right, and I pay tribute to the CAA for its work and its high standards. It does not cost the taxpayer a penny, but it means that our airlines have to make the equivalent of a recovery of 108 per cent. of the regulatory costs charged to them by the CAA. In the case of British Airways, that amounts to tens of millions of pounds each year for the services provided by the CAA.

Let us examine the position in Europe. Belgium recovers less than 5 per cent. from its airline; the rest is paid from taxation. Denmark is better, because it recovers 70 per cent. and is working towards 100 per cent.

In France, only 64 per cent. is recovered from the airlines; in Germany, from Lufthansa and others, only 15 per cent.; in Greece, only 14 per cent. In Holland it is better, with 55 per cent. recovered, largely from KLM. in Spain, from Iberia and other Spanish airlines, none is recovered. The entire sums are paid out of general taxation, because it is in the interests of the Spanish airlines. That is not good enough, and it means that national airlines gain a considerable subsidy from the Governments of those countries.

Before that other great aviation country, the United States, becomes too smug, let me make it clear that its carriers are not able to survive against tough competition unless they have a certain protection when they get into great difficulties. That is the protection from their creditors that is offered by chapter 11 of the bankruptcy code in the United States. That means that the prime aim of airline companies getting into difficulties and seeking protection under chapter 11 is to protect themselves from their creditors and generate cash flow rather than profit. They can continue trading without normal concerns for operating margins. The airlines operating under chapter 11 include Continental, which has embarked on a major advertising campaign in the UK, TWA and America West.

I hope that the Minister will agree that those European and transatlantic examples are to be condemned as unfair and subsidised competition, which, in 1993, casts doubts over the willingness of Governments to accept the implications of the single market and of competitive airlines that can operate within the rigours of the market.

Transparency, viability and the commercial regime should be the watchwords for the Commissioners in Brussels, and there is much still to be done. We should remind President Clinton and others in the new American Administration that chapter 11 solves nothing and distorts competition, not least to existing viable US airlines such as Delta, United and American.

The airlines are in a disgraceful situation. British airlines are trying to compete—indeed, are competing successfully and profitably—with their hands tied behind their backs.

I conclude by quoting the last paragraph of the report from the Air Transport Users Committee for 1992:

"The achievement of the single market for air transport has the potential to bring great benefits for consumers, but these benefits can easily be negated unless the Commission makes full and effective use of its powers under the Treaty to ensure that all carriers are able to compete on level terms. The greatest threat to the success of the Community's policies is in this vital sector of the economy lies in the distorting effect of state aids, and the Commission must use its powers under Articles 92 and 93 of the Treaty to ensure that such aids are not only banned in law but also in reality."

I could not put it better, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me that the UK Government are taking a firm line with the less efficient, less viable, subsidised airlines in Europe and the US.

11.48 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) on his good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate and on raising such an important subject. I echo his sentiments about the immensely impressive progress that our aviation industry has made in general over the past few years. The cornerstone of that progress is a policy which has been remarkably successful. It is one that is based on competition, and it is focused on two fundamental concerns. First, there is the need to encourage a healthy aviation industry in the United Kingdom. Secondly, there is the need to facilitate customer choice as between airlines. The two concerns go very much together.

I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees with the Government's firm belief that the pattern of air services and the fares charged should, as far as possible, be decided by the market. No outside influences should be allowed artificially to restrict the services available to the public and no collusion should be allowed to keep the prices charged unnecessarily high. It follows that those in the aviation industry who provide the right service profitably at the lowest price should thrive, but to do so they should be continuously open to challenge by competitors, and the barriers to new services should be minimal.

That belief remains the cornerstone of our approach to airline competition policy, because it is as true today as it ever was that competition gives customers choice. Competition between carriers produces better service to consumers as competing carriers seek to build new business and attract business from one to another by offering better deals and better services which better match what customers want.

We also continue to support the need for effective safeguard mechanisms to prevent anti-competitive behaviour, which is the thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks. It is vital for the maintenance of open and fair competition that all complaints of anti-competitive behaviour can be examined, and with appropriate speed.

Before I outline the arrangements which have been established in the European Community, I wish to echo my hon. Friend's praise of the United Kingdom aviation industry. We have a great deal to be proud about. In the United Kingdom there are 45 airlines. We have more airlines than any other country in the world, with the exception of the United States. More than three quarters of our airlines—34—are licensed to operate international services. Quality as well as quantity has resulted from bringing competition to our home market. British Airways, British Midland, Britannia, Monarch and Virgin are all world leaders which are renowned for their service.

It is gratifying that so many United Kingdom carriers exemplify what a successful air carrier should be. They are financially strong, innovative and competitive. Perhaps most importantly, they are privately owned. They owe allegiance to no one but their shareholders and they operate wholly according to their own commercial expertise as inspired by customers' wishes. Lord King, during his 12 years as chairman of British Airways, succeeded in transforming BA from an airline which was known by its initials—I do not know whether this is unparliamentary—as bloody awful, into one which is among the finest in the world, if not the finest. That is the position on any test. I know that many hon. Members wish Lord King continued success in his role as president of BA.

Having seen at first hand the benefits of competition in our home market—benefits for consumers, the airlines, airports and the economy—we are keen to take the lead elsewhere. I am sure that United Kingdom carriers will be prominant in seeking to open up new markets and attract new passengers. So I fully expect United Kingdom air carriers to be introducing new ideas and services and to be setting new standards for service, pricing and frequency in order to generate business and make profits. I look forward to seeing the privately owned and commercially minded United Kingdom carriers benefiting most from the opportunities presented by liberalisation both within the Community's air transport market and elsewhere.

The United Kingdom has played a leading part in the arrangements which have been established in the Community. Here the results of our liberalisation policy have been impressive—even in the face of doubt caused by the fears of some about competition, itself heightened by the world-wide recession.

The European Community licensing arrangements which have been established are crucial because they identify carriers licensed by the United Kingdom and other member states as "Community air carriers". That now means something, as a Community air carrier has the freedom to establish anywhere in the EC, to attract EC and other investment, and to provide services within the EC. With the United Kingdom very clearly in the vanguard, the EC has decisively banished the old, outdated traditional system characterised by nationalism and protectionism, in which the consumer has been the principal loser, and instead established a truly liberal single market in air transport on 1 January this year. It would be over-ambitious to expect dramatic changes to take place overnight, but the single market created by the third liberalisation package sets the ground rules and creates the opportunities for the aviation industry of the future in Europe.

By introducing common criteria for operator licensing —in other words, removing the possibility of flag carriers being given preferential treatment—and by removing restrictions on market access and pricing through the EC, all Community carriers have now been put on an equal footing. The market is now open to those with a stomach for a competitive environment, and the onus is on carrier to offer the sort of services that the customer requires and to set fares in the light of market conditions, rather than

[Mr. Steve Norris]

by cosy agreements with Government. This gives a green light to carriers which are prepared to go out and win business—provided always, of course, that they are safe; there has never been any suggestion that safety standards would be compromised.

I was sorry when my hon. Friend announced at the beginning of his speech that he did not intend to mention slots at Heathrow, as I had prepared an extensive part of my speech to deal with that—*[Interruption]*. I accept the invitation of the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) to regurgitate at least part of what I had prepared.

I am immensely proud to say that BA holds a smaller proportion of slots at Heathrow than many of its major EC competitors hold at their base airports, which demonstrates the success of our competition policy. For example, it holds a smaller proportion of the Heathrow slots than Lufthansa holds at Frankfurt and Munich, Iberia at Madrid, Sabena at Brussels and Air France at Charles de Gaulle. That is directly relevant to the thrust of the first two major points that my hon. Friend made about the extent to which national airlines rely on state aid.

We regard it as essential that we follow up the liberalisation agreement with progress in the key area of state aid. Cash injections to state-owned airlines on terms which would not be available in the private sector place those carriers at a distinct and unfair competitive advantage. Those injections are made in large individual cash lump sums, of which my hon. Friend gave examples, or in subsidised regulatory fees, for which the Civil Aviation Authority endeavours fully to recover costs. My hon. Friend is right to point out that that practice is not followed across the Community, and there is clearly scope for further work on precisely that point. We are quite clear that state aid should be rigorously controlled, and where terms would not be available in the private sector those state aids should not be allowed.

The Commission published guidelines on aviation state aid in 1984. They are nine years old now, so we have sought the uprating of existing Commission guidelines to tie in with the single market under the changes in the legal framework in recent years. The Commission's commitment to do so is therefore welcome. It is important that the Commission applies the guidelines in a way which is consistent with the concept of a liberal single market, and we shall continue to press for that. We shall also continue to ensure that cases of anti-competitive behaviour are dealt with rigorously within the framework of effective safeguards already in place.

I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I do not comment on each of the examples that he gave. I shall simply confine myself to sharing his concern about the logic that the Commission appeared to be pursuing in not finding some of the cases to which he referred obvious examples of state aid in circumstances which have conveyed an unfair competitive advantage.

The CAA currently has powers under the Civil Aviation Act 1982, EC regulations and supplementary domestic regulations to investigate complaints of anti-competitive practices made against United Kingdom carriers and to take appropriate remedies. Those powers are part of the CAA's powers to vary carriers' EC operating licences or their United Kingdom non-EC route licences.

Member states can put their views to the Commission in cases where the free play of competition may have been distorted, and we shall continue positively and constructively to put forward the United Kingdom's views on individual cases.

United Kingdom carriers may make a complaint to the Commission under articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome, as my hon. Friend said. Article 86, which covers abuse of a dominant position, is also actionable in the United Kingdom courts. Special regulations apply the articles to aviation and give the Commission important powers to intervene. They include the so-called "cease and desist" regulation, which enables the Commission to take quick interim action to stop a small airline being driven out of business before there is time to put any of the other procedures into operation.

The third package is very good news. It helps airlines to generate more business and earn greater profits. Successful carriers operating in a free market are less likely to need Government financial backing and state aid. It will also benefit consumers, as an efficient and competitive airline market will bring the prospect of new, improved services and will put downward pressure on air fares.

I should like to say one last word on the viability and attractiveness, or otherwise, of European airlines. It is surely extraordinary that, despite the examples of continued state funding—let us put it no more strongly than that—by other Community Governments of their national flag carriers, and despite the fact that British Airways, an example of a former flag carrier which is still a proud flag carrier for British aviation, operates in the free market and is entirely dependent on convincing bankers of the value of its capital programme if it wishes to reinvest, it is British Airways which continues to set standards throughout the world, and does so with a profit.

That should be the test. There must be a lesson to be learnt by every European Government: it is not state intervention and constant state subsidy which produce better quality services, but forcing airlines to accept the rigours of the market and of competition on entirely free and equal terms. That is how to improve the quality of airlines throughout Europe, and it will benefit me, my hon. Friend, every hon. Member and every citizen in this country and in the Community.

My hon. Friend also raised the important issue of unfair competition from United States airlines cushioned by chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. We flagged the anti-competitive implications of that protection with the United States Government in the context of our wider talks on liberalisation. However, a review of chapter 11 has not been one of our priorities to date. The two United States airlines supported by chapter 11 which currently operate transatlantic services—TWA and Continental Airlines—are not significant players in the market.

I asked my officials to examine the number of flights that they operate in the UK. United States carriers—non-chapter 11 protected carriers—operate 41 services a day to London and six to the regions. United Kingdom carriers operate 31 services a day to London and three to the regions. That is a total of 72 flights to London every day by non-chapter 11 carriers.

Against that, TWA has one service a day to London and Continental Airlines has four. In summer 1993—the

period for which I am quoting the figures—TWA and Continental represent only about 6 per cent. of the market. However, although I make that point to explain to my hon. Friend that it has not been our first priority—it is also in the context of other liberalisation and trading issues that we are currently discussing with our American colleagues—it does not mean that we do not take the issue seriously. We are certainly ready to take the issue further if it represents a real problem for United Kingdom airlines.

My hon. Friend referred to the whole philosophy of chapter 11, which is that it does not allow the market to operate in its normal sense. Broadly speaking, when a carrier is no longer able to provide services profitably and has exhausted its credit, it simply disappears from the market and allows stronger carriers to take on the services. To that extent, my hon. Friend is right: the whole concept of chapter 11 is at odds with the concept of a free market.

Elsewhere, we have sought arrangements with countries in the far east, in Australasia, in Africa and in South America which allow scope for extra competition between airlines and flexibility on routing, capacity and pricing. Significant progress has already been made with Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, Brunei and South Africa, and we are currently in discussion with others in those regions.

As with all our moves towards the liberalisation of air services, we insist that safeguards must be put in place at the same time to protect against anti-competitive practices. That aspect of our policy is just as much in the interests of a healthy, competitive aviation industry as it is in the interests of air transport users.

I believe that my hon. Friend shares the conviction that the Government have led the way—within the Community, certainly—in establishing the parameters of the third liberalisation package. We have consistently led the way on the advantages of the free market. Through the strength of our domestic airlines, we have demonstrated that those policies are successful. I am sure that my hon. Friend shares my enthusiasm for continuing to press the important matters that he has raised today to ensure that the market works fairly and not to the disadvantage of United Kingdom carriers.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 9 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Hong Kong Military Service Corps (Passports)

1. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the right to a British passport of members of the Hong Kong Military Service Corps.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for defence and I have received a number of representations about the allocation of passports to locally entered uniformed personnel serving in the military garrison in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alexander: Bearing in mind that we are dealing with members of a unit of the British Army, many of whom have served up to 22 years, during which time they have paid British taxes, and bearing in mind that we are talking about a maximum of 1,300 individuals, most of whom would not want to come here in any case, should we not make an exception in their case?

Mr. Hamilton: As my hon. Friend will know, there is a residual number of passports, of which we hope to secure a high proportion for many of these people, who I agree have given dedicated service to the Crown. I very much accept what my hon. Friend says and we should like to do everything that we can, within the allocation, to get as many of the passports as we can for those locally entered personnel.

Mr. Cox: Is the Minister aware that there is widespread support throughout the House for the point made by the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander)? Those personnel have loyally served the country and feel threatened by the changes in Hong Kong in 1997. They are in a very different position from other people such as prison officers or the police. I ask the Minister seriously to consider their request

Mr. Hamilton: I very much accept what the hon. Gentleman says. They are indeed in a different position, and one of the things that make their position different from that of the police, prison officers, and so on is that their jobs will not continue after 1997. As I have already said, we are doing our best to secure as many passports as we can from the remaining tranche available. I take the point that many of those people do not want to come to this country, but they want the guarantee so that their futures will be secure. We hope that their fears of persecution when the Chinese take over in Hong Kong are unfounded, and we have every reason to believe that they will be very fairly treated.

Yugoslavia

2. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the regulations concerning the payment of local overseas allowance for British troops serving in the former Yugoslavia.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Local overseas allowance is a tax-free addition to pay designed to compensate service personnel for the extra cost of serving in countries where day-to-day living expenses are higher than in the United Kingdom. This does not apply to British troops in former Yugoslavia who, in any event, do not pay local food and accommodation charges. Troops deployed there from bases in Germany nevertheless continue to receive a proportion of their local overseas allowance—70 per cent. for married personnel and 40 per cent. for single personnel—in recognition of continuing financial commitments in Germany.

Mr. Spellar: Does the Minister accept that, forgetting his lawyer's logic, the people of this country find it quite extraordinary that soldiers going into what is effectively a war zone in Yugoslavia are taking a pay cut and equally astonishing that those troops under fire are facing redundancy notices? When will he do something about that?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman really has not examined the matter properly. He should know perfectly well that British troops serving in Yugoslavia come from Germany and the United Kingdom. Those who come directly from the United Kingdom would not have been receiving an overseas allowance. Those who come from Germany receive an allowance to pay for the higher costs of living in Germany. It would be absurd to pay an allowance that is paid for one purpose in a territory where that purpose simply is not met; the hon. Gentleman should realise that before putting his rather foolish proposition.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful for my right hon. and learned Friend's reply because it is important that he remains flexible on that issue. It is undoubtedly very important to those serving in war zones, or however we may describe them, that their families are not at a financial disadvantage. Those who have been stationed in Germany, in particular, and whose wives and families remain there, still have serious financial commitments to meet. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the flexibility of which he has assured us will therefore be greatly welcomed by the wives and families who remain in Germany?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, it is a very flexible policy. If the Opposition had listened to my original answer they would realise that. Under current policy, personnel who have come from Germany and who continue to have commitments there will be paid 70 per cent. of the allowance if they are married and 40 per cent. if they are single. It would be absurd to pay them the full allowance,

which is partly to cover the cost of food and accommodation, when those serving in Yugoslavia receive food and accommodation completely free.

NATO

3. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of NATO in a future European security policy.

Mr. Rifkind: NATO will remain the principal mechanism for the promotion of collective security and stability throughout the Atlantic area and the forum for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of its members.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer, indefinite though it is. Does he agree that the success of NATO over 40 years was based on the imperative of defence and that, although the alliance had political structures, they were very much secondary and subordinate to that imperative? As a consequence, NATO was often much bigger and more effective than the sum of its parts. In the absence of that imperative, and with political differences and difficulties coming to the fore, might there not be a serious possibility that NATO could be fatally weakened and undermined?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the fact that, with the ending of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the circumstances in Europe for which NATO was originally designed have changed radically. We cannot assume, however, that all risk has disappeared. Clearly, Russia remains a nuclear super-power and while—at the moment—it has a friendly Government seeking to introduce democracy and western values, we cannot assume that to be a policy which will be achieved with great success in the foreseeable future. In addition, NATO must find ways of making available its valuable and expensive assets in order to contribute to other problems of security, as it is currently doing in, for example, former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my right hon. and learned Friend any plans for extending operational sea training facilities to other NATO navies? If so, will he produce some nice glossy brochures to sell the services of Portland rather than promoting the virtues of spending £600 million on new office blocks for Ministry of Defence civil servants?

Mr. Rifkind: I fully understand my hon. Friend's natural concern about that issue. As he will be aware, over the years we have already provided opportunities for sea training for other NATO countries. The United Kingdom is seen as a valued source of such training, and I am sure that it will continue to be so wherever sea training takes place.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Secretary of State confirm the importance of Britain's amphibious programme to future European security. In particular, will he repeat in the House what he said on "Newsnight" last week—that the Navy's new helicopter carrier is not to be cancelled to pay for the Army changes that he announced last week?

Mr. Rifkind: Amphibiosity continues to be a useful asset for the armed forces and, although it has not been used in recent years, it is, nevertheless, an important capability.

As for the landing platform helicopter, I repeat what I said in the House some time ago. We are continuing to evaluate the tenders that we have received. There is no question of cancelling the order to pay for last week's announcement about Army manpower. The continuing need for the LPH must be properly assessed on its merits, and that is how we shall proceed.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the changes in NATO have meant that there is an even bigger role for the amphibious forces? Important though the landing platform helicopter ship is, so are the replacements for the landing ships for the Royal Marines, who are probably the most efficient and cost-effective armed forces in the world. Can we ensure that they have the means with which to get to the places where they are required to work?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is certainly entitled to point out that the present reliance on the landing platform docks to develop an amphibious capability continues to be important. We do not have an LPH at present, and we have not had one for several years. It is a question whether we should enhance the amphibious capability by proceeding with that order. My hon. Friend is right to draw that point to the attention of the House.

Dr. Reid: Here we are, five years and more after the end of the cold war, and today the Select Committee on Defence has illustrated once again what the Opposition have said for the past two years: the Government have no strategy on defence, no policy on security and no idea where they are going. How on earth can the Secretary of State pretend to fashion European defence policy when he has not a clue how to fashion British defence policy? Would he not do better to save himself another U-turn and a lot of time and trouble by telling the House today that he will instigate a full defence review? Alternatively, does he intend to go on as he has over the regiments and the dockyards, staggering from pillar to post and doing a disservice to himself as well as to the country and to the armed forces?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman could not even present his point with a straight face, which is not surprising as he represents a party which has done a complete somersault on nuclear disarmament and whose party conference——

Mr. Skinner: We are in a nuclear-free zone here.

Mr. Rifkind: I entirely concede that there are at least three Labour Members to whom my criticism does not apply. The Labour party conference continues to call for massive 25 per cent. reductions in the defence budget, so the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who speaks from the Front Bench, should start to convert his own party supporters before he tries to instruct the Conservative party on a proper defence policy.

Defence Exports

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the contribution to the economy of defence exports.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Britain's defence exports for 1992 were £4·5 billion, representing 20 per cent. of the world market.

Those were record figures. In the month of January 1993, British companies won orders in the middle and far east with a value approaching that of our worldwide defence exports for the whole of 1992, so we now expect that 1993 will be another record-breaking year. We regard this as a satisfactory contribution to our economy.

Mr. Burns: Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for his tremendous work in securing the important Tornado order and for safeguarding thousands of jobs in this country? Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating HE, a company in my constituency of Chelmsford, on its important work in the building of Tornado?

Mr. Aitken: First, I am glad to confirm that HE, the admirable high-technology company in my hon. Friend's constituency, is likely to benefit from the large Tornado order. I make the point that all round the country approximately 150 British subcontracting firms will benefit from the order, in addition to British Aerospace, the main contractor. As my hon. Friend has said, all those companies have good reason to be extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for his superb negotiating skills which won the order.

Mr. Hutton: Can the Minister confirm that the Ministry of Defence has no current plans to sell any of the four Upholder class submarines which are due to enter service in the Navy in the near future? Will he take this opportunity to tell the House that those four submarines have an important role to play in the Navy's submarine service?

Mr. Aitken: I can certainly confirm that there are no current plans for the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised. The question concerns defence exports generally. Whatever any one product may be, our disposals branch plays a useful role in selling unwanted defence equipment to overseas buyers.

Mr. Trotter: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the role that he played in obtaining the very valuable aircraft and tank export orders. May I draw his attention to the potential for naval exports and particularly, in this unstable world, the need of foreign navies for amphibious ships? If we proceed with the landing platform helicopter order in this country, which was recently described by the Commander-in-Chief Fleet as critical to the Navy's capabilities, it could lead to export orders which would help to maintain our defence and industrial base.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) is a formidable champion of the interests of his constituency, where there is a great shipyard. He has been most helpful in pressing us to make efforts to achieve export orders for naval vessels, and there have been many successes in recent months. I certainly hope that, with my hon. Friend's help, we will continue to win orders in this important matter.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Instead of promoting the sale of weapons of mass destruction to undemocratic countries overseas, would not the Prime Minister have spent his time more successfully in taking a leaf out of the book of the Taiwanese Government and investing in our civil aerospace industry?

Mr. Aitken: The Prime Minister, on his recent trip, batted for Britain splendidly on civil and military matters and won orders for both. I am amazed by the hon. Lady's attitude, which conflicts with that of the many hon. Members who keep writing to me on behalf of their constituents asking us to fight for export orders. The hon. Lady reflects the confusion which was sown so excitably by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 24 November, when he said that we should not be selling defence equipment to anyone other than non-military dictatorships. We are all waiting for clarification as to which regimes have the Labour party's seal of approval. Should we send back the orders in the meantime?

Germany

5. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total annual cost of maintaining British forces in Germany; and what will be the likely number stationed there in 1994.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The defence budget provision for 1992-93 for the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany was £1,740 million. There will be around 36,000 troops stationed in Germany in 1994.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that typically full and complete reply. Does he agree, however, that there would be less strain on the Exchequer if British troops were stationed in the United Kingdom rather than in Germany, particularly as there is no longer any threat from the Warsaw pact? Would my right hon. Friend care to say why it might be thought that 23,000 troops in Germany is the right figure to maintain an American presence in NATO in Germany?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend says that there will be less strain on the Exchequer. In fact, there would be a greater strain on the Exchequer because if we brought those troops back we should have to spend a lot of money on barracks and so forth to relocate them in this country. It would help the balance of payments, but that would be very much outweighed by other costs.

I do not share my hon. Friend's view that there is now no threat from the east. We have to be very careful about Russia's capacity to regenerate its military power. I do not think that we should be complacent about that. Russia remains a major power in the world and we have to be very careful, because the political uncertainties in Russia are very great indeed.

As regards our contribution to NATO, it is extremely important that if we expect the Americans to continue to play a role in European defence through NATO we should make our contribution with forces overseas as well.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister give a clear assurance that there is no prospect of the local overseas allowance paid to British forces in Germany being cut or removed altogether?

Mr. Hamilton: No, we continue to review the local overseas allowance which is paid to forces all around the world and therefore has to take into account the different costs of living in different parts of the world. We intend to continue that. The local overseas allowance is regularly updated as well.

Nuclear Warheads (CIS)

6. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of fully operational nuclear warheads available to each country of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Mr. Rifkind: We estimate that the former Soviet Union had some 27,000 or more nuclear warheads. All the tactical warheads are now in Russia. Of the strategic warheads, we believe that there are some 7,500 in Russia, 1,500 in Ukraine, 1,200 in Kazakhstan, and 80 in Belarus. I am sure that the House will join me in welcoming the ratification by Belarus on 4 February of the START 1 treaty and her commitment to accede to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Is he aware that Ukraine is selling nuclear weapons to whoever will buy them? Is it not time that we had a fifth Trident submarine? Will he assure me that he will not listen to the CND crackpots opposite? They do not care about jobs and they do not care about defence. All that they care about is the lack of defence of this country. Will he answer a direct question? Will they knock £6 billion off their defence budget? Let us have a simple answer: yes or no.

Mr. Rifkind: I think that I can happily endorse my hon. Friend's observations. The Labour party campaigned against the Trident programme and sought to denude Britain of its nuclear deterrent, and at its party conference it continues to call for massive reductions in our defence forces. That policy is matched only by the inconsistency of Labour Front-Bench Members simultaneously calling for more soldiers, more defence spending and more regiments. The Labour party's policy has only to be described to be seen as totally unworthy of any support from any reasonable source.

Mr. Cohen: The Secretary of State will know that the United Kingdom has offered to supply 250 containers and 20 transporters to the countries of the CIS to help them destroy their nuclear weapons, but is it not the case that the transporters have not yet begun to be delivered and will not be there until the end of 1994? Is it not also the case that the design of the transporters is chronically unreliable? If they break down on British motorways, are they not likely to break down on the pot-holed roads of the Soviet Union as well?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman. Until they are manufactured, it is difficult to deliver them, and they are in the process of being manufactured at present. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the design will be of a sort that will be suitable for the purpose for which they are being sent.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend note that the President of the Ukraine is in the United Kingdom this week and therefore may well have heard the question of my hon. Friend for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans)? Will he also note that the problem of the continuing possession of nuclear weapons by the CIS is a matter of concern and underlines the importance of maintaining NATO and safeguards and encouraging the Americans to maintain their presence within NATO at the current level rather than switching to the rotation concept which has quite a lot of support among the Democrats?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the President of the Ukraine does not need to be in the Chamber to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). We do not have any evidence which shows that the Ukraine is selling nuclear weapons. Indeed, it does not have physical possession of the weapons on its territory: they continue to be in the control of the officers of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Some weeks ago, we had a visit by the Ukrainian Minister of Defence, who gave an assurance that the Ukraine remains committed to removing all nuclear weapons from its territory. All tactical nuclear weapons have already been removed, and we look forward to its ratification of the START treaty in due course.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Secretary of State realise that almost the whole world, with the exception of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), approves of the START 1 and 2 treaties, which will bring about a reduction of nuclear warheads throughout the world, including the CIS? Can he give the House an assurance that when he deploys Trident Britain will not buck the trend and increase the number of nuclear warheads on its submarines from 192 to 512?

Mr. Rifkind: Unlike both the former Soviet Union and the United States, our determination of the size of our nuclear deterrent has never been based on principles of either parity or superiority. We have always sought to identify the minimum size of deterrent which is capable of ensuring the ultimate protection of these islands. We shall continue to apply that principle. It is the only sound principle with regard to the defence of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Barry Porter: While I cannot match the elegance or eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), he elicited from the Minister some frightening figures about the nuclear presence and power of those countries that comprised the Soviet Union at one stage. Would not it make sense for the Minister to consider that Britain's submarine capacity would be better served if a warship yard of proven ability such as Cammell Laird were given at least some breathing space to see whether it can provide the defence that the Minister obviously considers desirable?

Mr. Rifkind: We attach continuing importance to ensuring that our shipyards are able to meet the needs of the Royal Navy. Those needs change as the years go by, but it is crucial not only that our naval requirements should be met within the United Kingdom, but that the principle of competition should apply wherever possible to ensure that the cost to the taxpayer is kept to an absolute minimum.

WE177 Nuclear Bomb

7. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Rifkind: The WE177 is expected to remain in service well into the first decade of the next century. We are studying a range of possible options for its eventual replacement; I will make an announcement at the appropriate time.

Mr. Donohoe: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the WE177 replacement will cost £3 billion? Will he accept the advice of the former hon. Member for Beckenham, who, on 22 November 1991, asked the Government to halt the replacement of that most expensive and unnecessary system?

Mr. Rifkind: I certainly cannot confirm the figure that the hon. Gentleman used, which I do not recognise. We are looking at a series of possible replacements for the WE177 which could either be an alternative free-fall bomb or another means of achieving a sub-strategic capability. It would be unwise to assume that there is no need for any intervening level of capability between conventional forces and the full power of our strategic Trident system. The whole basis of NATO defence policy, including our policy, has been to allow for the possibility of a graduated response in times of crisis. The hon. Gentleman should also take account of that.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in an era of potential nuclear proliferation around the globe, it remains important for the United Kingdom, if it is to be a significant nuclear power in the future, to deploy a sub-strategic deterrent that is both credible and visible? In that connection, is not it sensible to have an air-launched system such as the one that the French and the Americans will be deploying?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly important to ensure that any system that we might choose is credible and reliable. An air-launched system is one option that has to be considered seriously. There are other possibilities and it would be wrong to foreclose any of the options until the work has been done. As I mentioned to the House a few moments ago, our current sub-strategic system will be available until well into the first decade of the next century. Therefore, we can study these matters with the care and detail that they obviously deserve.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity today to exclude the tactical air-to-surface missile as one of those alternatives, because the need for it was conceived when NATO's nuclear doctrine was one of flexible response? Now that NATO's nuclear doctrine is that those weapons are weapons of last resort, what possible justification is there for a tactical air-to-surface missile, not least when a sub-strategic alternative could be achieved by the use of a single missile and single warhead on the Trident D5 system?

Mr. Rifkind: It would be wrong at this stage to exclude any of the options until the work has been done. Although the hon. and learned Gentleman is correct that the strategic situation has changed, as NATO continues to believe that flexible response is an important ingredient and that it is necessary to ensure the sub-strategic system in addition to strategic nuclear weapons, these matters must be considered with all the care that the issue clearly requires.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Once my right hon. and learned Friend has had time, as I am sure he will, to read, mark, learn, inwardly digest and, I hope, act upon today's report from the Select Committee on Defence, will he note that the most spine-chilling piece of evidence was that nuclear material and weapons are leaching out of Russia into European, Arab and Muslim countries and that 163 countries have now obtained them? Will he state definitely to the House that we will ensure that our capabilities to deal with such weapons are sufficient to deter their use by countries that have unstable Governments and are within reach of Europe?

Mr. Rifkind: The proliferation of nuclear weapons must be a matter of serious concern. At a time when the Soviet Union—the world's second-largest nuclear super-power—is disintegrating, it is an important priority to ensure that the transition of the Soviet Union into its successor states is accompanied by the removal of all nuclear weapons from countries other than Russia and to assist Russia in the dismantling and destruction of surplus nuclear weapons. We must do so partly to prevent the disposal of weapons or their components to other countries.

Mr. Martlew: Yesterday the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that we needed to review the welfare state because public expenditure was out of control. Today we have a damning indictment of the Government by the Select Committee on Defence, which says that we must spend more money on the Army. The answer must be for the Government to abandon their plans for a new nuclear bomb. We would save £3 billion if we scrapped the tactical air-to-surface missile. The Labour party would scrap TASM tomorrow. It is an embarrassment internationally and it has no military capability for the future. I predict that the Conservative Government will scrap TASM. Why does not the Secretary of State tell the House now that he will cancel it?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says that a Labour Government would scrap TASM tomorrow. It is worth remembering that the same Labour Government would have scrapped Trident yesterday. That speaks for itself on the inadequacy on Labour thought on those crucial issues.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. and learned Friend concede that we never know from where an attack may come? *[Interruption.]* Yes, even from the Opposition Benches. Does he agree that if we have a nuclear deterrent it must be updated? In the CIS nations inflation is running at 1,000 per cent. People cannot afford coffins to bury their dead. Hospitals cannot afford replacement needles. That group of nations has all the ingredients for another revolution. We must forget what is happening in the rest of the world and make sure that we can defend our nation.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to remind us of those considerations. It is worth remembering that in 10 years' time, even if it has fully met all its obligations under the START and successor treaties, Russia will still have more than 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads and will still be the world's second-largest nuclear super-power.

Nuclear Test Veterans

8. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in 1993 about compensation for nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A small number of representations have been received so far this year.

Mr. Hall: Is the Minister aware that thousands of former British troops such as my constituent, Mr. Anderson, who was exposed to radioactive fall-out in the

clean-up of Christmas island, still await justice and compensation from our Government, whereas their counterparts in the United States and Canada have received just compensation from their Governments? When will the report that the Prime Minister mentioned on 14 January on compensation for those Army veterans be published? Will he confirm that the cases of constituents such as Mr. Anderson will be included in that report?

Mr. Hamilton: Most of the people who witnessed the explosions that took place as part of the atomic experiments were not exposed to any radiation whatever. A minority of those who were close to the explosions were exposed, but the radiation did not reach dangerous levels. The current problem, which has been revealed by a previous report of the National Radiological Protection Board, is that people who get older are more likely to contract cancer. It is reckoned that possibly a third of people may contract cancer at some time during their life. The latest NRPB report said that there was no link between those who had attended atomic tests and cancer. We are waiting for the next report to appear which I am told should be some time later this year.

Mr. Allason: With respect to my hon. Friend, is he aware that that reply might be misinterpreted as appalling complacency on the part of the Government? Does he further agree that the claimants for compensation who witnessed those tests in the Pacific are dying and that there should be no further delay in settling their very legitimate claims?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend describes it as complacency, but the fact is that we have ways of checking doses of radiation and if people have not received any radiation, there is nothing that I can do to alter it. The fact remains that there was no evidence of radiation spreading very widely from the areas of those explosions. As I have already explained to the House, people get cancer as they get older—and that happens widely across the whole population, whether they have witnessed nuclear tests or not.

Mr. Cryer: Does not the case of the nuclear test veterans demonstrate two things: first, the callousness of the Government's attitude to the victims and, secondly, the grave dangers of the deployment and use of nuclear weapons? Why do not the Government acknowledge that a contribution to peace would be for the Government to get rid of nuclear weapons and to honour their obligations, which they have consistently breached, under the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty? Will the Minister confirm that 150 nations are pledged not to manufacture or deploy nuclear weapons? Why do not the Government support them?

Mr. Hamilton: The one thing on which I will congratulate the hon. Gentleman is consistency. During times when his party has changed its policy radically on the question of nuclear weapons, he always advocates that we should get rid of them. He knows, however, that the policy of this Government is and will continue to be to keep nuclear weapons. We believe that they do not put people's lives at risk in experimentation or anywhere else. They have saved many lives in terms of the deterrent provided.

Yugoslavia

9. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what number of British armed forces personnel are currently deployed onshore and offshore in support of United Nations actions in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of British armed forces personnel currently deployed, onshore and offshore, in direct support of United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia is about 3,000. Additionally, there are some 320 personnel deployed for possible reinforcement or evacuation action on HMS Ark Royal and other British vessels in the area.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is not it transparent that the extra turn of the screw in reducing Army numbers, now reversed, was always Treasury-driven and not a military judgment; that the idea that substantial savings could be made while continuing to meet our likely commitments —the so-called peace dividend—was in part and in practice a delusion; and that the cancellation of the helicopter landing platform, the intended centrepiece of our amphibious capability, would be a contradiction of the rapid reaction role on which our new policy is to be based?

Mr. Rifkind: We have always said that it would be necessary to review requirements in the light of the changing international situation, but I emphasise to my hon. Friend that the main thrust behind "Options for Change" remains unchallenged because the United Kingdom, with the United States, France, Russia, and every other country of NATO and the former Warsaw pact, must make substantial reductions in the overall size of its armed forces. The cold war is over. As the cold war was the single most important reason for the level of defence expenditure that we have had over the past 40 years, it would be unrealistic to believe that it should continue regardless of the changes that have occurred. That is a factor which I believe will commend itself to the House.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Secretary of State satisfied that the Ark Royal is so short of facilities and so overcrowded that members of our armed forces have to sleep under their planes and by their equipment? Does not this show that we are overstretched in the Navy as well as in the Army and does not it also call into question the need for a helicopter landing ship? Will he tell the House this afternoon that he intends to proceed with that order?

Mr. Rifkind: As for HMS Ark Royal, the hon. Gentleman is being foolish. Ark Royal is in the Adriatic for a specific and limited purpose. It is perfectly able to provide proper, indeed excellent, accommodation for its normal crew, but on a temporary basis it is carrying additional personnel. The suggestion that that is evidence of overall underprovision is very silly.

As for the helicopter landing ship, as I told the hon. Gentleman, the tenders in respect of that order are under consideration and we shall make an announcement as soon as we can.

Job Transfers

10. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian and military jobs have been transferred from Yorkshire and the north of England to other locations, resulting from the review of defence establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, no posts have yet been transferred out of Yorkshire and the north of England as a result of "Britain's Defence for the 90s". A number of proposals have been made to date, however, that will enable my Department to make savings by rationalising posts and closing establishments.

Mr. Banks: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. I recognise the need for rationalisation, but will he place serious emphasis on the retention of jobs in Yorkshire and the north? Does he recognise the concern of my constituents, whose civilian jobs in the RAF Support Management Group are to be transferred to Cambridgeshire under his review? Will he reconsider that decision, in the light of the decision not to locate the Junior Leaders Regiment at the Army apprentices college—an excellent set of buildings which would be ideal to house the support group?

Mr. Hamilton: A substantial number of defence jobs is being maintained in Yorkshire, because Catterick remains a major garrison for our troops. As for my hon. Friend's proposal that the RAF support group should be moved to the site of the Army apprentices college, we are currently considering that and I shall contact him about it; but I remind him that the period of consultation on the proposal to close the college is still in operation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Amess: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on launching a fundamental review of all Government spending, just as Conservative-controlled Basildon is currently doing? Does he agree that it is the responsibility of Government to ensure the best possible value for every pound of taxpayers' money that is spent?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend so often reminds the House, where Basildon leads others tend to follow.

I welcome yesterday's statement by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The Government spend over £250 billion a year of taxpayers' money. I believe that it is necessary to look very closely at the way in which that money is spent and at where it is spent and to ensure that we obtain the best possible value for every pound that is spent. It is for that reason that we are conducting the review.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Prime Minister recall the promise that he made during the election campaign only 10 months ago? He said that the Government had no plans and no need to extend the scope of value added tax. Does he stand by those words?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows that we are near to the Budget. She must wait.

Mrs. Beckett: The Prime Minister made just that promise to the British people when he needed their votes. Why will not he make it now?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows that we are close to the Budget. She must wait.

Mrs. Beckett: At the time of the election, the Prime Minister and all his colleagues promised no change in VAT, no other new taxes or charges and no cuts in the public spending plans that they had put before the British people. Is not it clear from the Prime Minister's refusal to answer a simple question that all his promises had a sell-by date of 9 April?

The Prime Minister: It is not remotely clear from that. What is clear is that we are close to the Budget and the hon. Lady will have to wait for the Budget to find out what it contains.

Mr. William Powell: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the article by Robert Fisk in yesterday's edition of *The Independent* which describes systematic rape in Bosnia? Has not the time come for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal, so that those responsbile for the perpetration of such foul crimes can be brought to justice? Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that, under the authority of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, such a tribunal is established as quickly as possible?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen the article to which my hon. Friend refers, but, as he will know, we have been considering that matter in concert with the United Nations for some time.

Q2. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heppell: Is the Prime Minister aware that unemployment in my constituency, in the once-prosperous city of Nottingham, is now higher than in any Scottish or Welsh constituency, having risen by 44 per cent. between 1990 and 1992? With three out of 10 males now unemployed, when does the right hon. Gentleman expect unemployment to start to fall?

The Prime Minister: I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's concern about unemployment, but I would respect it more if he did not support policies that would deliberately put people out of work—*[Interruption.]*—rather than back into work. He and his party have consistently argued for a national minimum wage and even the Fabian Society has recognised that

"an inescapable part of a"
national minimum wage
"policy is increased unemployment."

Perhaps that is another policy which the Labour Front Bench could ditch.

Q3. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the British Government support the Owen-Vance peace plan and that they will continue to keep up their pressure on the warring parties to comply with that plan? In the meantime, will he confirm British support for the humanitarian aid now going to Bosnia?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I confirm both points. The Government's policy is fully to support the Owen-Vance peace plan, which was developed out of the conference that I chaired in London last August. We also wish to maintain the conditions in which our forces can support the United Nations humanitarian effort, without which many thousands of people alive today would otherwise have been dead. But we believe it to be necessary to increase the pressure on the parties to help seek a solution. The United Kingdom has put forward proposals for tightening the operation of sanctions across the Danube and for increasing the isolation of Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs if their aggression persists. I hope that that policy will be supported throughout the European Community and the United Nations.

Q4. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Will the Prime Minister find time today to examine the effects of land contamination on job creation? In particular, will he examine the position of the Woolwich Arsenal site, which once employed 80,000 people in a single factory, but which now lies derelict in an area where male unemployment tops 62 per cent? Will he give a categorical assurance that, as the contamination was caused by the Ministry of Defence, the Government will meet the full cost of decontamination on that site and the neighbouring Thamesmead area?

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State for Defence will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said, will examine the matter and will respond to him.

Q5. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the great teaching profession clearly welcomes higher standards through the national curriculum, but appears to be flinching from achieving them through standard assessment tests? Does he further agree that it is vital, above all in the interests of our nation and our children, that the tests go ahead without delay?

The Prime Minister: I believe that we need national tests to raise standards and it is our intention that they shall go ahead. They are and remain a vital part of the national curriculum. Children need them, parents want them and I expect teachers to supervise them.

Mr. Llwyd: Will the Prime Minister confirm that he will meet the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food shortly to discuss his disgraceful betrayal of British farmers with the proposed cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances—despite the promise, fewer than 18 months ago, that they were safe in his hands?

The Prime Minister: I meet my right hon. Friend many times a week, but, regardless of the cut in HLCAs to which the hon. Gentleman refers, hill farmers' incomes will be between £60 million and £70 million higher as a result of increased sheep premiums, the green pound devaluation and other market factors.

Q6. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while any convert to conservatism is always welcome, if that conversion is coupled with a continuing opposition to British Rail privatisation, grant-maintained schools, GP fund-holding practices and compulsory competitive tendering, it shows that the conversion is insubstantial and entirely unreal? Is not that now the position of the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I welcome all conversions to conservatism, especially death-bed conversions—but they must be genuine conversions, not conversions that use the language of conservatism but remain wedded to the instincts and policies of socialism. Until the right hon. and learned Gentleman formally drops his commitment to clause 4, his opposition to privatisation and his idiotic proposal for a windfall tax, no one will take his conversion seriously.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the Prime Minister find time today to tell the President of the Board of Trade to get round the table with the Leyland DAF receiver, the management and the unions, in an attempt to save the van factory in Birmingham, which has a highly skilled and motivated work force of 2,000 people?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for the receivers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Forman: When my right hon. Friend is considering new measures to help the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed, will he give careful consideration to the idea of relaxing the social security rules that affect availability for work, so that it is possible for people to do more than 24 hours a week of voluntary work and more than 21 hours a week of educational study—to their benefit and that of the country?

The Prime Minister: We have looked and are looking at a range of measures that might encourage people back into

work. I cannot give my hon. Friend a particular undertaking on the point that he makes, but we are looking at a range of ways to assist.

Q7. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Turner: The Prime Minister's record is not a good one. Since he came to office in 1990, more than 1 million people have joined the unemployed queues and more than 100,000 training places have been lost. Is this the vision of Opportunity Britain, or is it a sign of the growing army of jobless whose lives have been wasted by the Government?

The Prime Minister: What we have sought to do and are doing is to put in place the economic circumstances that will create genuine and lasting jobs. That is why we have cut inflation to its lowest level for six years, brought interest rates down to their lowest for 15 years and put in place the most comprehensive training programme ever seen in this country. That is the only way to secure long-term, permanent jobs—not the quick fixes so beloved of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues.

Cleethorpes

Q8. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make an official visit to Cleethorpes by train.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and hope to include my hon. Friend's constituency among them.

Mr. Brown: I am delighted to hear that reply. Does my right hon. Friend recall the days when he and I used to travel on the train to Cleethorpes, which used to stop at Huntingdon? Is he aware that if he makes his official visit to Cleethorpes by train, after May this year he will have to change at Newark and hang around on the platform catching flu for hours on end because British Rail is taking away the direct train service to Cleethorpes? Does he agree that it is vital that British Rail should continue that service at least until the Railways Bill is on the statute book, when we can take advantage of the franchising opportunities of privatisation?

The Prime Minister: I recall those journeys with my hon. Friend with great pleasure, but British Rail's monopoly service means that it decides what services to run in the light of its view of passenger demand. I stress to my hon. Friend that British Rail's reluctance to change its service now is no bar to subsequent changes. The privatisation proposals will break British Rail's monopoly and will bring in private sector operators and I believe that part of those franchises will provide a better, cheaper and more effective service for the commuter.

Constitutional Separation

3.30 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to create a constitutional framework within which separation from the United Kingdom may be achieved by England or Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland.

I stand—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would those hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quickly and quietly please, so that we may proceed with the business before us? I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North can now make himself heard.

Mr. Walker: I stand before you, Madam Speaker, wearing the dress of highland Scotland—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members please leave the Chamber and not hold conversations here? Would those hon. Members who are holding conversations at the Bar please do so quietly or remove themselves?

Mr. Walker: I stand before you, Madam Speaker, wearing the dress of highland Scotland. I do so because I have no wish to be described as a little Englander; nor do I wish there to be any confusion with the black shirts of west central Scotland.

As a committed monarchist and unionist, I am presenting a Bill which I believe will strengthen the Union of the United Kingdom. I also believe that, if enacted, it would flush out the minority separatists and demonstrate clearly how little support they enjoy throughout the United Kingdom.

For far too long, the separatists in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have created massive political, constitutional and security problems. Successive United Kingdom Governments have tried to buy off support for the separatists by introducing devolution measures and power-sharing proposals. That has been done piecemeal at different times in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Sometimes it has been done in unison, but more often than not in isolation, and almost always with little consideration for the likely impact on other parts of the Kingdom.

Government proposals to introduce single-tier local authorities in Scotland, Wales and England are to be commended. Those all-purpose authority proposals should be implemented in Northern Ireland. If that were done, we would have similar local authority structures and powers throughout the United Kingdom. I believe that, if they were alive, Airey Neave and Ian Gow would endorse such proposals, because, like me, they would view this as a measure to bring constitutional government nearer to the people and thus reduce the political appeal of separatists.

Commendable as the local authority changes would be, they would not, in my view, completely address the problems created by the separatists, which is why my Bill, a constitutional Bill designed to address the gap in the constitution, is needed. Without such a Bill, a minority of dedicated separatists can and will continue to attract media attention—attention which is out of all proportion to the support enjoyed by the separatists within the electorate.

Although I am opposed to the establishment of an assembly in Edinburgh, that is not the issue covered by my Bill. It is designed to create a constitutional framework within which any part of the United Kingdom, if the vast majority of the people so wish, could achieve separation. Consequently, I would not expect those who support the maintenance of the United Kingdom, but who wish to do so by way of establishing a federal structure or by way of devolved assemblies, to oppose my Bill.

If, however, support for an assembly, be it in Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland, is seen as a first step towards separation, I will not be surprised, of course, to find those who hold this view opposing my Bill.

My Bill calls for the separatists in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland to present, in the first instance, a petition to Parliament demanding separation of that part of the United Kingdom from the rest of the United Kingdom. If 50 per cent. plus one of everyone entitled to vote in the general election were to sign such a petition, the Government of the day would organise a first ballot in that part of the United Kingdom, and only in that part of the United Kingdom. The ballot would have a single question on the paper. If it were Scotland, for instance, the question would be: "Do you wish Scotland to be separated from the rest of the United Kingdom—yes or no?" It would be a straight question.

If 50 per cent. plus one, or more, of those entitled to vote at a general election were to vote yes, there would follow a two-year period in which the true costs and the true benefits would be properly evaluated. In other words, the family assets and the family liabilities would be apportioned accordingly. That would include whether, in Scotland, Yarrow shipyard would continue to receive orders for frigates; what would happen to all the military bases in Scotland; indeed, what would happen to the Rosyth dockyard. All that would have to be decided, and of course the share of the national debt would be properly apportioned.

When that two-year exercise had been completed, there would be a requirement for a second ballot. The question again would be: "Do you wish Scotland to be separated from the rest of the United Kingdom—yes or no?" Again, if 50 per cent. plus one, or more, voted yes, separation would take place.

The Bill would also contain a clause which would place a 25-year moratorium on that part of the United Kingdom which had exercised the constitutional act but had failed to reach the 50 per cent. plus one in either the petition or either of the two ballots. The 25-year moratorium is designed to ensure that good local government measures and central Government administration could be carried out effectively, without having to be diverted constantly by media-oriented publicity and political activity of the separatists.

I believe that this unitary Parliament and the United Kingdom, with its unwritten constitution and single-Member constituencies, is far from perfect. Every day, I find things that require improvement. Even so, I still believe that we are most fortunate to live in the United Kingdom. Our constitution, although unwritten, gives us flexibility not enjoyed by countries with written constitutions. Citizens' rights are protected by the fact that Parliament is not bound by decisions made by previous Parliaments. If we get something wrong, as, we often do, we can rectify it the following year, which is one reason why I oppose ceding further powers to Europe. Also, a Member's right to ask questions and the right to have the

questions answered, when linked to parliamentary privilege, is the citizen's cost-free route to having wrongs righted.

Because I wish my children and my grandchildren to enjoy the benefits of the United Kingdom, the Westminster Parliament and the unwritten constitution, and because I do not wish them to lose that inheritance by default, constitutional change involving separation must and should require the support of the vast majority of the people, whether in England, in Scotland, in Wales or in Northern Ireland. If 37 Members elected on a ticket to come to this House were to sit in Edinburgh and say that it was a Scottish Parliament, we would have a constitutional headache of immense proportions, and we would have separation by default. Therefore, constitutional change should have the support of a vast majority. That is why we need the Bill.

3.40 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I rise as one of the red check shirts from the east coast of Scotland. I cannot speak for the black shirts; Conservative Members have more familiarity with black shirts than I do.

There are any number of reasons why we should oppose the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Indeed, there are many in Scotland who would ague that the fact that the Bill has been presented by the hon. Gentleman is in itself sufficient reason for opposition. After all, he was one of the foremost proponents and defenders of the poll tax in Scotland, and he remains to this day a keen supporter of water privatisation in Scotland. He might even be described as a Thatcher loyalist, someone who would revisit the Baroness on Scotland and on the rest of the United Kingdom. So I would argue that he could not be trusted with the constitutional arrangements for a bowling club, never mind those for one of the most ancient, historic nations in the continent of Europe. I refer to Scotland—which, as you know, Madam Speaker, preceded the birth of the United Kingdom by many centuries.

There are reasons other than the obvious shortcomings of the hon. Member for Tayside, North as to why the Bill should be opposed. First and most important, it is based on the idea that the House can tell Scotland what it must do to achieve independence. I do not want to get into an argument about the differences between the policy of the SNP on independence in Europe and the Labour party's policy of home rule within the United Kingdom; it is sufficient to say that both argue for a Parliament within the union. One would be within the European union and the other would be within the union of the United Kingdom.

The Bill assumes that sovereignty over Scotland——

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): and Wales.

Mr. McAllion: —and Wales—rests with a majority in the House. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sovereignty over Scotland rests with the Scottish people and only with the Scottish people. Sovereignty over Wales rests with the Welsh people and only with the Welsh people, as sovereignty over England rests only with English people. (HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That is not just my view; the "Hear, hears" from my hon. Friends and other Opposition Members show that it is the general view of the Opposition parties.

That has always been the view of the Scottish National party. Since the claim of rights for Scotland has been supported by the Labour party and the Liberal Democratic party, it is their view as well. Therefore, it can be argued that it is the view of 75 per cent. of Scottish voters in the most recent general election.

There exists in Scotland a massive majority opposed totally to the thinking behind the Bill proposed today. Even more, the Bill reeks of double standards and humbug. The hon. Member for Tayside, North said that, before Scotland and Wales could vote to separate themselves from the United Kingdom, a petition signed by 50 per cent. of those entitled to vote, plus one, would have to be presented to the House. That means 50 per cent. of those on the electoral register plus one.

Such support has never been achieved by any party this century. It is clearly meant to be a blocking mechanism to prevent any of the countries from moving away from the union. Indeed, the hon. Member belongs to a political party that readily accepted in last April's general election in Scotland that, had 37 Scottish national party Members of Parliament been returned, that would have been a mandate for separation from the United Kingdom.

As you know, Madam Speaker, 37 Members can be elected from Scotland on less than 40 per cent. of the vote —or less than one third of those whose names are on the electoral register. It seems neither sensible nor reasonable, therefore, to argue that less than a third of those entitled to vote in an election represent a mandate for separation, yet in a wholly unreal situation such as a ten-minute Bill that is going nowhere in the House to argue that, for separation, there must be a majority of 50 per cent. of those entitled to vote. The Bill adds nothing sensible or reasonable to the future government of Scotland and should be ignored for that reason.

But perhaps worst of all, Scotland is currently governed under constitutional arrangements that have the support of only 25 per cent. of those who voted at the last general election. Indeed, they have the support of only 19 per cent. of those whose names are on the electoral register in Scotland. I refer to those who voted for the Tories and for the constitutional status quo.

By the standards of his own Bill, the hon. Member for Tayside, North is arguing that the Tory Government do not have a mandate to run Scotland. Indeed, according to the mandate requirements of his Bill, the only parties that have a mandate to run Scotland are those that support a directly elected Scottish Parliament. Those parties received three out of every four votes at the last election and the support of more than half of those on the electoral register.

If the hon. Member for Tayside, North were being true to the proposals in the Bill, he would have joined Scotland United and would be taking part in a vigil outside the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh. He would have stood side by side with Opposition Members on top of an open-deck bus proclaiming Scotland's right to self-determination since the last election in April.

But this is not a serious Bill; it is a parliamentary stunt that does nothing for democracy and nothing for the right of the Scottish people to self-determination. Nor does it do anything for the very real problems that face far too many Scots in the hard lives that they must endure under a Government they did not elect.

A new generation has grown up in Scotland during a period in which Scotland has been rendered powerless by the Westminster system of government. That generation,

[Mr. McAllion]

and other generations of older Scots, are no longer prepared to accept or tolerate that situation. They recognise that all the rights that they regard as important —the right to a decent education, to proper training, to a job, to a living wage, to decent housing and to decent health care—do not grow on trees but spring from the system of government under which people live.

They are no longer prepared to tolerate a system that gives no voice to what they have to say in the government of their own country. They are no longer prepared to tolerate being told what they can or cannot do by those whom they did not elect. They are no longer prepared to tolerate parliamentary stunts such as that which the hon. Member for Tayside, North has tried to pull off this afternoon. We, the elected representatives of that majority in Scotland, are here to ensure that this Parliament will pay attention to the just demands of the Scottish people for self-determination.

Madam Speaker: The Question is that the hon. Member have leave to bring in his Bill. As many as——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) suggested that he was in highland dress: he is in nothing of the kind. He misled the House, and I have reason to believe that he is wearing little red pants under his kilt. *[Laughter.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have had enough colourful descriptions for one day. I shall now put the Question.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 28, Noes 180.

Division No. 144] **[3.48 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Cran, James
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Duncan, Alan
Fry, Peter
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hunter, Andrew
Kilfedder, Sir James
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Marland, Paul
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Stern, Michael
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Whittingdale, John
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir George Gardiner and
Mr. Christopher Gill.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster North)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shel'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bill Etherington and
Mr. Ian Davidson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Points of Order

3.59 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not given to making specious points of order, but, during exchanges in Prime Minister's Question Time, I distinctly heard, and I have no doubt that you did also, the word "pillock" being used by the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) from a sedentary position—not once, not twice, not thrice but four times. I was not sure whether it was a generic term of abuse of the Government Front Bench or a specific term for the Prime Minister.

As I was brought up in a fairly genteel society, I am not sure what the word means, but even if it means what I think it means, could I have your ruling, Madam Speaker, whether "pillock" or "pillocks" is an appropriate parliamentary term? I raise the matter only because there are times when we might resort to the language of ladies and gentlemen rather than to the language of hooligans.

Madam Speaker: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman's last remark. From time to time, our language deteriorates. However, the hon. Gentleman is not quite correct in one aspect. I certainly heard no such word used; otherwise I would have called it to the attention of the hon. Member who used it. I do not know what the word means —I do not wish to know what the word means—but I find it rather ugly, and I prefer it not to be used.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I was sitting much closer to my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) than the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) was. When the Prime Minister was talking about a matter for the receivers, my hon. Friend and others, including myself, shouted "hypocrisy" several times at the Prime Minister, and we meant it. I believe that to be in order, but I did not hear the other word. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is not confession time. We must move on now.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) has just dashed into the Chamber, in an attempt, no doubt, to defend himself. Of course I must hear his point of order.

Mr. Lewis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand that certain words were attributed to me during Prime Minister's Question Time. I am not absolutely certain what words were used, but I put it to you, Madam Speaker, to the House and to the country that, when the Prime Minister treats the workers of Leyland DAF in such an offhand, arrogant way, anybody of reasonable mind would accept any words that were spoken.

Madam Speaker: Whatever the exchanges in the House, English is a very rich language. I hope that we select it very carefully, however upset and excited we might become in our exchanges.

Orders of the Day

Housing and Urban Development Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

Ordered,

That the Housing and Urban Development Bill, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, New Clauses relating to Part I, amendments relating to Clauses 1 to 8, Schedules 1 and 2, Clauses 9 to 11, Schedule 3, Clauses 12 to 22, Schedule 4, Clauses 23 to 28, Schedule 5, Clauses 29 to 30, Schedule 6, Clause 31, Schedule 7, Clause 32, Schedule 8, Clause 33, Schedule 9, Clauses 34 to 36, Schedule 10, Clauses 37 to 38, Schedule 11, Clauses 39 to 52, Schedule 12, Clauses 53 to 57, Schedule 13, Clauses 58 to 61, Schedule 14, Clauses 62 to 91, New Schedules relating to Part I, New Clauses relating to Part II, amendments relating to Clauses 92 to 104, Schedule 15, Clauses 105 to 107, Clauses 118 to 119, Clauses 125 to 129, Clause 108, Clause 130, Clause 109, Clause 131, Clauses 110 to 114, Clauses 132 to 134, Clauses 115 to 117, Clauses 120 to 124, Clauses 135 to 138, New Schedules relating to Part II, New Clauses relating to Part III, amendments relating to Clauses 140 to 141, Clause 139, Schedules 16 and 17, Clause 142, Schedule 18, Clauses 143 to 150, Schedule 19, Clauses 151 to 166, New Schedules relating to Part III, New Clauses relating to Part IV, amendments relating to Clauses 167 and 168, Schedules 20 and 21, Clause 169, New Schedules relating to Part IV, remaining New Clauses, remaining New Schedules.—*[Sir George Young.]*

New Clause 13

TENANCIES TERMINABLE AFTER DEATH OR MARRIAGE.

"*Right to enfranchisement only in case of certain tenancies terminable after death or marriage.*

'.—(1) The following section shall be inserted in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 after the section 1A inserted by section 59 above—

1B. Where a tenancy granted so as to become terminable by notice after a death or marriage—

(a) is (apart from this section) a long tenancy in accordance with section 3(1) below, but

(b) was granted before 18th April 1980 or in pursuance of a contract entered into before that date,

then (notwithstanding section 3(1)) the tenancy shall be a long tenancy for the purposes of this Part of this Act only so far as this Part has effect for conferring on any person a right to acquire the freehold of a house and premises."

(2) In section 3(1) of that Act (meaning of "long tenancy")—

(a) after "and includes" there shall be inserted "both a tenancy taking effect under section 149(6) of the Law of Property Act 1925 (leases terminable after a death or marriage) and"; and

(b) in the proviso (which prevents certain categories of tenancies terminable after death or marriage being long tenancies), for the words from "if either" onwards there shall be substituted "if—

(a) the notice is capable of being given at any time after the death or marriage of the tenant;

(b) the length of the notice is not more than three months; and

(c) the terms of the tenancy preclude both—

(i) its assignment otherwise than by virtue of section 92 of the Housing Act 1985 (assignments by way of exchange), and

(ii) the sub-letting of the whole of the premises comprised in it.".'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.8 pm

The Minister of Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time Government amendments Nos. 55, 76, 56, 78 and 79.

I draw the attention of the House to Government amendment No. 56, which refers to line 22. There is a misprint; it should read "line 12". I make that point so that it need not be mentioned again.

Sir George Young: I repeat an interest which I have declared on previous occasions. I am the owner of a 999-year lease on a flat in my constituency, although it is not a lease that terminates on the death of the Prince of Wales, which is the subject of new clause 13.

When we debated the matter in Standing Committee, I undertook to reflect on the case for retrospectively bringing within enfranchisement lessees who are presently excluded by the so-called Prince of Wales clause. It is a blatant avoidance device used by some landlords, and its use was blocked prospectively by the Housing Act 1980. Leaseholders persuaded us that, in practice, many of their number would have been unaware of the effect of that clause in their leases, and no landlord groups have made any representations in favour of the clause. In the light of that, we have decided that it would be contrary to the aims of our reforms to leave that small group of leaseholders high and dry.

This new clause, with its associated group of amendments, will amend the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 by adding a new section and modifying the existing section 3. It will enable a leaseholder who was granted a long lease on a house before 18 April 1980, which would qualify under the 1967 Act except that it contains a clause which renders it terminable by notice after the death of, for example, the last survivor of any issue of King George V alive at the time of the grant—hence the name of the Prince of Wales clause—to acquire the freehold interest.

The valuation basis will be the higher of the two in the 1967 Act—the so-called special valuation base. That is consistent with our policy expressed in the Bill, that leaseholders who are given new rights should pay the market price for the interest that they can now purchase.

Nothing in the new clause will prevent landlords from continuing to grant bona fide life tenancies to, for example, former employees. Such leases will continue to be unenfranchiseable. Houses which were previously excluded from enfranchisement because of a Prince of Wales clause will be eligible for inclusion in an area subject to an estate management scheme set up under chapter IV of the Bill.

I hope that the House will recognise that this new clause signifies the Government's desire to be fair with the leasehold reform package. The new clause reforms an anomaly which is no longer defensible, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We welcome the new clauses which the Government have tabled on the Prince of Wales clause. They signify some give, after efforts were made in Committee. While the Government's intentions to extend enfranchisement to leaseholders are reflected in the clauses, what we have before us in the amendments and the new clauses do not satisfy all the promises which the Minister gave in Committee.

While we welcome the Minister's shifting of the direction of enhancing and extending leasehold, we would —as we said in Committee—push further: we want commonhold. At least the Government have given us an assurance that we shall get commonhold. We look forward to the Government introducing a commonhold Bill so that we can proceed with that.

Some small measure is provided in the Government's clauses which we are immediately discussing. I hope that the three quarters of a million leaseholders who think that they will be enfranchised under the legislation actually will be, because there is still a danger, despite the new clauses, that the Bill is hedged with exemptions. As we know, some of the clauses before us today will push through even more exemptions, so that those who think that they will be enfranchised will find in practice that they are not.

We welcome the shift on the Prince of Wales clause. In the further discussions on the shift, as it were, on the low-rent test for flats and houses which the Minister promised to re-examine, we look forward to the operation of the two-thirds rule in smaller blocks as well. I hope that we can make progress tonight to enhance and extend the rights of leaseholders to enfranchisement, rather than restrict them and hedge them with exemptions, which the Government still seem to be doing.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE

'(1) Nothing in Chapters I and II shall be taken to confer a right upon the tenant of a flat to acquire a lease extension unless the tenant occupies the flat as his principal residence.

(2) In relation to a claim for collective enfranchisement under Chapter I such a claim shall not be valid unless not less than half of the participating tenants occupy flats in the relevant premises as their principal residence.

(3) In this section "principal residence" means a flat which a tenant—

(a) occupies as his main or only residence; and

(b) has so occupied for the last three years or periods amounting to three years in the last ten years.'—*[Sir Jerry Wiggin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following amendments:

No.5, in clause 5, page 5, line 40, after 'rent', insert 'and

(a) occupies the flat as his principal residence, and

(b) has so occupied the flat for the last three years or periods amounting to three years in the last ten years.'

No. 10, in page 6, line 37, at end insert—

'(7) In this section "principal residence" means a flat which a tenant occupies as his main or only residence.'.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: It is a matter of considerable regret to me that the Bill is modelled on a Labour precedent, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. That Act was passed only after its opponents on the then Conservative benches, led by Mr. Anthony Barber, forced major concessions and amendments on the Government.

A number of us find it difficult to accept that a Conservative Government are retabling a socialist measure which has been described by Professor Wade QC, who is acknowledged to be the United Kingdom's foremost administrative lawyer, as a form of

"expropriation (which) can scarcely be said to have been for public purposes, since its object was merely to enrich certain tenants at the expense of their landlords."

However, we must accept that the principal motivation behind the Bill—to deal with abuses by landlords on leaseholders of flats—was contained in the 1992 Conservative manifesto, and neither I nor my right hon. and hon. Friends seek to renege on that promise. We seek a solution that is fair and equitable to all. The Bill is not. It is a sledgehammer to crack a nut; it is unjust.

On page 33 of the Conservative manifesto for the last election, under the title "Home Ownership", there is a preamble which outlines Conservative policy on housing:

"Conservatives have extended the right and opportunity to own a home and pass it on."

I am sure that we all agree that that is one of the most important rights that an individual has in a free society.

In that context, the manifesto commits this Conservative Government to

"giving residential leaseholders"—

I underline the word "residential"—

"living in blocks of flats the right to acquire the freehold of their block at the market rate."

Those who see the matter in a different light have been quoting the manifesto at me, but the manifesto specifies residential leaseholders.

Similarly, the 1967 Act gives the right to enfranchise to tenants and leaseholders who occupy the property as their genuine home, and the 1966 Conservative general election manifesto committed Conservatives to providing choices for a ground leaseholder of residential property who had occupied the house as his principal residence for at least the last five years. One of the choices was the right to buy the freehold, but here Conservatives made it clear that the freehold should be purchased on the basis of full compensation to the freeholder.

In stark contrast, the Bill gives the right to enfranchise to any long leaseholder of a flat. It will therefore be possible for absentee leaseholders, corporations, foreign companies and speculators forcibly to acquire a freehold property at a discount. The Bill, as I propose to discuss later, offers inadequate levels of compensation to freeholders and allows leaseholders, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, to acquire

"an asset worth more than the price paid."

So the Bill goes much further than the Conservative manifesto. Its provisions are even more confiscatory than the 1967 Act and, perhaps most disturbingly, it sets a dangerous constitutional precedent by giving rights of confiscation not to genuine home owners who may in late life regret having willingly entered into a leasehold contract, but to any investor with an interest in leasehold property.

The Bill does not set out to nationalise property—after all, the beneficiaries are private persons—nor does it bestow the right of eminent domain, which would enable the compulsory purchase of property for a public purpose or public interest such as building a road. No public interest is served by the collective enfranchisement of leaseholders, many of whom will be corporations, absentee overseas leaseholders and speculators. I cannot believe that Opposition Members really believe that it is sensible to pass legislation that benefits those classes of people. Instead, the interests of one set of private persons, the leaseholders, is served by the expropriation of the interests of another set of private persons, the freeholders.

Let us not imagine that all freeholders are dukes, vast estates or charities; many freeholders are single individuals who have invested in a block of flats or a house or have inherited the same. I have received a number of pathetic letters from people who will be seriously disadvantaged by the Bill, people against whom nobody could have any serious political angst. It is seriously wrong.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman paints a picture of poor freeholders, almost as people used to talk about "poor widows" when Rent Act protection was being discussed. Is he aware that one of the richest people in the country—sometimes described as the second richest person in Britain—the Duke of Westminster, has waged a campaign, obviously not among Labour Members but among Conservative Members? He has tried to do what he possibly can to persuade a sufficient number of Conservative Back Benchers to vote against the Bill. Is not the Duke of Westminster someone who has an interest in the matter and would feel much aggrieved if the Bill became law?

4.15 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin: The hon. Gentleman cannot make a case based on one individual, any more than I can make the opposite case based on another individual. The fact of the matter is that, if confiscatory legislation is introduced, surely the House should protect the rights of the individual, whether duke or pensioner. It has been a principle of long standing of the House that it protects the rights of individuals. It would be a great mistake for us to depart from that principle simply because one individual or case did not fit.

I should add that I have never heard the Duke of Westminster or his estate accused of being a bad landlord. But I am aware that many small landlords seriously abuse the law. Those are the people whom the Bill should get at. It should not seek to break up big estates or take people's property, at whatever level.

Britain has signed a European protocol which enforces certain rights and freedoms not included in section 1 of the European convention. Under article 1 of that protocol, the signatory Governments have agreed that

"Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law".

The Bill deprives natural and legal persons of the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions—their freehold properties. If the Bill is to be accepted by the House, it must be amended to prevent a challenge under the first protocol.

The new clause sets out to achieve the aims that I have described. It includes the requirement that enfranchisement or lease extension will be limited to individuals who occupy the property solely for residential purposes and as their principal residence. Furthermore, he or she should so have occupied the flat for the past three years or for a period amounting to three years in the past 10 years.

In reply to anxieties properly expressed in Committee by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), the Government argued that the residential qualification

[Sir Jerry Wiggin]

"would considerably reduce the effectiveness of the proposals, not least because it would make it harder to achieve a two-thirds majority of qualifying tenants."

At the same sitting on 17 November, the Minister of State said:

"It is not the object of the Bill to enable one investor in a property to enfranchise against another. Alternatively, such a person could block enfranchisement by other qualifying tenants in the building if the number of flats for which he was the qualifying tenant ensured that the requisite majority was never reached without his involvement."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 17 November 1992; c. 103, 113.]

The new clause ensures that, if the principal private residence qualification interferes with the majority needed for enfranchisement to be agreed, lessees who occupy as their genuine home should be given the right to a new long lease. It is a fair and sensible new clause, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) seeks Labour support, but I have to disappoint him and say that we cannot offer him support for this clause because we believe that enfranchisement should be extended and not hedged by further exclusion clauses. We wholly reject the contention that enfranchisement should be limited to leaseholders who have owned the property as their principal residence for three or more years.

If we can refer back, as we did in Committee, to the Consumers Association report, although it revealed that there is no uniform profile of leaseholders, it showed that a large proportion, about 90 per cent., of leaseholders had bought their flats in the past 10 years, and that three quarters of those surveyed had purchased their flats in the past five years. In other words, the practical import of the new clause is that, at a stroke, it would effectively render by far the majority of long leasehold flat owners ineligible to take part in an enfranchisement bid.

We think that the Government enfranchisement proposals are already too restrictive, but the knock-on effect of this clause would be arbitrary and unfair, and it would totally undermine the Government's intention in extending leaseholder enfranchisement. We have for a long time argued for leasehold enfranchisement, and we shall continue to argue for it—to be extended to everybody, not agreed in principle, as it were, giving a kind of rhetorical assent to a right and extending it as a rhetorical right and then undermining it by hedging it with more and more extensions. We see this new clause as further exemption, which would undermine the intention to enfranchise leaseholders.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I must first declare an interest, in that I own some domestic property which is let, but I am advised that none of it comes within the provisions of this proposal.

I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) in moving this new clause. This is the second time I have intervened in proceedings on the Bill. On the first occasion, the Secretary of State for Environment was kind enough to give way and I can do no better than repeat what I said then, that I can bring myself to agree, after much heart-searching, to legislation which forces people to sell their property when they do not want to. That, clearly, sometimes has to be done.

I am also just prepared to agree that, where people have entered freely into agreements without any pressure upon either side, those agreements freely entered into can be torn up, but my principal concern is about the level of compensation. We shall come to that a little later. But I do not like the proposals in this Bill. I find them basically offensive, and we shall come to the main reason why I find them offensive later.

I certainly find the provisions which are dealt with in new clause 2, together with amendments 5 and 10, very offensive, but that is because I do not see why it should be necessary at all to give a vast overnight windfall profit to people who have entered into agreements perfectly freely in the past. I cannot see why it is necessary for there to be a great moral crusade to allow the sort of bodies my hon. Friend referred to—corporations, investors, overseas residents, speculators and any others who happen to have a main residence elsewhere—to make vast overnight profits. We are all aware of foreigners who have houses or flats in London, for instance, and come to use them for relatively shortly periods of the year.

It is an injustice that those people should make, or in some cases, as the Bill stands, would make, vast overnight windfall profits just through the provisions of this Bill. I can think of no sensible argument, and have heard no sensible argument, that would justify giving such people of the opportunity presented by the Bill.

I strongly support what my hon. Friend the Member for West-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) has said. Opposition Members are usually the first to seek to clobber speculators, overseas residents, investors and the like; I was astonished by the attitude of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), and I cannot understand why the Opposition do not support the new clause.

The provision in the Bill was not properly thought out. I understand that it was shuffled into the manifesto at the last minute, with the minimum of consultation and discussion. I do not think that it should have been included, but it is there and we shall have to honour it. I feel, however, that the House is perfectly entitled to trim it in the way proposed in new clause 2, moved so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Let me spell out the simple, straightforward and fundamentally just reasons for proceeding with leasehold enfranchisement at a far more energetic pace than the Bill allows. We are talking about dismantling an archaic and unjust form of tenure which has disappeared almost everywhere in the world except in this country. Here, its continued existence buttresses the privileges of certain exceptionally wealthy people, who have been able for many generations to live on the money that they have extracted from land that they happen to own, on which other people's efforts built houses and other people's money paid rent.

Lest the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) has any doubts, let me remind him that, as long ago as 1889, fear of the possibility of leasehold enfranchisement—then much in public debate—made the first Duke of Westminster and his board decide not to renew leases. The writing was on the wall in 1889; it is sad that it has taken more than 100 years to reach this point, at which we are taking a significant step to dismantle an archaic and absurd form of tenure which has allowed a small number of people to become fat and wealthy at the expense of many others.

Let us look at the reality of the leaseholder's position. As the Bill stands, many leaseholders will find it impossible to exercise their right to enfranchise, because of the hurdles that they must overcome to qualify. They will have to establish that they themselves have a qualifying tenancy: that involves serious tests which we shall probably debate later, notably the low rent test, which may well prove an obstacle. They will have to establish that an appropriate percentage of the occupants are also qualifying tenants —in fact, two thirds of residents in the block—before they can proceed. They will have to establish that two thirds are willing to proceed with the enfranchisement; that no more than 10 per cent. of the accommodation is in non-residential use; and that there is no resident freeholder. All those serious tests will have to be passed if leaseholders are to benefit from the Bill, which is nowhere near as simple and straightforward as it should be.

If leaseholders negotiate those hurdles successfully, they must pay a significant price, allowing freeholders to obtain half the marriage value of the process for nothing. Let us hear no more cant about the poor unfortunate multi-millionaires who have lived off their landholdings for generations, and are now being required to dispose of them as part of the process of leasehold enfranchisement. We want a far more energetic pursuit of enfranchisement, and the removal of many of the obstacles that we shall discuss later. I sincerely hope that the House will dismiss this wrecking amendment for what it is—an attempt to impose yet another obstacle on leaseholders who deserve the earliest possible opportunity of enfranchisement.

4.30 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am glad to speak after the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) because on this occasion I agree with him and disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) and those who support the new clause. But then, I would, considering the constituency that I represent.

On the face of it, the proposed new clause looks sensible, and there must be many hon. Members who consider it to be a reasonable condition to place on those seeking to enfranchise. But some of the most dangerous things in life are disguised to look the most harmless. Anyone who knows anything about the housing market, particularly in central London, will be aware that, far from being an innocuous addition to this part of the Bill, the new clause would effectively wreck it.

I am sure that its proposers are not unaware that, if the new clause were adopted, the vast majority of leaseholders, certainly in my constituency, would be prevented from enfranchising. So we would be passing a piece of legislation that enabled leaseholders to gain control over their homes in principle, but prevented from doing so in practice. It would be a worthless piece of legislation.

The enfranchisement of blocks of flats is a collective action. A certain number of leaseholders must meet the criteria set out in the Bill if they wish to get together and exercise their right to enfranchise. By dramatically extending the scope of the criteria that must be met, the new clause would severely limit the number of cases in which sufficient qualifying leaseholders existed.

As the hon. Member for Greenwich said, hon. Members with first-hand knowledge of the need to reform the leasehold system feel that the hurdles that those wishing to enfranchise must cross are already too high. They must have leases of over 21 years; they must pass the ridiculous and indefensible low rent test, a subject which we shall discuss later; they must have at least two thirds of the flats in their block enfranchiseable; they must not have more than 10 per cent. of the floor space in commercial use; they must have a two-thirds majority in favour of enfranchising; they must pay a disproportionate amount of the marriage value to the freeholder; and they must buy up excess flats if the freeholder so demands.

All those hurdles already combine to exclude many genuine long leaseholders from the provisions of the legislation. Consider the effect that the new clause would have. Westminster city council, which has virtually nothing but leasehold property in the city, is an ardent campaigner for leasehold reform. Unlike some of my hon. Friends who do not have leasehold properties in their constituencies, Westminster city council knows only too well the misery and hardship caused by the perverse leasehold system and is clear that the proposed additional hurdle would exclude the vast majority of leaseholders from enfranchising.

The reasons why the new clause would emasculate the Bill are simple. For example, it would exclude from the equation those who have not yet lived in their long-lease flats for over three years. But the housing market is never static, particularly in central London. There will always be a sizeable portion of leaseholders who have lived in their flats for one, two or just under three years. No sooner will one flat owner have crossed the three-year mark than another will move out, and the new leaseholder will again count against in the enfranchisement equation. Add the flats owned and used by businesses and the second homes of people working in London, of whom there are many in Parliament, and one appreciates how difficult it would be to cross the proposed new hurdle.

The danger of the new clause is that it would prevent those identified in it from enfranchising and would make it impossible for those who meet all the stated requirements to do so. These leaseholders would simply not be able to assemble the required proportion of qualifying leaseholders.

I realise that some of my hon. Friends may not want businesses to be able to buy and sell freeholds for speculative gain, but that has already been dealt with. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare is arguing a case which I contend would wreck the Bill. The amendment accepted in Committee would prevent any person or corporate body that owned two or more leases in the same block from taking part in any collective enfranchisement. That amendment stops property speculation. The new clause will virtually stop all enfranchisement, even by genuine long leaseholders. I urge the House not to support it. It is a wrecking measure, and it should be stopped.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), because I endorse wholeheartedly the points that they so eloquently made about the new clause.

I must tell the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), who spoke about individuals, that Opposition Members who served on the Committee are unstinting in their praise for the groups that have

[Ms. Glenda Jackson]

furnished us with evidence about what it is like being a long leaseholder under the present law. I should like to list some of them. Under the heading of the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee, there are six organisations: the Commonhold Flats Campaign, the Consumers Association, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the Federation of Private Residents' Associations, the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association and the National Consumer Council. All of them are concerned that the present law, which is inequitable and almost feudal in its exercise, should be changed.

We are much concerned that the Government's proposals are far too narrowly drawn. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare regards the Bill as a measure of expropriation. I have received a copy of a letter written by someone who really knows what expropriation is about. She came here as a refugee from Hungary in 1948, and she says:

"Good God, how different that was from the expropriation threat to the Duke of Westminster".

She and her family had everything taken away from them:

"You woke up one morning and found that you had nothing,"

not even the coat on one's back. The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) described the Bill as offensive. The lady who came here as a refugee from Hungary finds the low-rent test deeply offensive, as do Opposition Members.

What is it really like for people who are leaseholders, for instance, on the Cadogan and Grosvenor estates? The Cadogan estate had every intention of evicting a leaseholder after she had been in her home for 43 years —despite her repeated but unsuccessful appeals to the estate for a negotiated settlement. Once legal proceedings started, she claims that the estate obstructed her at every turn, wore her down to the point of extreme exhaustion and landed her with annihilating costs—to such a degree that she was eventually forced to withdraw from the case.

A leaseholder on the Grosvenor estate carried out extensive building improvements. This is a recurring theme in all the evidence that we have received from associations and individuals. Leaseholders are responsible for the upkeep of their property; for the repairs, decoration and security of their homes. In many instances, they pay large amounts——

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I think that the hon. Lady is incorrect in citing those two cases. Even under existing law, all leaseholders are protected by the Rent Act 1977 and there is no way that the lessor could throw out either of those lessees.

Ms. Jackson: The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare said that it was a battle between equals. I was attempting to point out that it is anything but that. It is a battle between leaseholders and the might of the major estates. In the second instance that I referred to, the lease was running out and because the estate categorically refused to consider an extension, the lessee submitted that evidence.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Surely the hon. Lady agrees that in my opening remarks I ceded the argument about landlords who abuse their tenants and that something had to be done to put that right. Does she not agree that her argument has failed on one important point of information—that the lease is a voluntary contract for every leaseholder?

Ms. Jackson: Wherein lies the equality in entering an agreement freely, when the definition of what constitutes the contract inevitably lies in the hands of the freeholder?

Despite his intervention, I must disagree with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare. The estates are financially immensely powerful and can employ the best that the legal profession is able to offer, which is not the case for the leaseholder.

The leaseholder on the Grosvenor estate had carried out such extensive building improvements to his home that he could have been eligible to apply for the freehold. As in so many cases, the estate decided to fight the application. The leaseholder had limited resources and a family of five and had to abandon all thoughts of taking action. That is why the Opposition oppose the new clause. The requirements for enfranchisement drawn on the fact of the Bill by the Government are infinitely too narrow and restrictive, but the new clause would make a mockery of the Bill and of the House.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am delighted to add my voice to those who oppose the new clause and, although I am advised that it is not an interest, I must mention that I own a leasehold flat in my constituency.

To take up the argument of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson), like anyone who tries to acquire a flat, I had no choice when I entered into the contract because I could not obtain a freehold. I share that burden with people who live in England, Wales and Hawaii, as those are the only countries which have the leasehold system—not even our friends the Scots have ever gone down the leasehold route in the way that we have done.

I fervently support the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who said that this is a wrecking new clause. I agree that it would emasculate this new, important and useful Bill, and that it is totally contrary to the spirit of the legislation. I should be doing a disservice to my right hon. and hon. Friends who tabled the new clause if I did not suggest that they were well aware of that when they tabled it.

Many people have leasehold flats in constituencies such as Eastbourne and other resorts along the south coast. Many use them as holiday properties or have them in mind for their retirement. Often people of slender means have invested their money in those new homes. Under the new clause they would be told that they are not allowed to purchase control—the freehold—of their homes and they would not even be entitled to an extension of the lease. The new clause would effectively make them second-class citizens, despite an enormous capital outlay to purchase the leasehold and to pay for maintenance and repairs. Many people want to buy such homes, particularly for their retirement, and would like to own the freehold.

Given the collective nature of enfranchisement in blocks of flats, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North said, the new clause would prevent enfranchising by leaseholders who might meet all the relevant criteria but would be unable to assemble the proportion of flats required for a block to enfranchise.

4.45 pm

Retirement flats will count against the other leaseholders, which will discriminate against my constituents and those of my colleagues who represent towns on the south coast. Leaseholders who moved in to their flats one, two or three years ago will count against them —and think how many people in any one block will not have lived there for three years. The housing market is such that there will always be some flats in a block that are owned by people who have not lived there for the length of time proposed in the new clause. All flats owned by businesses will count against them, as will flats whose owners have rented them out for the short term and flats owned by people who are temporarily working abroad.

One can readily see why the new clause would bring such comfort to people who are fundamentally opposed to the concept of enfranchisement. The clause would exclude not only people who could not claim their flats to be their principal residences—perhaps for the best of reasons—but most of those people who can.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I have been following my hon. Friend's argument carefully, but I do not understand why he thinks that someone who has lived in a flat for three years and has established it as his or her principal residence, would be unable to apply for the freehold under the Bill. By then, the leaseholder would have met all the conditions necessary for the purchase.

Mr. Waterson: Given the constant turnover in a block, there are bound to be people who have not lived there for the requisite amount of time, and a majority is required.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My hon. Friend seems to have a fair point. Many people want to move within three years. If there were no time qualification, but merely a statement that the flat should be occupied as a main residence, it would tie in with the manifesto on which we both fought the last election. It seems to me that the removal of that qualification might cheer up my hon. Friend. Would he care to comment on that?

Mr. Waterson: As my hon. Friend knows, I am a cheerful sort of fellow and that might give me a modest amount of cheer, but I still have a fundamental objection to the new clause, with or without the three-year restriction.

Even Opposition Members have grudgingly accepted that the legislation is important and beneficial for leaseholders, and I believe that as many people as possible should be able to reap the benefits.

Mr. Battle: I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we are grudgingly supporting leasehold reform. We are actively campaigning for it. We have been looking forward not only to the hon. Gentleman's speech on the new clause, but to his voting for our new clause to widen and enhance leasehold enfranchisement.

Mr. Waterson: I am delighted to accept support from wherever I can find it in the House. I wonder whether I can take it from the hon. Gentleman's remarks that, unlike on Second Reading, he and his hon. Friends will vote for the legislation on Third Reading. The hon. Member is uncharacteristically silent on that issue. No doubt we shall hear more from him later.

The point I was making was that the new clause would exclude not only those who could not claim their flats to be their principal residences, but most of those who could legitimately do so. Its ramifications reach far beyond those who are mentioned in the new clause. I believe that if it were allowed to pass, it would wreck this legislation.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare speaks of socialist legislation, confiscation, and so on, he is, I believe, missing the fundamental point. This issue is not really about the great London estates; it is about individual, often retired, folk in places such as Eastbourne who have put all their savings into a piece of property which is, in effect, a wasting asset; people who, like myself, when they came to acquire a flat in that constituency had no choice but to take leasehold.

As I have said, this applies only in England and Wales and, I think, Hawaii. It has always been an indefensible system and I am delighted that this legislation will sound its death knell.

I am therefore happy to oppose the new clause on behalf of my constituents and those of many other right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholls: I start by declaring my interest in Port Enterprises Ltd., the Waterfront Partnership and Howard de Walden Estates Ltd., and the fact that I have a flat in London on a long lease.

One thing that has become starkly obvious in the debate is that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench have found themselves deriving comfort, and indeed votes, from some strange quarters. It must have been obvious to all of us that, although the Opposition are apparently entirely behind the Government in opposing this new wrecking clause, they are working to a different agenda and marching to a different tune.

I know why I am in favour of the Bill and why I voted for it on Second and Third Readings. The reason was set out in a very straightforward manner by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), who opened the debate. I thought that this was all about ensuring that residential home owners were enabled to buy their own homes. That carries with it some rough justice, because ultimately it means that some people will be deprived of their property against their will. As a Conservative, I do not particularly like that, but politics is an imperfect trade and this is an imperfect world, and sometimes one has to balance interests. It certainly seemed to me that the greater Conservative interest was met by home owners being able to own their own homes. So far, so good.

What we heard from the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) was an entirely different tune. He is in the business of reversing history. He has a jolly, romantic and completely ridiculous view of history. He wants to divest dukes. That is what he thinks this is all about: robbing the robber barons. I dare say his view is sincerely held, but it is quite potty. When my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench suddenly find that hon. Gentlemen are all in favour of opposing this clause, I hope that they will pause and reflect that, although misery is supposed to acquaint one with strange bedfellows, it is a bit odd to have to rely on that sort of support to get legislation through.

I am extremely grateful to my right hon. and hon. Friends for the care that they have taken in listening to the representations that I have made in recent months. It must be said—I hope that this will not embarrass them—that

[Mr. Nicholls]

they have come a considerable way towards meeting the substance of the objections that we have been hearing from these Benches this evening.

As long ago as 14 August, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State wrote a very helpful letter to me. In view of some of the remarks that have been made in this debate, I ask whichever of my right hon. or hon. Friends will reply to confirm that this is still the position. My hon. Friend said in his letter:

"You were concerned that the present proposals would enable long resident leaseholders, including corporate bodies and professionals, to enfranchise. I explained that we had already decided that commercial tenants would not be qualifying tenants for the purposes of enfranchisement."

I have no reason to doubt that that remains the position. I have come to the House today believing that to be so and if by any chance it is not, I hope that that will be made clear in the winding-up speech.

It was clear that, even after that undertaking, there was a risk that one form of commercial investor would be able to enfranchise against another form of commercial investor. I put that point to my right hon. and learned Friend on Second Reading and he was kind enough to say that he would look into it.

Subsequently, in Standing Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) tabled an amendment that dealt almost entirely with the point. I commend my hon. Friend, because it was a remarkable piece of draftsmanship. Interestingly, it accorded exactly, it would appear, with the Government's thoughts on the matter after my intervention on Second Reading. In Standing Committee, that clause was accepted and the substance of it was that a head lessee cannot be the qualifying tenant of more than one flat in a block for the purpose of enfrachisement. It is a lawyer's point, but none the worst for that. It took some time for that to come; it arrived because of representations made throughout the month, and it is very welcome.

It seems to me that it is only a small step from there to asking whether anything needs to be done, in addition to my hon. Friend's amendment, to tidy things up a bit. The way that I would have tidied it up is in amendment 115, which, for reasons of I know nothing, finds itself in a forlorn position further down the list of amendments, perhaps because of the way in which I tackled it. In substance, if not in reality, it belongs in this group of amendments.

I was seeking to achieve the acceptance of a residual qualification that the home must be a person's principal or primary residence. That would seem to accord exactly with what was in the manifesto, because it talked about residential home owners. This is in no sense a novel concept; it is known already. It is known for the purposes of MIRAS and of the capital transfer tax laws. It is also known for the purposes of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1967, which, to some extent in our deliberations, has now achieved a status close to that of a bible. People dine a la carte on it where it seems to be in their interest to do so. Therefore, I will do the same and commend the 1967 Act in this respect at least, because it makes the case and accepts the concept of a principal primary residence.

What can be the objections to that concept? I know what the objections will be from the Opposition; they have been expressed with great eloquence and sincerity. I also appreciate that some constituency pressures may produce a particular approach to it in other parts of the Chamber. But, from the point of view of the manifesto that we walked the streets of England, Wales and Scotland advocating, what could be wrong with the concept of principal primary residence? I know that in due course my hon. Friends will be telling me what the objections are. Happily, in the light of correspondence that I have had with them, I can perhaps give an answer in advance to some of their objections.

The proposal is supposed to be novel and complicated. Well, it is not. A more serious and worthwhile objection that certainly must be addressed is that there is no doubt that some people in a block would find it harder to enfranchise, and I accept that that is a problem that must be dealt with. I made that point on Second Reading and I said that there would be lots of time for officials, with all the resources of intellect and ingenuity available to them, to come up with a solution to that problem.

I even, as a humble country lawyer from the backwoods, suggested one way in which they might proceed. They could say that, if a person in a block was unable to enfranchise because of this proposal, he should be entitled to a long lease. That would not have been quite the same as full ownership, but it would have been very much further towards it and would have made sure that the policy objective set out in the manifesto would have been achieved. If that is not feasible for some reason, I look forward to hearing why. The point is that there has been sufficient time to think how that might be taken forward.

What other objections might there be? One suggestion, as I understand it, is that it is really all a bit of a misunderstanding, because, if people are conducting a business when they are essentially in a residential context, they must be in breach of a planning law. If that were the case, one could tootle along to the local planning authority and say that those people are not really residential, but are running businesses. Perhaps one could, and perhaps one could not; I neither know, nor, frankly, do I care.

I do not see why one should have to use the planning laws as an instrument of property protection. It is perfectly clear that, a long time before there was any such thing as planning laws, head lessees sold leasehold interests in property. We are now in the business of home ownership, yet we find that there are places where there are no homes at all. Let us take, for instance, a Harley street doctor. For the purposes of equality, I suppose I had better talk as well about the Manor House hospital which prominent trade unionists use; I would be out of order in going too far down that road, so I will leave it.

5 pm

Anyone who has ever been to see a Harley street doctor does not believe that he actually lives in his house in Harley street. He is into hot bunking; he is virtually into revolving brass nameplates outside. It is a rabbit warren. It has nothing whatever to do with residential accommodation and everything to do with business accommodation. It does not matter what the planning laws say; the reality is that someone who is a business person will suddenly find as a result of the legislation that he will be in a position to enfranchise. I cannot believe that that was the intention of my right hon. and hon. Friends when they introduced these proposals.

On my final point I must part company with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare. Someone who can move within three years these days is lucky, but there could be a problem about setting a three-year qualification period. The way to address the problem is simple, although it would make things harder for the landlord. Let there be a qualification without time limit, so that, the instant someone buys, it becomes the principal private residence. That would take care of the practical abuse.

When we have gone to the country with a commitment to do something to help residential home owners, I do not understand how business use can get in on the side. The Government have done so well in listening to the representations, in making the concession that was made in correspondence in August, and in dealing with the point made in Standing Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), that it would not take very much for them to get it exactly right. Were they to do that, they would know that they have done the right thing because of the undying abuse and criticism of the Opposition. I should like to think that they would feel consoled when they heard that.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Many points have already been made in the debate, so I shall be brief. May I disabuse those Opposition Members who believe that the Bill is about getting another kick at nasty landlords? That has come through clearly in their speeches. The socialism of envy has been prominent on the Opposition Benches, particularly from the hon. Members for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who is no longer in his place.

A number of people—not a large but a significant number—on retirement, perhaps after selling a small business or after saving for a number of years, invest their savings funds not in a leasehold flat but in freehold reversions. That is not illegal, or even immoral. It was a way of investing money over a long period to provide a fixed income through what was regarded as a safe investment.

The reason why I and some of my hon. Friends are doubtful about some aspects of the Bill is that we can see the life savings of those small investors being significantly devalued by the provisions of the measure. While I accept the principle of the Bill—I voted for it on Second Reading and I shall support it on Third Reading, because it increases the availability of freehold property to a substantial number of people—we should be wary of confusing that principle with using the power and force of Government to make financial adjustments between landlord and tenant. That is why I look forward to a discussion later on the extent to which marriage value is to be divided between the two.

I raise the point on the new clause because there has been much discussion about the meaning of residence. All of us have different views about the extent to which residence as such, or residence over a period, needs to be a qualification under the Bill. I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) on one detail of the proposed new clause, in that I know of many people, some of them hon. Members, who live in flats in London during the week and in homes in their constituencies at the weekend, but who for tax or whatever purposes regard their constituency home as their principal private residence. I can see no reason why such people should be debarred from enfranchisement under the Bill, despite the fact that technically the flat that they are trying to enfranchise is not their principal private residence.

When I lived in a block of flats in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), I found that on the two floors where I knew the tenants well—the floor that I lived on and the floor beneath—I was the only tenant who was not occupying a company let. I have no idea who the landlord was. He might have been one of the dukes referred to in such slighting terms by Opposition Members, or he might have been a private investor. All the other tenants were there because they were occupying flats for the benefit of the companies for which they worked.

I do not object to those people having votes or not having votes when it comes to enfranchisement. What I question is their reason for playing any part in the process. If we are dealing with something as fundamental as the right of the occupier of a flat to enfranchise and become a freeholder, and the right of the ultimate freeholder to receive a fair price for the freehold reversion, what possible interest does a company tenant have in the process on either side? Why should the votes of the temporary or permanent companies who are renting for business purposes determine the financial adjustment between the long leaseholder and the freeholder? We are ignoring the legitimate rights recognised by the Government in their election manifesto and allowing disinterested third parties to determine who should get wealthy and who should become poor.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in opposing the new clause, specifically because of the undesirability of creating any greater obstacles than those which already exist and which will not be removed by the legislation for leaseholders wishing to enfranchise. This has been of great concern not only to me but to my predecessor, Gerry Bowden, who was a strong advocate of commonhold, as I am, and before him to Sam Silkin. It has been a chronic problem, so far unresolved by legislation, in dealing with the fraught relationship between leaseholders and freeholders.

The provisions are modest and do not extend to commonhold. They do not provide adequate protection against poor management and negligent freeholders, a situation brought vividly to my attention by the case of a constituent whose experience bears out the conclusions of the recent study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

My constituent has suffered exploitation by a large south London freeholder managing agent. She found it impossible to identify other leaseholders in a similar position. She was a woman of average means and, in her own words, she was forced to scrape together money to buy a flat due to to the chronic shortage of affordable accommodation to rent. Since that time, she has paid the freeholder whatever was asked of her in ground rent, management fees and service charges.

As yet, services are non-existent. Urgent repairs are not carried out. Worse still, repairs have been started and have never been completed. For most of the last six months she has had no steps up to her front door, the steps having collapsed last August. She has been in the ridiculous position of having to spend many hours negotiating with the freeholder to get that work completed.

[Ms. Tessa Jowell]

I suspect that that picture is repeated across London and it remains a major failing of the Bill that leaseholders excluded from enfranchisement are not more adequately protected in law against the bad practice of freeholders. As the Bill is already inadequate in the protection that it extends, I hope that hon. Members will oppose the new clause.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): In moving the new clause, and speaking to the amendments grouped with it, my right hon. and hon. Friends have touched on a number of important issues of principle concerning the Government's proposals for leasehold reform. I well understand why they have approached the matter in that way. Their concerns are legitimate and I hope that I shall be forgiven if, before dealing with the residency test, I put the debate in a wider context.

The proposals in part I are aimed primarily at giving the owners of flats the opportunity to enfranchise. The Bill stands in a long line of measures that Parliament has introduced to regulate the relationship between landlord and tenant. From time to time, Parliament has judged it necessary to intervene to change the balance of rights. Inevitably, that has an effect on the expectations that the various parties might have enjoyed and must necessarily mean interfering with pre-existing property rights.

It was a Conservative Government who instituted the most radical reform of our land tenure system since Edward I legislated in 1290. The 1925 package of legislation—the Law of Property Act, the Settled Land Act, the Land Registration Act and the Land Charges Act—had the effect, among other changes, of abolishing many anachronistic forms of land tenure and simplifying conveyancing procedures in favour of purchasers. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1927 gave business tenants new statutory rights against their landlords and the Landlords and Tenant Act 1954 extended that protection to residential tenants. All those measures were passed by Conservative Governments. Residential tenants under long leases now generally have the right to hold over as statutory tenants at the end of their leases. Those legislative Acts necessarily applied to pre-existing leases and were introduced to deal with the practical problems that resulted from the operation of the leasehold system.

Enfranchisement has been a matter of concern and debate for more than a century. The first Bill to provide a right to enfranchise was introduced in 1884. The Conservative party promised enfranchisement on fair terms in its manifesto for the 1966 election, although a Labour Government introduced the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. The Conservative Opposition welcomed the principle of that Act, although they had grave concerns about the basis of compensation that it introduced. I hope to say more about that when we debate the amendments on the valuation.

In 1974, the Conservative Opposition moved amendments bringing medium-value houses within the scope of the 1967 Act, although on a new and fairer valuation basis. Conservative Members have consistently taken the lead in bringing the concerns of their constituents to the attention of the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and his predecessor, the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, and the predecessor of the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell), Gerry Bowden, lost no opportunity in pressing the case of their disadvantaged constituents, and the Bill is primarily a response to their concerns.

5.15 pm

The Bill takes enfranchisement a step further. Almost all owners of leasehold houses have had the right to enfranchise since 1967 or 1974. The Bill extends that right to many of the 750,000 or so owners of leasehold flats. They will be able to buy their freehold at a fair market price.

Flat owners face two serious problems. The first is that their lease is a wasting asset which, once it has fewer than 60 years to run, becomes difficult to mortgage and hence to sell. The second is that, although they pay all the costs of maintenance, they are in the hands of the freeholder when it comes to getting work done. This gives rise to many difficulties and complaints, as independent research and the evidence of many letters from constituents has shown.

In English law, there is no satisfactory alternative to leasehold ownership for flats. Commonhold will remedy that in due course, but alongside commonhold we need a mechanism for existing leaseholders to take control of their own homes.

Because the nature of a flat is different from that of a house, the right can be exercised only collectively rather than individually and it will apply only where certain qualifying conditions are satisfied, to ensure that enfranchisement takes place only where tenants can be said to have the greater interest in the property—essentially, where two thirds of the flats in a block are let on long leases at a low rent. Where a building does not qualify for collective enfranchisement, there will instead be a right for qualifying tenants to extend their leases at market price, which will at least deal with the problem of the lease as a wasting asset.

The Bill also extends the right to enfranchise to those few high-value houses that remain excluded from the 1967 legislation on the basis of their rateable value. Again, we shall debate that matter later this evening.

The amendments and the new clause seek to introduce a residency test for the enfranchisement of flats. Amendments Nos 5 and 10 would mean that a tenant of a flat would not be a qualifying tenant unless the flat were used as a principal residence and had been occupied as such for the previous three years or for three years out of the previous 10. The new clause uses a slightly different approach. The right to lease extension would be available only where the tenant satisfied the residency test, but for collective enfranchisement at least half the participating tenants would have to satisfy that test.

The Bill does not propose a residence qualification for the enfranchisement of flats, because it is a collective rather than an individual action. That is the second of the reasons that were identified in advance by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). Tenants must already clear two hurdles before they are entitled to enfranchise: first, two thirds of the flats in a block must be held on long leases at low rent; and, secondly, of those qualifying tenants, two thirds must wish to participate. The amendments would make it significantly more difficult for tenants to clear those hurdles. If tenants are disqualified unless resident, it will be more difficult to

satisfy the first test. If in order to participate at least 50 per cent. must be resident, it will be more difficult to pass the second.

The reason is that, like other people, those who live in flats move from time to time. If there were a residency test, at any one time a number of flat owners would still be completing their period of qualification. If, on average, people move every nine years, typically one third would fail a residency test at any one time. A block that may be entirely occupied by home owners living in their own homes could hover between qualifying for enfranchisement simply according to the pattern of moves.

Genuine long-term owners of flats in the block might never have the chance to enfranchise, simply because, whenever they come near to establishing the necessary majority, one of their neighbours moves. Indeed, the worst managed blocks, which experience the most difficult problems with maintenance or exploitation of service charges and from which people move as soon as they can, may experience the most difficulty in qualifying.

There is also the possibility that some freeholders might use the existence of the residency test to defeat the right to enfranchise. There are instances at present where landlords have refused consent to assign a lease other than to a company, purely with the object of taking a house outside the scope of enfranchisement. If they were able to do that with one or two flats in a block, they could deny other tenants access to the collective right.

We have already accepted an amendment in Committee which will prevent anyone owning more than two flats in a block from enfranchising. That will eliminate the risk that speculative landlords may be able to enfranchise against the freeholder. To go beyond that and to include a residency test would make the right to collective enfranchisement, given by chapter I, unenforceable by many tenants who can themselves meet the residency test and all other requirements.

I accept that the case against a residency test for lease extension is not so strong. It is an individual right, and the same difficulties of assembling a sufficient quorum to exercise the collective right do not apply. I accept the force of the argument put to me by my right hon. and hon. Friends on that point and I am prepared to undertake to table an amendment at a later stage which would have the effect of applying a residency test on the same lines as that which currently applies to houses in the provisions of chapter II.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will accept that I understand what lies behind their concern. I have tried to meet it where it would not imperil the fundamental purpose of the legislation. On that basis, I urge the House to reject the new clause and its associated amendments, which would apply a general residency test and would make chapter I unenforceable for many people.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 3

SAVING FOR CHARITIES

'There shall be no right under Chapters I or II to acquire any interest in or new lease of any property which is held by or in trust for a charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1960.'—*[Sir Jerry Wiggin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 4, in clause 4, page 5, line 30, at end insert—

'( ) This chapter does not apply to premises of which the reversioner or any relevant landlord is a charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1960.'

No. 6, in clause 5, page 5, line 43, leave out from 'lease' to 'or' in line 45 and insert

'or a relevant landlord is a charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1960;'.

No. 7, in page 6, line 4, at end insert

'or

(d) the lease is of a flat forming part of premises of which the freeholder is a charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1960'.

No. 8, in page 6, line 5, leave out from beginning to end of line 7.

No. 12, in clause 59, page 63, line 42, at end insert—

'(3) This section shall not apply to any house and premises of which the landlord is a charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1960.'.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: The new clause and the amendments deal with a single point. It was clear from the previous debate that opponents of my view and that of my colleagues on this issue were seeking to build some of their case on the iniquities, or otherwise, of individual landlords who are frequently quite blameless. We heard the story of big estates.

The purpose of the new clause is to exempt charitable freeholders from the Bill's provisions. I acknowledge that it will not be difficult to make an intellectual case that charities should not be treated any differently from other landlords. However, Henry Smith's Charity, a very big charity which owns a large chunk of London, has made representations which it is reasonable to air.

Henry Smith's Charity distributes about £12 million a year to medical charities, hospitals, hospices, medical research, to the mentally and physically disabled and other social welfare organisations, such as those dealing with the young and the elderly and those providing services for drug and alcohol abusers.

To put that in context, about half the charity's income comes from Henry Smith's Kensington estate, which is centred on Onslow square and which has been owned by the chairty for many years. I shall argue later about the compensation terms, but Henry Smith's surveyors have done a calculation dealing only with Onslow square. It shows that, if the Bill is passed with its current provisions for compensation, the windfall gain that will accrue to tenants in that area alone will exceed £2 million. That means that £2 million of charitable money will be removed from the charity and handed to the leaseholders as a windfall. That seems unfair.

I have received other representations from charities, usually of an institutional type such as university colleges, which have for many years held property as part of their portfolio. I have not heard any hon. Member who supports the Bill say that such organisations fall into the category of bad landlords. That is far from the truth. Such organisations have been trying to preserve their investment for charitable purposes, and it is wrong that the Bill should apply to them. I believe that the case for other charities is self-evident, and I do not need to elaborate further.

Mr. Raynsford: I wish to respond to the specific point made by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) about Henry Smith's Charity and its activities in south Kensington.

I worked in the area for many years and frequently saw a large notice board displayed by an aggrieved leaseholder, proclaiming that Henry Smith's Charity was corrupt and should be investigated. That individual may or may not have had good reason for his point of view which he displayed so forcefully for several years, but it certainly suggested that there were grounds for concern about whether the kindly named Henry Smith's Charity was entirely blameless.

More recently, I have received from Pelham residents association a list of leases in that area which have been disposed of by the charity. When moving the previous new clause, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare said that it would be wrong to allow companies, speculators and others to benefit from the enfranchisement provisions. However, according to the residential residents of that area of south Kensington, it has been a deliberate policy of that charity to dispose of leases, which have been occupied by normal families in residence for many years—for hundreds of years in some cases—to companies.

I have a schedule of the current leaseholders in that area. No. 1 Pelham crescent has been leased to Rubyquote Ltd.; No. 3 to Howden Management and Data Services Ltd.; No. 6 to Credit Du Nord Societé Anonyme; Nos. 18 and 19 to Intro Properties (U.K.) Ltd.; No. 21 to First National Bank of Boston; and Nos. 27 and 27a to Moyna Holdings Inc. No. 1 Pelham place has been leased to Great Lakes Carbon International Ltd.; No. 2 to Kirkdale Ltd.; No. 11 to Eastwyn Sales Corporation and No. 29 to Merat Holdings Ltd.

Henry Smith's Charity may believe that it is in its interests to dispose of large numbers of their holdings to companies.

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): Only this week, a constituent of mine who has the disadvantage of being an Englishman and an individual was refused a lease by Henry Smith's Charity because he had a millstone around his neck—he has to be a company to acquire a lease.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Member for that intervention, which reinforces the point that the policy being pursued by this supposedly charitable body works explicitly against the interests of people seeking residential accommodation in the area of London in which it has so many landholdings.

It may be in the charity's intersts to let its properties to non-residential occupiers and to companies, but it is pretty rich for some hon. Members to argue that the charity should be exempt from these provisions on the ground that it is doing wonderful charitable works. If the charity chooses to pursue these policies for commercial gain, it has only itself to blame if the House rightly decides that the Bill should apply to it as it does to everybody else. It will be entirely justified for the leaseholders of Henry Smith's Charity in south Kensington to have the right to enfranchisement and not to be debarred, which would be the impact of the new clause.

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State knows fairly intimately, as a result of my correspondence with him and as a result of some of our conversations, about the considerable disenchantment that the Church Commissioners, a parliamentary charity, feel about the draconian obliteration of their long-standing leasehold interests in properties in various parts of London. My right hon. and learned Friend has been kind enough to look not without sympathy—although, alas, without a specific response so far—at the urging, expressed in the new clause, that charities should be removed from the scope of the Bill.

It is worth pointing out to my right hon. and learned Friend and to the Minister of State that charities which, in the nature of things, have an indefinite lifespan that stretches from here to eternity—certainly that is true of the Church Commissioners—[HON. MEMBERS: "Commissioners?"] That was a slip of the tongue. I meant the Church Commission as a body. The Church Commissioners individually do not stretch from here to eternity.

For charities such as the Church Commission, 99 years is a small drop in the ocean of time of their lives and work. It becomes rational for charities such as the Church Commission to extend, to develop, to maintain and generally to sustain all their capital assets, which they develop and hold entirely for the advantage and benefit of certain limited beneficiaries. For the Church Commission, those beneficiaries are serving clergy, retired clergy and their dependants.

It remains reasonable for such charities to maintain leasehold properties, from which they take out initially a full or almost full market value, leaving aside the ground rent, over a 99-year lease period—99 years is a drop in the ocean of time from their point of view—and to look steadily forward to a reversionary interest as the period comes to an end. Charities are then once again presented with the opportunity to use their reverted properties to raise money, entirely for the benefit of their worthy beneficiaries and their dependants.

It was rational for bodies such as the Church Commissioners to have some property leases in their portfolio of assets. The Church Commissioners have maintained their leasehold interest in properties in good faith, believing that they did nothing but good both for the leaseholders and ultimately for their beneficiaries.

The Bill will narrow the scope for charities such as the Church Commission because it will suddenly remove opportunities from them and the potential for asset investment of this sort will be obliterated. It is neither necessary nor desirable that my right hon. and learned Friend's reform should extend to that particular type of charitable leaseholder, which includes leaseholders of properties owned by the Church Commissioners and by Henry Smith's Charity, merely because the justification for other aspects of leasehold reform may be more sustainable.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to consider whether it is really necessary to sweep up charities, which have a special dimension, in the Bill. If there is no escaping his final scything action against the Church Commission and other charities, and if my right hon. and learned Friend is determined to sweep away this perfectly attractive and desirable type of property ownership, I ask

him to consider at least one little modification. If, after careful study, the modification appeals to him and seems reasonable, perhaps he will tell me that he will make the necessary changes to the Bill in the other place so that we need not press the new clause.

I mentioned the modification to my right hon. and learned Friend in conversation not long ago. He should exclude from the scope of the Bill leasehold owners—we have a few in the Church Commission properties—who are company leaseholders. Earlier exchanges dealt with Henry Smith's Charity's excursions into the realm of company ownership. The Church Commissioners have a few company leaseholders which we nominated as leaseholders entirely because, at the time of nomination, the Rent Acts made it difficult to recover let properties unless they were let to companies.

There was quite a development in company letting to avoid the squeeze of the Rent Acts. One result is that a small number of Church Commission leaseholders are companies that have taken up long leases. They have used properties essentially for the benefit of their visiting clients and of their visiting customers.

There seems to be no good reason why those companies, which are non-individual and non-personal leaseholders, should get the benefit of enfranchisement. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will agree that the small group of leaseholders involved, at least so far as the Church Commission is concerned, may be excluded from the scope of the Bill by an appropriate amendment in the other place.

Such leaseholders have no personal issues at stake, no personal pressures and no personal needs. There is no individual dimension in the small group of company leaseholders. They would not suffer and they would be perfectly content that their position should remain the same. Such leaseholders do not yearn for the personal security of a home of their own or for something to leave to their children. They take out the leasehold entirely as a commercial venture for the benefit of their business and clients. They do not mind whether they own the property completely or whether they continue as leaseholders.

It seems unnecessary that that group should be forced to acquire their leases when that was not the basis on which they entered into the arrangement. There seems to be no good reason why, on the ground of doing good to individuals or to those in personal housing circumstances, we should allow company leaseholders the same benefits. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will look sympathetically at this narrow point even if he is unable to give us the full exemption in the new clause.

Mr. Battle: When we debated new clause 2, the Secretary of State hinted that the Government would come back, perhaps in another place, with a principal residency exclusion concession. I shall watch with interest to see what the Government do, but I hope that they will not be pressed to make exemptions. If the Secretary of State accepts the words of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), it will be a case of moving the leasehold market in the direction of a two-tier housing market. Clearly, a distinction will be drawn and people will see a relative fall in the value of their homes because of the two-tier leasehold market.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir. J. Wiggin) at least acknowledged that there are strong arguments against exemptions for charitable properties. I see no reason why properties that are held in trust for charities should be excluded from that part of the legislation on leasehold enfranchisement. Trustees of charities are legally bound to manage their properties on a fully commercial basis. Hon. Members should not be seduced by the word "charity" into thinking that, by opposing charities, we are therefore against the work of charities that have to look after their portfolios in that way.

There is no evidence that charities are any more benevolent in doing that than any other category of freeholder. I make that point because it is not as managers and freeholders that charities carry out charitable work; it is in their other aims and intentions. There is some evidence that they are not more benevolent, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) pointed out in respect of Henry Smith's Charity.

If the freehold is purely a form of investment for the charity, there is a fair argument that, if the charity is not happy with that as a sufficient return on its investment, alternatives are readily available. The right hon. Member for Selby said that freeholding was a drop in the ocean of time for the Church Commissioners. We should keep our eyes firmly on the people who live in houses over which the Church Commissioners have the freehold. It is not a drop in the ocean of time for the leaseholders. The focus should be on their lifetime and the quality of their lifetime.

The leaseholders involved have their homes at stake. Many of them have invested their savings in their homes. If they were now to be excluded from the legislation, they would see a relative fall in the value of their homes. In effect, their homes would become second-class properties. By offering exemptions, the Government would be opening the way to setting up a two-tier structure of leaseholders. I hope that that is not their intention.

Mr. Raynsford: I have been thinking about my hon. Friend's remarks and those of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). The logic of the case for the exemption of lettings by charities to non-residential occupants would lead inexorably in one direction. It would not be a two-tier situation, but one in which it was impossible for any individual to obtain a letting from any such freeholder, because all lettings would be given to companies in order to evade the provisions of the Bill. That would effectively entirely close off the option.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As usual, he has applied his logical mind to the direction in which the Bill could go. It could create space for practically everything to be redefined and therefore effectively close off the intentions of the Bill. In other words, the spirit might be retained—that is, that the Government want leasehold enfranchisement—but in practice everyone would see the possibility of opt-out. I hope that the Government are not going down that road. I urge the Minister not to accept the new clause.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my right hon. and hon. Friends for the measured way in which they have addressed the new clauses. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) conceded that there was an intellectual argument against his new clause, and I hope briefly to deploy it. It is no part of the Government's case that Smith's Charities, the Church Commissioners or other charitable landlords have acted

[Sir George Young]

other than honourably in the management of their estates. Indeed, we applaud the work of Smith's Charities and other charities, some of which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare.

On the specific point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the Church, a few moments ago we debated company leaseholders. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State explained why it would not be possible to make the exemption which my right hon. Friend has pressed on us. I hope that, when the day of judgment comes, the Church will not hold it against Ministers for the actions that they might have taken against the Church Commissioners' interests on earth, but it is the Government's intention that leasehold enfranchisement should apply to as many long leaseholders as possible and that there should be few exemptions.

5.45 pm

The purpose behind the amendments is to secure an exemption for charities from leasehold enfranchisement of flats and higher-value houses and also lease renewal for flats. The debate has taken a course similar to the one which took place more than 25 years ago, in 1967, when the Leasehold Reform Bill was before Parliament. Parliament decided then that charities should not be exempt landlords, and the Bill was passed without such an exemption.

Apart from resident landlords, inalienable land held by the National Trust and certain Crown properties, only charitable housing trusts that let flats in pursuit of their charitable purposes will have any form of exemption from enfranchisement and lease renewal. In such circumstances, if the charity is the immediate landlord, the tenant of the flat will cease to be a qualifying tenant. But some of the amendments would exclude all properties from both enfranchisement and lease renewal where any landlord is a charity. A block of flats with a charity as head leaseholder would be outside the scope of the Bill. Others would prevent certain leaseholders from becoming qualifying tenants, irrespective of whether the charity was their immediate landlord.

The Bill is concerned with leasehold reform. In such a reform, it is wrong to distinguish between the profession or the character of freeholders. If a leaseholder, by reason of leasehold tenure, qualifies for enfranchisement, he should qualify regardless of who his landlord is. I do not see the case for denying some leaseholders the right to enfranchise or, indeed, to extend their leases just because their landlord is a charity. There certainly is no precedent for such a sweeping exemption.

The fact that a charity applies its income for the benefit of others is not a reason for exemption and because charities will receive full market value for their interests there is no reason why they should not continue to do the excellent work that they do now. Indeed, part of my right hon. Friend's remarks related to compensation. The Bill is neutral on the assets of a charity. Nothing in the Bill need inhibit the excellent work which charities fund.

At issue is the derivation of a charity's income. Although a charity may apply or use its income in a charitable way, it by no means follows that the income was obtained in a similar fashion. Where a charity invests, whether in property, shares or similar, the chief underlying intention is to make financial gains. An appropriate comparison might be drawn with the position of charities owning shares. When a company is taken over, individual shareholders such as charities do not have veto rights.

For tenants, it really is of little importance whether the landlord is a charity; it is all the same to them. Their landlord, although a charity, will behave towards them simply as a commercial landlord. Indeed, one charitable landlord has confirmed that the trustees are generally bound to set premiums and rents that match the market price.

A few days ago, I happened to listen to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby answer questions on behalf of the Church Commissioners. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), my right hon. Friend said:

"The commissioners' investment policy is to seek to achieve the best total return on their assets—that is, growth of both income and capital. This reflects their primary objective, which is to provide adequate financial support for the Church's serving and retired clergy."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1993; Vol. 113, c. 12.]

That is the objective of most charities when they look at how they derive their income.

Where a charity has a property in which two thirds or more of the flats are let on long leases, we consider that the charity has disposed of a major interest in that property. When a property is let on a long lease at a low rent, the greatest interest, often substantially the whole interest, passes to the leaseholder and the landlord's predominant role then becomes a residual management one. We will shortly have a debate about the price that leaseholders will have to pay for the freehold which will reflect the full market value of that interest. Like others, charitable landlords will be fairly compensated for the loss of their interest.

The Government's firm belief is that it would be wrong to distinguish leaseholders whose landlord is a charity from other leaseholders. We do not believe that it is in the general interest so to do. The landlord's identity makes little or no difference to such leaseholders.

An exemption for charities along the lines proposed by the amendments is, in the Government's view, difficult to defend. The amendments would exclude unfairly many tenants from the benefits of the Bill to which they are greatly looking forward. If my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare cannot be persuaded to withdraw the new clause, I hope that the House will oppose it.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 5

PURCHASE PRICE (NO. 1)

'. For subsections (1) and (2) of section 9 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 there shall be substituted the following—

"*Purchase Price*

(1) The price payable for a house and premises on a conveyance under section 8 above shall be the amount which would be payable for the house and premises pursuant to Schedule 5 to the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 upon the assumption that the house and premises are specified premises and the valuation date for the purposes of that Schedule is the date when notice is given by the person acquiring of his desire to have the freehold.".'—*[Sir Jerry Wiggin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following: New clause 6—*Purchase price (No. 2)*—

'[ ]. In Section 9 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 there shall be inserted the following—

" 1(D) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section the price payable for the house and premises shall be increased to take account of—

(i) any diminution in value of any interest of the vendor in other property resulting from the acquisition of his interest in the house and premises,

(ii) any other loss or damage which results therefrom to the extent that it is referrable to his ownership of any interest in other property, and

(iii) provided that any examination in value shall be ignored to the extent that the loss or damage to the vendor which results from the acquisition of his interest in the house and premises is reduced by the imposition of restrictive covenants and easements."'.

New clause 7—*Price payable under enfranchisement*—

'–. (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the price payable for the freehold and any other interest in property acquired under Chapter I or III of Part I of this Act (including any house and premises acquired under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 pursuant to modification to that Act made by Part I of this Act) shall be the sum of:

(a) the difference between the value of the freehold with vacant possession and the value of the purchasers' former leasehold interest or, in the case of collective enfranchisement, the aggregate value of the new interests to be held by the participating tenants and the value of their existing leasehold interests after deducting the value of any interest to be granted to the freeholder in accordance with section 32 and Schedule 8 (which provide for leaseback to former freeholders), and

(b) any amount of compensation for loss resulting from enfranchisement payable under subsection (2).

(2) Where the landlord or, in the case of collective enfranchisement, the freeholder or the owner of any intermediate leasehold interest will suffer any loss or damage (including loss of development value in relation to the specified premises) by way of:

(a) any diminution in value of any interest in other property resulting from the acquisition of his interest in the specified premises or his interest in other property pursuant to section 1(2)(a) or (4) or section 18(4),

(b) any other loss or damage which results therefrom to the extent that it is referrable to his ownership of any interest in other property,

there shall be payable to him (and whether or not, in the case of a freeholder, the grant of a lease in accordance with section 32 and Schedule 8 has or could mitigate the loss or damage) such amount as is reasonable to compensate him for that damage.

(3) In this section:

"the new interests" means the interest of each qualifying tenant in the relevant premises after enfranchisement assuming that they jointly own the freehold and taking into account their potential ability to have new leases granted to them without payment of any premium and without restriction as to length of term.'

Amendment No. 25, in clause 28, page 37, leave out lines 28 to 31.

Amendment No. 27, in schedule 5, page 175, leave out from line 15 to end of line 38 on page 181.

Amendment No. 15, in page 175, line 44, at end insert—

'( ) In addition to any sum payable by virtue of sub-paragraph (1), where, within the period expiring 5 years after the valuation date, the nominee purchaser or any person to whom the freehold is transferred grants or agrees to grant to any person other than a participating tenant a new lease in respect of any part of the specified premises at less than market value, he shall also then be liable to pay a sum equivalent to the difference between the market value of the new lease and the price paid or to be paid for it.'.

Amendment No. 28, in page 177, line 22, after the second 'the', insert

'qualifying tenants assuming that they are all'.

Amendment No. 26, in clause 61, page 64, leave out lines 38 to 47.

Amendment No. 13, in page 64, line 44, leave out from 'shall' to end of line 45 and insert

'be determined in accordance with subsection (ID) and (IE) below

(ID) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the price payable for a house and premises to which this subsection applies shall be the aggregate of—

(a) the value at the relevant time of the freehold to be acquired by the purchaser less the value of his existing interest in the property,

(b) any amount of compensation for loss resulting from enfranchisement payable under subsection (IE) below.

(IE) Where the landlord will suffer any loss or damage (including any loss in value of an interest in premises which is attributable to the possibility of demolishing, reconstructing, or carrying out substantial works of house and premises) being loss or damage by way of—

(a) any diminution in value of any interest in other property resulting from the acquisition of his interest in the house and premises,

(b) any other loss or damage which results therefrom to the extent that it is referable to his ownership of any interest in other property,

there shall be payable to him such amount as is reasonable to compensate him for that damage.'.

Mr. Jopling: On a point of order, Dame Janet. It occurs to some of us that the later grouping of amendments headed by No. 14 could be taken with this group. If that is convenient to the House, it would be helpful in the interests of progress.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is all right so far as I am concerned, but I am in the hands of the House. If all are agreed, then, we will also discuss the following amendments: No. 14, in schedule 5, page 175 line 41, leave out from first 'the' to 'marriage'.

No. 16, in page 177, leave out lines 7 to 16.

No. 19, in schedule 12, page 200, line 21, leave out from first 'the' to 'marriage'.

No. 20, in page 201, line 25, leave out sub-paragraph (1).

Sir Jerry Wiggin: At the start of the Bill's progress through the House, I drew the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to a major anomaly—the fact that the provisions in clause 28 and schedule 5 give leaseholders the right to make windfall gains at the expense of the freeholder.

I argued that, unless the provisions are amended, they will amount to the expropriation of private property. I believe that they have no place in a Conservative Government's programme. The 1992 Conservative party manifesto committed the Government to extending home ownership. It offered residential leaseholders the right to acquire. Instead, this Bill gives any investor the right forcibly to acquire the assets of another investor.

[Sir Jerry Wiggin]

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) read to the House a list of the tenants in a street in his constituency. I beg his pardon if I have not got it precisely right, but it was a strange list of leaseholders who will benefit as a result of the Bill. It is nothing to do with the wretched leaseholder harassed by the wicked landlord which we heard about earlier. I was rather surprised by the hon. Gentleman's remarks, considering that he spoke on that amendment and the one by which such fortunate companies and others will be precluded from gaining the advantage of enfranchisement.

Clearly, the Bill's provisions are confiscatory. They originate from the commendable concerns which have been expressed by Conservative Members and which I mentioned during debate on an earlier clause.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has been prominent in the defence of leaseholders in London and is much admired by hon. Members on both sides of the House for his single-minded concerns for those tenants. He is aware that I shall refer to a letter which he wrote to Daniel Smith and Partners some three years ago, in which he said:

"There would be no element of compulsion".

He was discussing a Bill on leasehold reform proposed by the then Lord Chancellor. With proper indignation, he wrote:

"Such provision would have been confiscatory, anti-Tory, another piece of state bossiness in Britain's property laws, which is the last place it is needed."

I am distressed that those commendable and excellent views should have altered somewhat in the past year or two.

Mr. Fishburn: I am delighted that my hon. Friend reads my correspondence so carefully. Late at night when I answer letters, I shall note that I have one more keen reader. The remarks that I made at that time were to do not with leasehold reform but with commonhold reform. When the commonhold Bill is introduced, as it will be by the Government next year, there will be no element of compulsion in it.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: It would have been much better if the supporters of the Bill had waited for the promised legislation, which, I am glad to hear, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington will steer through the House, presumably with the co-operation of the Government of the day.

One of my complaints about the Bill is the major change effectively in eliminating leaseholds. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State said that the object of the Bill was to eliminate long leaseholds, although there appears to be a slight difference of opinion in the Government as to precisely how long and how definitive such an objective might be.

I diverge from the purpose of new clause 5, which deals with the amount of compensation to be paid after the Government have forced the freeholder to sell his rights to the leaseholder. Investors have the right, first, to buy properties which are not their homes; secondly, to force freeholders to sell properties at a discount; thirdly, to exercise the right of expropriation at any time in the future. That will enable investors to make windfall gains from a resale of an asset which has been forcibly confiscated.

On 12 November 1992, my hon. Friend the Minister of State conceded in Committee:

"the tenants will have forced the sale and determined its timing".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B,* 12 November 1992; c. 73]

On 19 November 1992, he said that the leaseholder

"will receive an asset worth more than the price paid."

Surely that admits our contention. As the Bill gives those persons the right to expropriate property at a time of their choosing, my hon. Friend's proposals for compensation are, by definition, inadequate. After all, the forced sale of the freehold is being upheld by the law. Therefore, there can be no willing seller, even though there may be willing, even eager, buyers. I am not surprised that that should be the case, given the profit which will accrue to them.

In Committee, the Government argued that clause 28 and schedule 5 provide a valuation based on the normal market practice. The forced sale of assets, upheld by the law, is not in anybody's fair mind normal market practice. However, it is current practice for leaseholders and freeholders, in negotiation, to take into account the potential gains to be made by the leaseholder. The gains that could be made will vary with the length of the lease. I have heard figures quoted as high as £275,000 on a property in Mayfair with a lease of, say, 30 years unexpired, and a freehold vacant possession value of £1·5 million.

My hon. Friend the Minister told the House that his Department had tried to ask

"what would happen if the freeholder wanted to sell and the leaseholders wanted to buy. What price would they agree on voluntarily?"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B,* 19 November 1992; c. 188.]

That is all very well, but it does not reflect the reality of the Bill, which is that the freeholder will be forced to sell.

My hon. Friend said that, in drafting the clauses and schedules, the Government tried to build into the statute a formula which would reflect what happens in a transaction between a willing buyer and a willing seller. At the same time, the thrust of this legislation is to force, and then uphold in law, a transaction between an unwilling seller and a very willing buyer. The anomaly at the heart of the Bill is that the Government are forcing a sale. My new clause and amendments seek to correct that anomaly and to provide for as fair compensation as is possible in the artificial property market created by the Bill.

I tabled the amendments not simply in defence of the interests of freeholders but in a broader defence of the property market. To quote my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, this piece of state bossiness is already disrupting the property world and deterring investors from a market unique in the western world for its lack of flexibility in housing tenure.

At the beginning of the century, rented property made up for 90 per cent. of the property market. Today we differ from the United States and all other European countries in having a property market in which only 7 per cent. of all properties are to rent.

6 pm

The flight of investors from the rented sector was brought about by state interference. The Bill is already deterring investors. Only fair and adequate compensation will encourage them to maintain their interest in housing investment.

I appreciate that the terms of the amendments are complicated and technical, but the concept behind them is

simple: to ensure that the compensation is based on the difference between the value of the lessee's interest before he or she acquires the freehold, and the value after. In other words, my amendments will provide for the lessee to pay as compensation for the forced sale the full increase in the value of the property arising from enfranchisement. When a landlord grants a long lease on any property, he effectively gives up some of that value in return for retaining the freehold—a fact which everyone has always recognised in the history of leasehold, yet which is being blindly ignored on the specious argument that there is no choice.

The Government propose a formula which will not provide for the landlord to get back all that value. It provides for the increase in value arising from the combination of freehold and leasehold known as the marriage value, to be shared between the lessor and the lessee, with not less than 50 per cent. going to the freeholder. That has been interpreted in some quarters as meaning that a 50:50 split should be the norm, but as my right hon. Friend said, the leaseholder would receive an asset worth more than the price paid.

At the same time, the Bill is effectively giving the right to enfranchise to those with very high-value houses excluded by the 1967 Act, and again there will be some fairly substantial windfall gains to lessees.

It appears that the new model Labour party, far from squeezing the rich, is now happy to approve the parts of the Bill that make some of the rich richer still. Conservative Members see no reason why leaseholders should benefit at the expense of freeholders, particularly as a very large number of charities and so on are involved, and we have already debated the merits of those cases. These gains are particularly unacceptable under the conditions of a forced sale.

I know that the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors will be dragged into the debate. I understand that it recently wrote to the Department clarifying its position. Mr. Michael Chambers of the RICS makes it clear that it would be wrong for legislation to begin from a premise "that a 50:50 split will be the norm".
The leasehold valuation tribunals will be resolving any disputes about the allocation of marriage value, and it is the view of the RICS that there will be cases in which all, or virtually all, the marriage values should go to the freeholders, as currently happens in market practice. They should, but will they? That is the question.

I move the amendment in the spirit of accepting the Government's underlying principles of increasing home ownership, but I believe that the compensation clause is a major anomaly in the Bill, to which I object more than I do to the general principle.

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): Our debate on the valuation of leasehold property under enfranchisement is one of the most important this evening. To say that the law relating to such valuation is complicated is a meiosis. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench know what a meiosis is—it is not something to which the Government are given; it is a wild understatement. We are dealing with an immensely complicated and arcane subject.

When one attempts to understand the complexity of the legislation on valuation it reminds me of the famous comment that Palmerston made about the Schleswig-Holstein question in the middle of the last century when he said that only three people understood it: one was a German who had been committed to a lunatic asylum, the second was a Danish professor who was dead and the third was himself and he had forgotten about it. I shall try to do a little better and attempt to explain to the House why I have certain reservations about the Bill.

I am not concerned about the principle of the Bill, which is that there should be an extension of leasehold enfranchisement, although I appreciate that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends strongly oppose that principle, but when the Government undertake to introduce a measure that is a means of setting aside agreements that have been freely entered into according to the laws prevailing at the time, and retrospectively set them aside, it is up to the House to ensure that the victims of that action are properly compensated.

I have in mind a particular case involving one of my constituents whose estate has been in the family for some 400 years. One of the houses was let on a lease some years ago, and he had hoped to return it to the use of the family when the lease expired, but, of course, that will not now be possible. I can understand his considerable annoyance at the proposals in the Bill. Such annoyance can be met by proper compensation.

I shall now deal with houses and the three types of valuation that relate to them. First, there are the houses affected by the 1967 Act which I shall call the 1967 houses; then there are the 1974 houses, which are those affected by the 1974 Act, and then there are the 1993 houses, which come under the Bill.

The basis of valuation for the 1967 houses under the original 1967 Act was that the right to enfranchise was given to those with a rateable value of below £200 in the country and £400 in the town and the basis of valuation of those properties for lessees who wished to enfranchise was described as an investment value, which did not bring in the concept of the marriage value. That was a very good deal for the leaseholder and many people will know of examples in which property was bought for a very small sum and sold on for a substantial profit shortly afterwards.

The 1974 valuation introduced a new concept. First, it extended the ratable value to £750 in the country and £1,500 in the town and the valuation tribunal was allowed to take into account the tenant's bid for the freehold value; therefore, the tenant was given an opportunity to marry his investment in the tenancy with the freehold, and the landlord was allowed a share in that. That was the introduction of the concept of the marriage value.

The houses that will be enfranchised under the Bill will be valued on the same basis as provided in the 1974 Act. So we shall have two bases of valuation for houses on franchise under the present system when the Bill becomes law—the 1967 valuation and the 1974 or 1993 valuation.

The treatment of flats is yet another concept of valuation. Of course, flats are brought within enfranchisement provisions for the first time under the Bill. Schedule 5 lays down the basis of valuation for flats. As those who have been following the Bill closely will know, schedule 5 has three elements. First, there is the investment value, which, in shorthand, approximates to the 1967 type of valuation. Secondly, there is the freeholder's share of the market value, which is part of the 1974 legislation. Thirdly, there is an allowance for injurious affection. That is an allowance for the fact that the value of the remaining

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

property surrounding or next to the property that has been enfranchised may be reduced as a result of the enfranchisement.

The best way to understand the schedule is by giving an example. If the market value of the property was, say, £100,000, the investment value, for the sake of argument, may be £10,000. The freeholder share will be, let us say, £70,000—therefore, amounting to £80,000. The difference between £80,000 and the market value of £100,000 is known as the marriage value. As the Bill says, at least 50 per cent. of that should go to the freeholder.

I have tried to explain to the House that there is an inconsistency between the processes of valuation for houses and flats. The valuation for flats is as I have just described. The valuation for houses starts with the 1967 houses with very low valuation. Some of the amendments seek to include the 1967 valuation in what I shall propose in a moment. I would not seek to do that. Some would say that after 25 years people have had a chance to enfranchise their properties, and, if they have not, they should come on to the new basis. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be pleased to know that I am not arguing that tonight. I am arguing that the basis of valuation for houses and for flats should be the same. That is the purpose of new clause 6.

New clause 6 creates only one basis of valuation for flats and houses. It seeks, first, to incorporate the concept of injurious affection into the valuation of houses. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will find that acceptable. I do not see what arguments he can use to say that one can apply the principle to flats and not to houses.

I also hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to accept the principle that flats and houses—by houses I mean the 1974 as well as the 1993 houses—should be valued on the same basis as flats. Again, that is part of the principle of new clause 6.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), I wish to refer to the letter from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. When some of us have argued that when enfranchisement takes place the freeholder should be entitled to the market value—which would be, in effect, 100 per cent. of the marriage value —we have been told two things. First, we were told that the RICS was not arguing the point. Secondly, we were told that the basis that hitherto the Government had tried to defend was the basis for valuation for compulsory purchase. I do not find either argument convincing. I particularly do not find the latter argument convincing.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare said, the RICS has now written clearly about the matter. I noticed that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was nodding when my hon. Friend read out what the RICS said. Perhaps I could encourage my right hon. and learned Friend to nod further. It said:

> "Under the Bill, any disputes about the allocation of the marriage value will be resolved by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunals."

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will nod. He nodded earlier. It continued:

> "It will be essential that in reaching their decisions they draw on evidence on what is the current practice in the market rather than begin from a premise that a 50–50 split would be the norm."

Another nod.

> "The clearer that this could be spelt out in the Bill, the better."

Ah, another nod. That encourages me. It means that we have a listening Government, or at least I hope that we have. [HON. MEMBERS: "A nodding Government."] That is as good.

Mr. Jopling: They were nodding off when they drafted the Bill.

Mr. Baker: No, that is unfair. I am not against a nodding Government so long as they nod to proposals from Conservative Back Benchers and not proposals from the Labour Front Bench.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is nodding again. I hope that what I have said has shown the House that changes are needed. There is genuine anxiety among many people that if contracts freely entered into under the existing legislation are to be set aside retrospectively, the compensation should be the proper market value. I do not seek more than the market value. Some amendments propose that compensation should be the marriage value plus injurious affection.

However, it is reasonable for my right hon. and learned Friend to accept the arguments that when the valuation clauses are amended—I suspect that they will be amended not tonight but in another place—two principles should apply: first, flats and houses should be valued on the same system; secondly, there should be an allowance for injurious affection for houses.

6.15 pm

Mr. Raynsford: We have heard some nonsense this evening, especially in this debate. The suggestion that extensive expropriation of unfortunate freeholders is about to take place is one of the most nonsensical arguments advanced by those people who seek to tighten the Bill to make it entirely ineffective.

Let us think about the circumstances in which most freeholders, and especially some of the large estates, operate. They have owned the land for several centuries. During that period they have been able to extract from leaseholders repeatedly virtually the entire value of the site that has been subject to the lease.

As leases have expired and been renewed, the freeholder has derived a huge premium for extending the lease. During that period the leaseholder has been liable for the maintenance and upkeep of the property and has had to keep it in decent condition, thereby contributing to the increased value.

When Conservative Members suggest that a measure to allow leaseholders to acquire at market value the freehold of the property is expropriation of the freeholder, Opposition Members are astonished at the gullibility of the dukes' men on the Conservative Benches, who have been persuaded by powerful interests to go along with that specious nonsense. Freeholders have lived off the fat of the land for long enough and it is time that the archaic system of leasehold tenure, which is dead everywhere in the world except Britain and one or two other countries, was swept away.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): How can the hon. Gentleman say that the freehold will be bought at market value when it is widely admitted that the measure puts an immediate capital gain into the hands of the leaseholder?

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, because it allows me to explain what is involved in the valuation procedure, which seems to me unduly generous to the freeholder, As the hon. Gentleman will know from studying schedule 5, three elements are involved. The first is the value of the freeholder's interest, which will be paid to the freeholder. I accept that. But the second is the freeholder's share of the marriage value. The marriage value is the enhanced value of the property as a result of bringing together the freehold and the leasehold. That is a windfall gain, if there is any. It is a windfall gain which is owed neither to the freeholder or the leaseholder because it arises purely——

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raynsford: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me a moment. I am trying to answer the point made by his colleague. I know that he is impatient, but I should like to complete my response.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Get on with it.

Mr. Raynsford: I am responding to an intervention from one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues. He might have the decency to wait until——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Some of the sedentary remarks are less than charitable.

Mr. Raynsford: Like the lettings policy of some charities.

The windfall gain, in so far as there is one, is, according to the provisions of the Bill, to be shared equally between the leaseholder and the freeholder. That seems to me to be possibly the fairest way of deciding it, but by no stretch of the imagination can this be described as a windfall gain for the leaseholder, because the freeholder is going to get an equal proportion.

Then there is the third element, of injurious affection, to which the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) referred. I have to say to him that a completely different circumstance applies to houses from that which applies to flats. It is absurd to suggest that it applies to houses. The freeholder of a flat will be entitled to compensation for any loss he may be able to claim that he has suffered as a result of this process.

So, from the Labour side, the terms look extraordinarily generous to freeholders, many of whom will have received, over many years previously, the full, if not more than the full, capital value of the property on which they are now to get an additional bonus. It seems to me to be unduly generous, if anything, to the freehold interest, and the suggestion that it is expropriation is utter nonsense. I hope that the Government will resist these entirely unjustified and specious arguments.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is always refreshing to have a particularly poignant example of old-fashioned primitive socialist prejudice. The hon. Member for Greenwich has just indulged in one of the more shameless exercises of socialist primitivism. Whether a piece of land was bought 250 years ago or five years ago, in the case of compulsory purchase for public purposes it would be treated, rightly under the rule of law, which some Labour Members appear to regard as evident frivolity, as equal. If one takes a person's property for a public purpose it is irrelevant whether one is a duke or whether the property was acquired yesterday or several hundred years ago.

The issue of public compulsory purchase has always been guarded by the House with the utmost jealousy, and properly, because it is fundamental to the rule of law. This group of amendments goes to the fundamental issue of political morality. The principles of public compulsory purchase, traditionally, whether going back to building canals in the 18th century or dealing with modern local authorities exercising general statutory powers, are as follows: that there is a specific proven public purpose for the aquisition; that no more is taken than is necessary for that purpose; and that full compensation is given. That is what the rule of law is all about. It is fundamental in this country. It has only been in time of war, with requisitioning and matters like Crichel Down, that that fundamental constitutional principle has been removed.

In the present Bill, the Government are in effect setting up by statute a scheme of private compulsory purchase of real interests. There was one previous example of this on the statute book—the 1967 Act—but the fundamental difference between that legislation and this is that, under the 1967 Act, the class of persons benefiting was carefully defined in such a way that a social purpose could be said to be served by the legislation.

If the present Bill creates a situation in which charities may be expropriated by foreign companies, simply by the accident of the general scheme, it is even more important that the compensation provisions for this scheme of private compulsory purchase should be at least as generous as for ordinary compulsory purchase for public purposes. The two cannot, as a matter of general principle, be considered separately or treated in any way differently.

I appreciate that the intellectual Jacobinism of my hon. Friend the Minister of State is fundamental to the principle that there must be leasehold enfranchisement, but if one goes down that path without full compensation, why should one stop where the Government have stopped now? I know that Labour Members will ask why, if leasehold tenure is obsolete, ordinary Rent Act tenants should not be given rights to acquire compulsorily against freeholders. I can see the argument, but fundamental to that proposal is that any adjustment to property rights must be done with full compensation and for a public purpose.

I conclude with this commendation to my right hon. Friends. They will recall that the 1967 Act was challenged years later in the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds that it was a breach of article 1 of the first protocol. There may be those in the House who believe that the European convention on human rights should be part of our law or should take precedence over the will of Parliament. I am not in that category. What I am anxious to do is to prevent my right hon. and hon. Friends from any subsequent embarrassment.

The justification for the European Court's decision was that the public purpose which justified the 1967 Act was the peculiar class of beneficiary. There was a social purpose. Where there is no social purpose of a specific nature, but simply an arbitrary rearranging of property interests, it must follow that full market compensation should be given for compulsory purchase. On that basis I commend this group of amendments.

Mr. Nicholls: This group of amendments gives an opportunity to my hon. Friends to resolve the dilemma to which I referred earlier: how on earth a Conservative Government can expropriate property belonging to somebody else. It does not matter for the purposes of the dilemma whether they are paid the full market amount or not. It will be no defence for Dick Turpin to say, when tried at the assize, "I offered them full market value for their jewellery before I took it and they declined it." In the old classic definition, it would still be theft.

The problem that my right hon. and hon. Friends have to resolve is that there is a conflicting balance of Conservative interests. They conflict because we are in the business of taking away the property of people when they do not want to part with it. It does not much matter for those purposes whether one is a duke or a dustman, or even, dare I say it, a Minister. There is a dilemma and it has to be resolved. Fortunately, there is a way to resolve the dilemma, and that is by making sure that a proper rate of compensation is paid.

I do not particularly concern myself that these amendments are complex. I accept that they are and, as a lawyer, I look forward to that with great relish. The point is that even behind those difficult amendments lies a straightforward purpose: to make sure that a proper level of compensation is paid. The sad thing is that presumably the principle is agreed between the people who signed this amendment and Ministers. That has been clearly understood because, at the outset, the Government said that they were not in the business of allowing people to acquire property at a discount.

As long ago as 6 March 1992, the then Under-Secretary for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), said:

"We do not intend that through this legislation leaseholders should be able to acquire assets at a discount" —[*Official Report*, 6 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 583.]

That was a considered and measured statement. I have not listened to the tapes to see whether that was a throwaway remark by the Minister at the time, but I doubt whether it was. I have a distant memory that it was a familiar house style, and a well-considered statement of Government intention at the time, that property should not be acquired at a discount.

Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, when he opened the Second Reading debate, said:

"I contend that the Bill provides for proper compensation".

So it was admitted and acknowledged that proper compensation would have to be given. My right hon. and learned Friend went on:

"As for compensation, the leaseholders will pay a fair market price for their landlords' interest."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 154.]

I heard it advanced in support of the way in which the Bill provides for compensation that it is a fair market price. It may aim to be so, but it is complete nonsense to talk about a fair market price in the context of a forced sale. A market price is a price agreed by two people when one wants to buy and the other wants to sell. In an imperfect world, there will sometimes be a disparity in the bargaining position, but forcing one person to sell must introduce the ultimate disparity. In such circumstances, it is impossible to talk about the market; all that can be discussed is a fair price.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: The Government introduced the Bill because the basic premise to which the hon. Gentleman refers—relating to fairness and rights—did not exist. That was the basis for the Bill. It was needed only because landlords refused to issue any kind of lease other than a leasehold.

6.30 pm

Mr. Nicholls: Not only do I not understand that point; I am not sure that the hon. Lady understands it either. The reason for the legislation is straightforward and was set out in the Conservative party manifesto. It was all about giving a right to residential home owners. The amendments that we are discussing concern the compensation that should be paid.

It has been said before—no doubt it will be said again in the wind-up speech—that what is being suggested is at least fair, although it is not a market price because no such price can operate in this context. I have even heard it said —although I cannot believe that I shall hear it said today —that it is not a windfall profit, because it arises from market forces. It does not; it arises specifically from the Bill. I have also heard it said that it is not a discount. The fact is that property acquired from an unwilling seller is instantly worth more than the buyer has paid. That is a discount, whatever people may prefer to call it. The amendments aim to ensure that there is no discount and that the level of compensation relates to the value of the property at the time of its acquisition by the new owner.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the time and courtesy that he has expended in talking and writing to me on this subject. I hope that he will not consider it a breach of confidence if I cite one of the arguments that he has advanced to me over the months. He has said, effectively, "See my problem: I am pulled in both directions." Indeed he is, as I would expect him to be.

The debate has shown very clearly that our reasons for embarking on this legislative road are not the reasons espoused by the revisionists manqués on the Opposition Benches. We are in the business of doing something for residential home owners. For instance, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), who produced the most articulate but also the most bizarre exposition of Opposition thinking, is not in the business of helping residential home owners; he is in the business of attacking and divesting dukes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) spoke of a possible extension of the legislation. The true socialists on the Opposition Benches were nodding away: they know where the legislation could lead. There is no question of our being able to resolve the legislation on the basis of being pulled in two directions; there is always a ready market for the acquisition of property at less than the full market value. Any self-respecting fence knows that.

If we are to try to resolve the dilemma and to work out how we can adhere to our Conservative principles without breaching one of the most important of all, there is no point in our taking any aid or comfort from the arguments of Opposition Members. We may need their votes tonight; that is one of the occasional embarrassments of being in government. But, in trying to resolve the dilemma, the Government should look behind them and ask what their

Conservative supporters want. They should not abandon the legislation; they should ask what was their original policy objective.

The objective was to help residential home owners, not to enable people to acquire property at a discount. That presents a fundamental problem which accepting the amendments—or, at least, the principle behind them—would help the Government to resolve.

Dame Jill Knight: I strongly agree with what was said by my hon. Friends the Members for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). I urge the Government to accept that the Bill is occasioning a great deal of anger, distress and worry among Conservative Members.

I have always detested compulsory purchase, which is opposed to all the principles in which I believe. I recognise that, in some circumstances, it may be necessary for the public good; I also accept that, on occasion, tenants in leasehold properties have suffered—for instance, when the owners and managers of blocks of flats have imposed unfair service charges. That applies to many of my constituents. What I cannot stomach, however, is the House of Commons forcing a private person to proceed with a sale to another private person, although the seller does not wish to negotiate that sale. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to make clear the Government's intentions to those of us who have grave worries.

My right hon. and learned Friend has outlined a lengthy catalogue of reforms. I am worried about what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth. I cannot see any reason why, if all the arguments adduced today are accepted, we should not move on to allow private tenants to buy their houses or flats from unwilling landlords. Although I think it entirely right for council tenants to have such rights—so does the Labour party now; Labour Members had better listen to this—I feel that, unless we recognise the real need for a privately rented housing sector, we shall be in deep trouble. Unless we understand that we must play fair with owners—whether they own leases or properties—I can see myself voting against the Government.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I will not detain the House for long. I had not intended to speak on this group of amendments and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will know what I am going to say, because I have already told him.

As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, I am not happy about the Bill. In particular, I am unhappy about the provision of insufficient compensation. I was struck by my hon. Friends' speeches about that and I think that my right hon. and learned Friend will have to advance careful arguments if he is to counter what they have said.

When I first came to the House, my party was in opposition. We opposed a measure presented by the then Government concerning compensation for the assets of the Burmah oil company. We opposed it partly on grounds of retrospection, but principally because the compensation was inadequate. On both those grounds, the amendments need to be considered carefully.

The point that I wish to make to my right hon. and learned Friend—indeed, I have already put it to him—was more or less resolved in a letter that he wrote to me about one of my constituents, who happens to own a house that has been in his family for some time and which he lets, on lease, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I believe that it is quite well known to some of my right hon. and hon. Friends. In theory at least, the Government are now in a position to buy the house, which the family has owned for some 250 years, at a discount.

If the compensation were adequate, there would be no major concern about the matter, although my constituent is anxious not to sell the house. The point that concerned me—I think that it also concerned my right hon. and learned Friend—was that, had it not been for a technicality, the Bill would have allowed the Government to buy the house at a discount from the market price. That would have been nationalisation at a discount.

It is some time since a Minister resigned over such matters. Years ago, Ministers used to resign on issues such as Crichel Down. I have made the point not for the merit of the case. The Minister has persuaded me that the lease on that house was one year too short for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to have exercised its right to buy the freehold. So my constituent's problems do not arise on the group of amendments before the House. But imagine had it been one year longer: the Government could have nationalised one of my constituent's properties. While that may not be the case, it does not say much for the nature of the Bill in that it would have represented compensation at well below the market price. I hope that the Minister appreciates the depth of feeling that exists on the Government Benches about compensation at less than market value.

Mr. Howard: The amendments and the new clauses relate to compensation, although the debate has ranged more widely than that. I hope that my hon. Friends who were not here for the debate on the earlier group of amendments will forgive me if I do not go over the ground that I have traversed then, when I explained how this reform fitted into a long tradition of Conservative Governments reforming land tenure.

I shall answer at the outset my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) who, uncharacteristically, was a little unfair in suggesting that the constituency case to which he referred came outside the scope of this legislation as the result of a technicality. It was not simply the fact that the term of the lease was shorter than that which would have brought it within the Bill. Indeed, it is a different kind of lease from that to which this legislation applies. It was not a residential lease, so there are a number of fundamental reasons—I appreciate the concern that my right hon. Friend would have had if it had come within the terms of the Bill—why the description "technicality" should not be applied to that case and why the case does not come within the scope of this legislation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) introduced me to the concept of meiosis. I confess that the concept was previously unknown to me. He was kind enough to define it as "wild understatement" and said that it was not a concept to which the Government were given. It is a condition to which my right hon. Friend is something of a stranger, but I was grateful for his contribution and I hope that my remarks will be of some comfort to him and a positive response to his comments.

I was grateful for the solicitude of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who sought to prevent me from appearing before the European Court of

[Mr. Howard]

Human Rights at a future date. Should that happen, I hope that my hon. Friend will make his services available to me. He ended with a plea that the basis for compensation under the Bill should be the same as that provided under compulsory purchase. The answer is that it is, though I appreciate that that does not satisfy others of my hon. Friends, and I hope to ally at least some of the anxieties as I respond to the observations of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley.

The amendments seek to increase the price paid, whether by lessees of houses who are already entitled to buy their freeholds by the 1967 Act or the 1974 Act extension, or long lessees of houses and flats, who will gain the right of enfranchisement for the first time under the Bill.

6.45 pm

The House must address difficult and important issues about valuation, and it may be helpful if I describe the evolution of the proposals in the Bill. When long leaseholders of low-value houses who were paying a low rent became entitled to enfranchisement under the 1967 Act passed by the Labour Government, the price was very low. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley pointed out, they had to pay only the open market value of the freeholder's interest in the land, which would have been less than the price for which it could have been sold to a third party.

Labour's policy intention, which the then Conservative Opposition always opposed, was confirmed by the Housing Act 1969, which added a statutory assumption to the valuation provisions in the 1967 Act to the effect that the tenant was not buying or seeking to buy, and that reversed a judicial decision which had the opposite effect by assuming that the tenant was in the market.

Understandably, that was popular with tenants. But we did not accept that it represented an arrangement that was fair to both parties to the transaction. We opposed the 1967 measure on Second Reading, as it was unfair to the landlord. During the passage of the Housing Act 1974, under a later Labour Government, the Conservative Opposition successfully moved an amendment to the 1967 Act to bring medium-value houses within its scope. That amendment was moved on the basis that the price had to take into account the fact that the tenant had a special interest in buying, so that his bid for the freehold was likely to be higher than that of a third party.

That basis of valuation has proved much more acceptable and has worked well in practice for nearly 20 years. It is the basis which we now have for the enfranchisement of medium-value houses. It is a valuation basis which the tribunals dealing with such matters have become well accustomed to interpreting, and it reflects what actually happens in the market. It does not provide statutory favouritism.

When we considered the extension of enfranchisement rights to the relatively few leaseholders of ineligible houses under the earlier legislation, and the 750,000 or so long leaseholders of flats, there was no doubt that they should have to pay no more and no less than the market value of their landlords' interests. The existing legislation delivers that objective. For flats, we have spelt out the way in which marriage value should be calculated and divided. It is not a change in policy. It enables the parties to understand more fully the basis on which the valuation is derived.

We have provided that the price paid to the landlord should comprise the sum of three elements identified by valuers. Those are the open market value of the landlord's interest, at least half the marriage value and compensation for any severance losses. The first two elements add up to the price paid by tenants of medium-value houses—we are just specifying them separately—and naturally, as under the 1974 amendment, tenants must also pay all reasonable landlords' costs.

The first element, open market value, represents the price that the landlord could receive from a third party purchasing the property as an investment. It is fairer than the original valuation basis applied to low-value houses by the 1967 Act because it takes into account the value of the buildings as well as of the land.

Most of the amendments with which we are concerned affect the other two elements. Marriage value is the difference between the aggregate of the values of the freehold and leasehold interests before and after enfranchisement. In other words, it represents the increase in value when the freehold and the leasehold come under the same control. It is how the market puts a monetary value on the tenant's special interest in acquiring the property and it reflects the fact that the former tenant of the house gains an unencumbered freehold, and the fact that the tenants collectively in a block of flats can grant themselves new leases for little or no premium.

It is important that hon. Members appreciate that we have not newly identified marriage value for flats. It is a familiar idea. It exists for houses too, and, as I have explained, the present provisions reflect it. Although marriage value is not mentioned in section 9 of the 1967 Act, the valuation base in section 9(1A), which applies to medium-value houses, takes into account the tenants' interest in obtaining the property. It is because of this special interest that an element of marriage value forms part of the price.

In the marketplace this marriage value is shared to ensure that a mutually acceptable bargain is struck. The market thus acknowledges the mutual financial benefit of selling to leaseholders. Landlords could not obtain all the marriage value save in very exceptional circumstances. The Lands Tribunal, following this principle, has adopted the approach of sharing marriage value between the parties.

Several right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, but I do not think that they were necessarily aware that it has today issued a press notice which takes its views somewhat further and makes them somewhat clearer. I will not weary the House by reading it all, but perhaps I may read part of it. The RICS spokesman says:

"A great deal of confusion continues to surround the concept of 'marriage value'—the additional value which is created when the leasehold and freehold interests are brought together. There have been claims"—

we have heard them today—

"that the way in which this value is shared between leaseholders and freeholders will lead to massive windfall profits for some leaseholders.

The RICS believes that many of the concerns stem from a misreading of the Bill."

The document goes on to explain its understanding of the Bill and how the windfall will not arise. It also explains —to answer the point raised by my hon. Friend the

Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin)—that in some cases, because the market would give the whole marriage value to the freeholder, any decision by the leasehold valuation tribunal would also give the whole value to the freeholder. It is not a question of splitting the valuation 50:50 and treating that as the norm. I believe that that was the reassurance sought by my hon. Friend. It is a question of seeking to treat the marriage value in a way that most nearly reflects what the market itself would provide.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before the hon. and learned Gentleman intervenes, may I point out that it would be enormously helpful if the Secretary of State would speak to the microphone, so that *Hansard* Reporters can catch every word he says?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Would my right hon. and learned Friend, who is a most sophisticated English silk, explain to a simple Scottish one why the English find it so difficult to do anything simply? In Scotland we either rent a house or buy a house. If we rent it, it belongs to the person who rents it; if we buy it, it belongs to us. We do not have freehold, leasehold or any of this nonsense. Instead of this ridiculous formula to do with marriage value—I have never heard of the marriage value of a house: I have never heard of houses marrying—why not just rent houses and give them back when they cease to be rented, or own them and sell them when they are no longer wanted?

Mr. Howard: My hon. and learned Friend is entirely right to suggest that, if we had followed Scottish practice, we would not have had leasehold and would not be here this afternoon debating this legislation. I am not sure whether my hon. and learned Friend is taking the radical course and suggesting that the legislation does not go nearly far enough and that we should abolish leasehold completely in England——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *indicated assent.*

Mr. Howard: I see that he is. I am afraid that the Government are not bold enough to follow his advice on this occasion. I suspect that by rejecting that advice I am on the same side—at least in this respect—as my right hon. and hon. Friends who have put their names to this group of amendments.

We have followed the precedent of the 1974 amendment to the 1967 Act and the professional advice that we have received from the RICS and elsewhere in formulating our policy that marriage value released by the enfranchisement, of flats should be shared. I do not consider it right that tenants should pay more than the open market price to enfranchise, but that would be the effect of the new clause and amendments, which would require that all the marriage values be awarded to the landlord. To give the whole marriage value to one party to the transaction would not be equitable. If the landlord were to sell to any other purchaser, the extra value would not be released.

Enfranchisement is effectively maximising the possible gain a landlord can get from his asset. This is because he receives all his marriage value share when the property is enfranchised. If there were no enfranchisement, he would receive it, if at all, spread over a number of years as and when individual tenants wished to extend or renew their leases. All the landlord loses is control over the timing of the disposal, but, as this maximum gain only comes from a sale to the tenants, they in practice dictate the timing in a voluntary transaction, too.

The Bill provides that landlords of flats shall receive at least half of the marriage value. This is a floor, and where the market would have given the landlord a bigger share in a voluntary sale, he can argue for and get more under enfranchisement.

I understand the concern that the landlord will receive marriage value only on the flats of participating tenants. Amendments Nos. 15 and 28 seek to give the landlord extra money by including the element in respect of the non-participating qualifying tenants as well. But it would be very unfair to give the landlord marriage value on the flats of non-participating tenants, because no marriage value is in fact released. It would be false accounting, as the leases of these flats are not being brought under the same control as the freehold. Marriage value arises only when the freehold and leasehold interests are joined under the same control.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley raised an important point about the provision of compensation for severance—part of what is known as injurious affection for houses. The Bill already provides it for flats. My right hon. Friend says that it should be provided for houses, too. He correctly takes the view that that would be of some assistance in the constituency case to which he referred. It is important that the House appreciates that "injurious affection" is a precise valuation term to quantify in money terms the loss of redevelopment potential or any other loss of value on land now in the landlord's ownership which he keeps after the enfranchisement of other property. It is not a general compensation to cover compulsory purchase by tenants. It has only that limited meaning.

It is a valid element in the price of blocks of flats, because a development or an estate will often contain a group of blocks. Here the loss of one may prevent the freeholder developing the land between the blocks. It might also make his costs in maintaining the remaining blocks higher due to the loss of economies of scale. That is why the Bill includes special provision for those circumstances. It is more difficult to visualise the need for severance for houses, and it was not provided for under the 1967 Act where the low-value houses which were to be enfranchised were very unlikely to have an impact on the remaining property of the landlord.

I do understand the concerns about high-value houses brought in by that Act. I accept that in these cases there may be a need for severance to be recouped. I therefore propose to introduce an amendment in another place to ensure that all houses brought into the 1967 Act by the Bill should have a new head of compensation to cover severance, in line with the provisions for flats in the Bill.

I cannot accept new clause 6 because it would apply to all houses. I am particularly concerned about the impact on low-value houses, which are already capable of enfranchisement. The addition of severance to the price could add considerably to the cost of enfranchising such property, or could be used by a landlord to deter enfranchisement, which would be unfair. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley recognised that in his observations.

There has been a full debate on property valuation and I have listened with interest to the arguments of my right

[Mr. Howard]

hon. and hon. Friends. The Bill builds on the precedent of Conservative policy and provides a basis for transferring property interests from the freeholder and intermediate landlords that is above all fair.

I am prepared to introduce an amendment in another place to deal with severance compensation for high-value houses. I hope that, in that spirit, my right hon. Friend and his hon. Friends will not press their amendments.

7 pm

Mr. Jopling: I have listened with great care to the Secretary of State's reply to the debate. I must apologise to him and to the House as I left the Chamber for a few minutes in the middle of the debate, but I heard all the opening speeches as well as the later ones.

My right hon. and learned Friend's promise to introduce an amendment in another place to deal with the application of severance in regard to injurious affection is welcome. However, I am disappointed that I heard nothing in his speech about the 50 per cent. floor. I understand that he intends to leave that as it is and has not moved towards our view that it should increase to 100 per cent.

I accept that one would not expect the price to be 100 per cent. of the marriage value plus the value for severance. I do not think that any of us would be interested in promoting that, but we want 100 per cent. of the marriage value. I am disappointed that my right hon. and learned Friend has not been able to move on the 50 per cent. figure. He used phrases and words that he used on Second Reading and suggested that, given the figure of not less than 50 per cent. in the Bill, the level of compensation——

Mr. Howard: May I deal with that matter and go somewhat further than my right hon. Friend wanted? In an appropriate case, if the market value were such that the tribunal properly came to the conclusion that 100 per cent. of the marriage value ought to go to the freeholder—I emphasise that it is open to them to reach that view under the provisions of the Bill—and if an extra element for injurious affection were judged appropriate, it would be right for the freeholder to have 100 per cent. of the marriage value plus an additional element for injurious affection. Those two elements are not inconsistent.

If my right hon. Friend will forgive me, I must reiterate that the 50 per cent. figure is intended to be a floor and that the tribunal, if the circumstances justify it, may award a greater proportion of the marriage value to the freeholder, up to and not excluding 100 per cent.

Mr. Jopling: We are grateful to the Secretary of State for explaining more fully. In all humility, I am bound to say that I have never had any experience of values of injurious affection with regard to severance, and thus find it difficult to put a figure on them. His remarks are therefore helpful.

I think that my right hon. and learned Friend said that the figure only applies to high-value houses and—as I understand it—not to flats.

Mr. Howard *indicated assent.*

Mr. Jopling: It does apply to flats. That is a move forward, but I am disappointed that my right hon. and learned Friend has not increased the 50 per cent. floor figure.

As I was saying when I gave way to the Secretary of State, we are all concerned that he referred to 50 per cent. of the marriage value as a "fair" figure. That is the crux of the difference of opinion between the Front Bench and right hon. and hon. Members who are unhappy about the proposal. We believe that in many cases 50 per cent. could be patently unfair and we are seeking to improve it.

The House should always remember that the freeholder owned 100 per cent. of the marriage value when he granted the leasehold interest to the leaseholder. He willingly agreed to forgo that as the price for retaining the freehold interest, for the reversion of ownership of the property and for control over it.

After the Secretary of State's speech and the amendments that he has promised, I am still unhappy about the compensation and think that it will be unfair. I should like to think carefully about the implications of his remarks between now and Third Reading.

I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) that there is not much point in voting on the new clause. The Opposition parties will not vote with us and the result would therefore be a foregone conclusion. However, we must consider carefully the Secretary of State's remarks and, if necessary, we can express our opinions clearly on Third Reading tomorrow.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 10

QUALIFYING TENANTS TO HAVE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE ENFRANCHISEMENT

"(1) This Chapter has effect for the purpose of conferring on qualifying tenants of flats contained in premises to which this Chapter applies on the relevant date the right, exercisable subject to and in accordance with this Chapter, to have the freehold of those premises acquired on their behalf—

(a) by a person or persons appointed by them for the purpose, and

(b) at a price determined in accordance with this Chapter; and that right is referred to in this Chapter as "the right to collective enfranchisement".

(2) This Chapter applies to any premises if—

(a) they consist of a self-contained building and the freehold of the whole of the building or of that part of the building is owned by the same person;

(b) they contain two or more flats held by qualifying tenants; and

(c) the total number of flats held by such tenants exceeds one half of the total number of flats contained in the premises.

(3) This Chapter does not apply to premises falling within subsection (2) if—

(a) any part or part of the premises is occupied, or intended to be occupied, otherwise than for residential purposes: and

(b) the internal floor area of that part of those parts (taken together) exceeds 50 per cent. of the internal floor area of the premises (taken as a whole); or

(c) the premises are premises with a resident landlord and do not contain more than three units.

(4) Subject to the provisions of section 5, a person is a qualifying tenant of a flat for the purposes of this Chapter if he is the tenant of the flat under a tenancy other than—

(a) a protected shorthold tenancy as defined in section 52 of the Housing Act 1980;

(b) a tenancy to which Part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 (business tenancies) applies;
(c) a tenancy terminable on the cessation of his employment;
(d) an assured tenancy or assured agricultural occupancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988.

(5) A tenant of a flat who is a landlord of a qualifying tenant of that flat is not to be regarded as being a qualifying tenant of that flat.'.—*[Mr. Battle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Battle: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 29, in clause 1, page 2, leave out lines 6 to 14.

No. 30, in clause 3, page 4, leave out lines 40 to 46.

No. 31, in page 5, line 1, leave out

'For the purposes of this section'.

No. 32, in clause 4, page 5, leave out lines 16 to 22.

No. 33, in page 5, leave out lines 28 to 37.

No. 34, clause 5, in page 5, line 38, leave out from beginning to end of line 7 on page 6.

No. 9, leave out lines 10 to 14.

No. 36, leave out lines 20 to 37.

Mr. Battle: As we said on Second Reading and in Committee, we welcome the thrust of leasehold reforms contained in part I of the Bill, but we are worried that the Government are being pressurised to water them down. We hope that that will not happen, because we remain concerned that many of the exclusions built into the leasehold reform measures before us are too tightly drawn. The last group of clauses tried to lead us in one direction, but we hope to press the House to go the opposite way, and we want to tackle the loopholes that the Government have left in the Bill.

I hope that the House will support new clause 10. It is widely agreed across the Floor of the House that leasehold is a debased and archaic form of tenure, that its reform is long overdue and that the Government are taking a hesitant step with a relatively modest proposal, although they have promised that full-blown commonhold proposals will be put before the House before long.

When put in practice, the qualifying rules and the valuation method will exclude many leaseholders from exercising their right to enfranchisement.

Many of those 750,000 leaseholders who at present may think that they will be enfranchised by this legislation will discover that in practice they will not be. In particular, what needs to be withdrawn from the Bill as at present drafted is the low rent test and the limiting of non-residential floor space threshold. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Member, but I must ask hon. Members to have their meetings elsewhere than in the Chamber.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is obvious that the dealing is still going on on the last clause. That may or may not affect the debate in the other place. We rather hope that the Government will not be swayed by the argument, even after the debate has taken place, that landlords ought to be compensated even more.

The groups campaigning for wider rights for leaseholders, such as the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee, believe that the Bill, as it stands, is far too restrictive. That is a view with which the Opposition concur.

Leaseholders in a block of flats where more than one third of the flats are rented will be excluded, as will those who live in blocks where more than 10 per cent. of the floor space is used as a shop or office. There is also the low ground rent test, which is designed to sift out leaseholders from those renting their flats or homes. As landlords are given to increasing ground rents to make their properties unenfranchisable, even now, as these debates go on, I hope that the Minister will concede that the low rent test is inequitable and unnecessary, and ought to go.

At present, some 750,000 long-term—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman a second time. Hon. Members should know the rules of the House. They really cannot stand up in the Benches and have a conversation with each other. If they want to have a conversation, they should leave the Chamber.

Mr. Battle: In theory, about 700,000 long-term leaseholders will be enabled to buy the freeholds of their flats from their landlords, but in practice many leaseholders, including a disproportionate number of elderly people, will find it very hard to raise the necessary cash, and therefore will find that they are excluded.

Many are concerned about the low rent test. We have all had letters—I know that the Secretary of State has been written to—from people in leasehold property emphasising the fact that the leasehold enfranchisement provisions in the present Bill exclude all those who have had their ground rent raised beyond the low rent test. One tenant sent the following letter to the Secretary of State:

"I am advised that my impending ground rent review in 1996 will increase by thousands and will be well outside my means. This clause also has prevented me from selling my house, which has been on the market for seven years. As a widow over pensionable age I am still struggling to find a little work to keep and to maintain my home."

This new clause will give qualifying tenants the right to collective enfranchisement. Subsection (2) will allow enfranchisement where more than half of the flats are occupied by qualifying tenants. In effect, that will widen the scope of the enfranchisement at present allowed for in the Bill, which is that two thirds of the flats must be occupied by qualifying tenants.

Our new clause will exclude blocks where more than 50 per cent. of the floor space is in non-residential use. At present, the Bill excludes premises where more than 10 per cent. of the internal floor space is in non-residential use. We believe that that is far too restrictive, and our clause would increase the percentage to 50 per cent. to correspond precisely with the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, under which leaseholders are given the right of first refusal when a landlord decides to dispose of the freehold as a block, provided that 50 per cent. or more of the floor space is in residential use.

Subsection (3) of our new clause would amend the resident landlord exclusion so that premises are included in the enfranchisement provisions unless they have a resident landlord and do not contain more than two units.

Subsection (4) will extend the definition of the qualifying tenant to include all those tenancies other than shorthold and assured tenancies, business tenancies and service tenancies. Again, the wording of that subsection is taken from the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. We can see

[Mr. Battle]

no cogent reason why tenants other than those excluded by this subsection should not enjoy the right to collective enfranchisement, just as they enjoy the right to first refusal when the landlord disposes of the freehold.

Our amendment to the definition of a qualifying tenant will have the added advantage of avoiding the need for the low rent test and for the definition of a long lease. At whatever level a low rent or a long lease is eventually defined, there will always be boundary cases, since it is to be expected that landlords seeking to evade the provisions will deliberately choose to grant leases which fall just outside the proposed limits. By taking those two tests out of the legislation, as was done in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, those problems will in practice be avoided.

Subsection (5) is included to cover the possibility that there will be more than one potential qualifying tenant for a given flat—for example, where a leaseholder has let the flat on a tenancy. In this case, it will be proposed to give the right of collective enfranchisement to the lowest level of interest, which makes it most likely that the right will be given to the person occupying the flat, but without the need to introduce a residence qualification, which could cause difficulties, as we all appreciate, with second homes.

In other words, our new clause would give secure tenants rights that they will not get under the present legislation. We will be extending leasehold enfranchisement.

7.15 pm

In closing, I want to refer to three other letters, although they are really only two. During the general election campaign, the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), circulated a leaflet to all leaseholders in the Chelsea constituency, sent from the Conservative campaign headquarters in Chelsea Manor street, which read:

"A Conservative Government is committed to changing the basis of extending Leasehold tenure in the following ways: —Introduction of Commonhold for Leasehold flats . . . Extension of leases . . . Removal of upper limit of rateable value on houses".

I have to say that, although it had a note on the bottom telling people when polling day was, creating the impression that the people would get these rights, many of those who received that leaflet now feel that they were misled and sold short—so much so that one of them wrote direct to the Prime Minister to say that he was disturbed, because at the time of the general election he had been given an assurance by the candidate that the Tory party intended to retain in the forthcoming legislation the low rent disqualification. That was not mentioned at all in the leaflet that went out.

The letter goes on:

"It is unfortunately becoming clear to me that not only are the Tory Party avoiding their election obligations, not for the first time, but also that they are being heavily influenced by the large donations made to the Tory Party by the London landlords."

Some have been very disappointed, because those who wrote direct to the Prime Minister were told in a reply on 7 April 1992, conveniently just before the general election, that they would have promised leasehold in full. I have a letter here from the person who received that reply from the Prime Minister, which says:

"If the Prime Minister promises leasehold enfranchisement 'in full', he should deliver leasehold enfranchisement in full and not let certain parts of British society hide behind technical provisions cleverly drafted by solicitors which hide the real substance of the lease behind an artificial legal form."

That is what people are now discovering to have happened, and without new clause 10, which will open up leasehold reform to qualifying tenants in a wider way than is proposed in this Bill, the loopholes in the Bill will mean offering the rhetoric of rights, but not the legal substance. Landlords will be given scope to frustrate the intentions of the legislation. I believe that we should not be leaving space for Duke of Westminster spokesmen in this place and elsewhere to drive a coach and horses through what ought to be the welcome introduction of leasehold enfranchisement.

In a sense, the Government have been coy so far, and have given assurances that they will consider again the measures put to them by their Back Benchers to try to undermine the leasehold proposals. I hope that the Government will say that the leasehold proposals would be improved if they included new clause 10. That would give real rights to the 750,000 leaseholders who would benefit from the legislation.

I commend new clause 10 to the House as a means of improving and enhancing the rights of leaseholders. Having seen off their Back Benchers who tried to undermine the Bill, the Government should have the confidence to go further and give people real rights.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The new clause would allow any tenant to qualify for enfranchisement other than assured tenants under the Housing Act 1988 and some minor exceptions, so there would be no requirement for the lease to be long or to be at a low rent. It would extend the right to enfranchise well beyond the category of those who own their flats. For example, regulated tenants who pay a fair rent under the 1977 legislation, or secure tenants of a public sector landlord would be entitled to enfranchise.

Somewhat perversely, given some of the amendments put down by the Opposition in Committee, somebody with a three-week holiday let of a flat would fall within the scope of new clause 7 and would be entitled to enfranchisement.

The Government's proposals are designed to give rights to those who are likely to have the greater financial and personal investment in a building, those with flats on long leases—leases of 21 years or over—at low ground rent who regard themselves as owners of the flats.

By departing from these principles, the Labour party would put at risk any prospect of securing a revival of the rented sector. By allowing regulated tenants a right to enfranchise, the Opposition would send a very clear signal that any landlord is at risk if he dares allow another person to have a tenancy of his property. The hon. Gentleman may try to claim that excluding assured tenancies would reassure landlords, but by including regulated tenancies, or short-term tenancies of flats which fall outside the 1988 Act, they are certainly bringing rented accommodation into the scope of the Bill.

The proposal to allow tenants to buy blocks where up to half the floor area is non-residential would damage the commercial market. Tenants would not just be buying their own flats from their landlords, but would be able to secure the transfer of vastly more valuable commercial

assets. That is not what the Bill is about. Managing a portfolio of commercial property is different from managing an owner-occupied block of residential flats.

Institutional investors have made it clear that they would be unhappy about leasing commercial space in blocks managed by residential tenants. Moreover, the cost of taking on commercial property on this scale would be vastly more than many tenants could realistically afford. Shops are proportionately much more valuable than flats. So the Opposition risk the confidence of commercial investors in non-residential property and do no favours to tenants by trying to extend the scope of the Bill in this way.

The new clause would reduce from two thirds to one half the proportion of flats required to be held by qualifying tenants before a block can enfranchise. Taken together with the rule that two thirds of the qualifying tenants must wish to participate for enfranchisement to go ahead, that would mean that in some blocks only one third of the tenants would be entitled to buy out the freeholder. In those circumstances, it could hardly be argued that those qualifying tenants held the major interest in the block.

That would extend the scope of enfranchisement beyond what we regard as being reasonable. We believe that it is right that more than a bare majority would qualify.

Taken as a whole, the new clause is deeply unsatisfactory. It would move beyond giving the owners of flats likely to have the greatest interest in the block the right to acquire the freehold to situations where a minority of tenants, or tenants with only a short-term interest in the property, would have the right to dispossess a landlord and to acquire significant amounts of commercial space. I do not believe that that would be right. I do not believe that the House would consider it to be right, and I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Battle: I found it surprising that the Minister's reply, compared with the responses that he gave in Committee shows a harshening of tone. In Committee he gave assurances that the Government would introduce measures to tackle the low-rent test and the two thirds rule. That is not what we have just heard from the Minister.

I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman says that our proposals would damage the commercial market when, clearly, that has not been the effect of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. Our proposals would put the Bill within the context of the 1987 Act. That would have been an appropriate way to move forward to ensure that leasehold enfranchisement was a real right and not simply one so hedged with exclusions that many people would find that they were priced out or could not qualify at all.

Therefore, I believe that we should divide on the new clause. I ask hon. Members to support it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 299.

Division No. 145] **[7.25 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'T'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon

O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek

Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 15

SAVING FOR DESIGNATED HERITAGE PROPERTIES

'—(1) Nothing in this Part of this Act shall apply to property which:—

(a) (i) belongs to a body not established or conducted for profit; and

(ii) in relation to which the Treasury has for the time being given a direction under section 26 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984;

(b) is for the time being designated by the Treasury under section 31(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

(2) Where an application to the Treasury for a direction under section 26 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 in relation to a property or designation of a property under section 31(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 is or has been made at any time before the expiry of one year from the coming into force of this section then subject to subsection (3) below if (before or after the making of the application) a notice is given by a tenant of a house of his desire to have the freehold under Part I of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 ("the tenant's notice") or a notice is given under section 11 ("the initial notice")—

(a) no further proceedings need be taken towards the determination of the terms of the proposed acquisition to which the notice relates beyond those which appear to the landlord in the case of the tenant's notice or the reversioner in the case of an initial notice, to be reasonable; but

(b) the tenant in the case of the tenant's notice or the nominee purchaser in the case of the initial notice may at any time withdraw the notice by a further notice in writing given to the landlord in the case of a tenant's notice or the reversioner in the case of the initial notice and he shall not be required to make payment to the landlord, reversioner or any other relevant landlord in respect of costs incurred by reason of the notice withdrawn.

(3) Subsection (2) above shall cease to apply—

(a) if within a period of two years from the date of the application it is withdrawn or the designation is refused or not given or no direction is given; or

(b) if the applicant has not, by advertisement or by other appropriate means given adequate notice to persons interested informing them of the application for designation.

(4) In the case where an application is withdrawn or refused subsection (2) does not apply at any time falling after—

(a) the date of withdrawal of the application, or

(b) the date when the decision of the Treasury refusing the application becomes final,

as the case may be.'.—*[Mr. Peter Ainsworth.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Amendment No. 116, in clause 4, page 5, line 30, at end insert—

'( ) This chapter does not apply to premises forming part of a landholding for the time being designated as a heritage area under Schedule [*Heritage area*] to this Act.'.

Amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 37, at end insert—

'(5) This chapter does not apply to premises which—

(a) are for the time being designated by the Treasury under section 31(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 or paragraph 3(3) of Schedule 4 to that Act, or

(b) on application by the landlord, satisfy a leasehold valuation tribunal that they would qualify for designation under the aforesaid provisions of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

(6) The provisions of sections 63(4) and (5) shall apply to any application under section 4(5).

(7) Any application under section 4(5) must be made within the period of two years beginning with the date of the coming into force of this section.'.

Amendment No. 117, in clause 5, page 6, line 4, at end insert

'or

(d) the lease is of a flat within premises forming part of a landholding for the time being designated as a heritage area under Schedule [*Heritage area*] to this Act.'.

Amendment No. 118, in clause 5, page 63, line 31, after 'shall', insert

" , if the house is not comprised in a landholding designated as a heritage area in accordance with section [ ] of, and Schedule [*Heritage area*] to, the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.'.

Amendment No. 2, in clause 59, page 63, line 42, at end insert—

'(3) This section does not apply to any house which

(a) is for the time being designated by the Treasury under section 3(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 or paragraph 3(3) of Schedule 4 to that Act, or

(b) on application by the landlord satisfies a leasehold valuation tribunal that is within an area which would qualify for designation under the aforesaid provisions of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

(4) The provisions of sections 63(4) and (5) of the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 shall apply to any application under section 1A(3).

(5) Any application under section 1A(3) must be made within the period of two years beginning with the date of the coming into force of this section.'.

Amendment No. 119, new schedule:—

'HERITAGE AREA

1. In this Schedule—

"conservation area" means an area for the time being designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

"landholding" means a group of properties adjoining or in close proximity to one another and whether or not separated by other properties, each of which has been for a period in excess of 20 years prior to the coming into force of Part I of this Act under the control of one landlord whether or not subject to one or more tenancies;

"listed building" has the meaning given in section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;

and references to the Secretary of State are references to the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

2. The Secretary of State may, in consultation with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (commonly called English Heritage) and in accordance with the provisions of this Schedule, designate a landholding situated in England as a heritage area for the purpose of this Act and the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

3. The Secretary of State shall not designate a landholding as a heritage area—

(a) except upon an application made within twelve months beginning with the coming into force of Chapter I or Chapter II of Part I of this Act; and

(b) unless he is satisfied that the landlord has, by advertisement or otherwise as the Secretary of State may require, given adequate notice to persons interested, informing them of the application for designation and inviting them to make representations to the Secretary of State for or against the application within 28 days of such notice being given,

and before designating a landholding as a heritage area the Secretary of State shall consider any representations so made within that time, and if from those representations it appears to him that there may be grounds for refusing the application, he shall afford to those opposing the application, and on the same occasion to the applicant and such (if any) as he thinks fit of those in favour of the application, an opportunity to be heard by a person appointed by him for the purpose, and shall consider the report of that person.

4. Subject to paragraph 3, a landholding shall be designated by the Secretary of State as a heritage area if—

(a) it or a substantial part of it was contained within a conservation area at the coming into force of Part I of this Act;

(b) at least one-fifth of the area covered by buildings forming part of the landholding measured on plan comprises listed buildings;

(c) the landlord has undertaken to comply with a code of estate management practice in relation to the landholding; and

(d) in his opinion the landholding is—

(i) of outstanding architectural or historic interest, and

(ii) its continued existence with one landlord and management in accordance with the code of estate management practice will make a material contribution to its preservation or the enhancement of its character or appearance.

5. For the purposes of paragraph 4, a code of estate management practice in relation to a landholding shall—

(a) specify the management arrangements and leasing policy (including the length of leases granted and policy on renewal) and give practical guidance as to their operation; and

(b) be no more onerous or restrictive in its impact upon tenants as a whole than the policies and practices adopted in relation to the estate in the period of five years prior to the application for designation.

6. A failure on the part of any person to comply with any provision of a code or estate management practice for the time being approved under this Schedule shall not of itself render him liable to any proceedings but in any proceedings before a court or tribunal—

(a) any code of estate management practice approved under this Schedule shall be admissible in evidence; and

(b) any provisions of any such code which appears to the court or tribunal to be relevant to any question arising in the proceedings shall be taken into account in determining that question.

7. The Secretary of State shall be under a duty, so far as it appears to him practicable from time to time, to keep under review the management of heritage areas and to consider any matter which is the subject of a representation (other than one appearing to him to be frivolous or trivial) made to him by or on behalf of a person appearing to him to have an interest in that matter.

8. The Secretary of State shall be under a duty to take into account whether there has been any failure to comply with a code of estate management practice in determining whether to revoke or renew a designation.

9. The Secretary of State may at any time if it appears to him desirable to do so—

(a) revoke the designation of a heritage area or substitute for a landholding so designated a part of that landholding if, in either case, it appears to him that the criteria for designation are no longer met; or

(b) modify or replace a code of practice applicable to a heritage area.

10. Prior to taking any action under paragraph 9, the Secretary of State shall give reasonable notice of his intention and afford an opportunity to persons interested in the matter to make representations.

11.—(1) Without prejudice to paragraph 9, the designation of a landholding as a heritage area and any renewal of designation shall cease to have effect ten years after the date of its designation or, as the case may be, renewal unless application is made prior to that date for its renewal.

(2) The provisions of this Schedule other than paragraph 3(a) shall apply in relation to any renewal of a designation as they apply in relation to an initial designation.'.

7.45 pm

Mr. Ainsworth: Unlike the other new clauses and amendments that we have discussed today, new clause 15 does not seek to examine the fundamentals of leasehold reform. My right hon. and hon. Friends have eloquently made the case on behalf of those who are worried about the wider implications of leasehold reform. However, the new clause does not seek to deal with them.

It is a modest new clause, which serves a modest but important purpose. It reflects some specific concerns raised by English Heritage and the Historic Houses Association. It involves a technical adjustment to ensure that an existing right is permitted to continue unimpaired under the Bill.

To endure that our national heritage does not suffer as a consequence of inheritance tax through the forced sale and break-up of important properties, assets of outstanding historic or architectural interest can, under existing arrangements, as reflected in section 26 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984, be exempted from such tax if they are made over to a non-profit making body. They can also be designated by the Treasury under section 31 of the same Act, with the result that they can be conditionally exempt from inheritance tax. At present, the leasehold enfranchisement provisions of the Bill will, or could, undermine that important protection.

The exercise of enfranchisement rights over a part of an estate which has been given conditional exemption from inheritance tax might be deemed by the Inland Revenue to break the undertaking to maintain the character and integrity of the whole property. Through no fault of his

own, the owner could be faced with paying tax on not only the value received for the disposal but the value of the whole estate which had previously been exempted.

That could also work the other way round, to the detriment of heritage properties, by preventing action which is necessary to preserve historic buildings in good order. For example, a major heritage property in Warwickshire is currently governed by a body of trustees which is granted exemption under section 26 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984. The trustees are short of funds to ensure the good repair and upkeep of an important heritage building. They have come up with a scheme to convert the top floor of the principal building into flats and to sell them on long leases. Only be selling them on long leases will they be able to raise sufficient money to make the exercise worth while.

However, the trustees wondered what the Bill's consequences will be for their inheritance tax exemption, and they have stalled. Already, as a result of the proposals, an historic building of major national importance is not getting the much-needed money for its upkeep. Without the new clause, the funds may never be forthcoming. New clause 15 would avoid such pitfalls by excluding designated properties from the application of part I of the Bill. It would also specify a limited period of one year during which designation may be sought for potentially elibible properties. During that time, and until the Treasury has made its decision, any applications to enfranchise will be frozen.

The number of estates which would benefit from the clause is small. I understand that only about 60 estates are currently designated for inheritance tax exemption, but each one is of vital national importance through its contribution to our heritage. In each case, the consequence of the Bill could—I do not exaggerate—be catastrophic. The new clause does nothing to undermine part 1 of the Bill, but it permits the continued safeguarding of our heritage, an aim of which I hope all hon. Members would approve.

I cannot believe that it is the intention of the Minister for Housing and Planning to jeopardise the integrity of our most important heritage buildings, so I hope that he will look favourably on new clause 15. It would have been impossible not to note a certain gloom among Ministers this afternoon. By proposing a helpful new clause, I hope to give my hon. Friend the Minister the opportunity to cheer himself by being helpful in return and to cheer the House by his acknowledgement of the merits of new clause 15.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) said that there was gloom among members of the Government Front Bench, but it is not so much gloom as their being squeezed to make a few concessions to prevent some of the worst excesses of Conservative Back Benchers trying to press some amendments much further than the Government wished. We certainly saw some manoeuvring to ensure that that did not happen.

To some extent, the new clause falls into the same category as some of the issues that we debated earlier, in that it is basically misleading. This new clause, in particular, is spurious. It tries to wreck the Bill's objectives. The Minister has said repeatedly that the Government wish to enable as many people as possible to exercise the right of enfranchisement. The new clause is another attempt to increase the categories of people who cannot take advantage of the proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) tried to go in the opposite direction with the previous new clause by proposing to extend the right of enfranchisement. We clearly have different objectives.

The Minister claims that the Government have sought to give enfranchisement to people with leasehold tenure of property, but we claim that we are trying to do more than the Government, and certainly more than Conservative Back Benchers. I have no sympathy with the argument that certain properties should be excluded from the provisions on the basis of the heritage. We do not intend to support the new clause if there is a Division on it.

I have a copy of a letter written to the Minister on 25 November by Roderick Barr. He says:

"I am amused when I hear the argument that freeholders are the guardians of the heritage. We have received only one cursory visit from the Estate's representative in 8 years. Preserving the heritage has in practice been done by Islington Council's planning officers and English Heritage (the houses are Grade II listed), and paid for out of the pockets of long leaseholders, such as myself. Nor does the estate seem to be a particularly good landlord to those tenants who still 'rent' (as opposed to 'own'). If you walk around the square it is immediately obvious from the condition of the houses which are owned privately on long leases and which are still rented out by the Estate; only the owner-occupied houses are well maintained."

The letter shows that it is usually not the landlords of such properties who are likely to maintain the heritage and character of estates: it is the owner-occupiers who have a vested interest in ensuring that their properties are maintained.

The Government have used that argument to an extent about the sale of council houses. One reason why they advocated the sale of council houses was, they said, that tenants who became owners would invest money in their properties. Our argument on that was that properties should be available for rent by those who had to rent and by those who chose to rent. The argument that landlords are better at protecting the heritage is not valid.

The Duke of Westminster has been mentioned a number of times in our debate today. His new stately home, Eaton hall in Cheshire, cannot be envisaged as an asset to our heritage. It is of a modern design and even in 200 years' time, if it is still standing, it will not be listed by a future Labour Government—*[Interruption.]* Indeed, we might have been in office continually for 200 years by then, and we should have been able to make the changes that we wanted.

A letter from the Minister was printed by *The Spectator* on 31 October 1992:

"Sir: John Martin Robinson ('When reform means ruin', 24 October) forecasts dire effects from our proposals for leasehold reform. But has Dulwich Village become squalid as a result of the 1967 reforms? Has Pimlico decayed or improved since enfranchisement? I am convinced that the speculation somewhat extravagantly expressed in his piece is unfounded."

I hope that the Minister will confirm that that is still his view and that he believes that there is no reason why we should include a provision in the Bill to prevent people from enfranchising on the false basis that that would better protect the heritage. I hope that the Minister remains strongly of that view.

Another letter in *The Spectator* of 7 November 1992 was from Paul Barnes of London, N1:

"The claim that it is only the leasehold system that can preserve the character of parts of central London is

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

ridiculous. No other countries apart from England and Wales have a leasehold system and yet the character and grandeur of cities like Paris, Rome and even Edinburgh are well retained. You only have to look at Bath or York, where the property is mostly freehold, to see that areas can be conserved without the leasehold system."

That view is at the root of our debate.

Mr. Roger Evans: I suggest that the difference in Rome, in Edinburgh and in the other examples is that systems of law other than the English system enable some form of social, communal control over the alteration to and development of property for the public good. It is the classic lack of such protection with English freehold property which is the cause of the difficulty.

Mr. Pike: The letter also referred to Bath and to York, which are not affected by different systems of law. If the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) had been a Member of Parliament when the Greater London council was being abolished, he might have been convinced that the GLC played a better role in protecting our heritage.

Much of the legislation introduced by previous Governments to protect our heritage has largely been eroded by this Government's actions since coming to office in 1979. With a Tory Government, profit and short-term gain tend to be of greater interest than protecting our heritage, whether buildings or our industrial heritage. The Government's record in this respect is not a great credit to them. The hon. Member for Monmouth is mistaken in his view.

The estates have not played a good role in protecting the heritage over the years. Articles were written about the demolition of Paradise row in 1906. Lord Cadogan's estate took steps to destroy parts of historic Chelsea because it wanted to make money out of the developments that would be possible once the heritage had been destroyed.

There are many similar examples over the years. Late one night, the House debated a Bill that would have removed certain protections for the Grosvenor buildings along the River Thames. The Bill would have removed restrictions that limited how those properties could be developed.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Even if the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) is correct about the way in which estates have looked after their properties over the years—many of us would disagree—I cannot understand why he seems to suggest that we should not protect national heritage properties today.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman must accept that I do not argue for a moment that we should not protect the heritage. In Committee, we talked about management and other schemes to ensure that the character of buildings would be protected. I referred to many areas of character, such as the new towns and certain villages, which have been protected over the years by agreements about their character. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of many examples of freehold properties being acquired by the people living in them, but one could still take sensible steps to protect the character of buildings.

Opposition Members would not advocate a Bill that allowed the devastation of some of the character of London. Many hon. Members will be gravely concerned about some developments that have taken place in recent years. I am sure that, if they could, hon. Members would think again before they destroyed buildings to make way for new developments in London and many other parts of the country. For example, in Burnley there is no way that we would allow the market hall to be destroyed.

8 pm

The Minister has been to my constituency on more than one occasion. He will accept that our poor, old houses that lack style and need money spent on them—even if we could get it from the Government—have character because they are built with stone. That character is worth preserving—in fact, our stone buildings are a unique feature of north-east Lancashire.

In more modern times, on 26 January 1962, an article in *The Daily Telegraph* stated:

"Extensive rebuilding is planned in Chelsea by the Cadogan Estate on land it owns in Sloane Street, Pont Street, Sloane Square, and Lower Sloane Street." At that time, the estate was seeking planning approval from London county council. One must accept that it was not ownership that prevented buildings from being destroyed, but, in many cases, local authorities' refusal to grant planning permission.

I cannot imagine the new clause preserving our heritage. Like the hon. Member for Surrey, East, I certainly do not wish our heritage to be destroyed; I wish it to be protected. The new clause was moved not with that intention. I cannot say that the hon. Member for Surrey, East is misleading the House, but he is taking us along a false path if he believes that his new clause is the best way of preserving the heritage. Whatever the hon. Gentleman thinks. the prime intention of the new clause is to prevent people from enfranchising. The Bill will remove certain people's rights to exercise the right which the Bill, in theory, is supposed to give them.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: The wishes of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) are most commendable, but I fear that he completely misreads the situation, particularly in great cities such as London. Amendment No. 19 has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). He apologises for not being with us this evening; he is suffering from the unfortunate illness of mumps. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have our sympathy; his heart is very much in this matter.

The amendment defines heritage areas as those which are wholly or substantially

"within a conservation area"

with

"at least one-fifth of the area covered by . . . listed buildings"

where

"the landlord has undertaken to comply with a code of estate management practice"

and the land holding containing the heritage area is

"of outstanding architectural or historical interest"

and its preservation or enhancement would be secured by management by

"one landlord . . . in accordance with a code of estate management practice".

The way to preserve estates with their historical aspirations already so successfully preserved is by exempting the small number concerned. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) acknowledges that we are talking about not a large number of estates but a few particularly special ones.

Section 19 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 is not enough. I cannot see that section 19 can be amended by stiffening its provisions when, by its very nature, the success of section 19 depends on the spin of the roulette

wheel as to how many leaseholders apply to enfranchise. The statutory controls are not enough. It is necessary to find a stronger weapon to ensure the continuation of great national monuments.

It might be argued that the new clause might provide a loophole through which the owners of an ordinary estate could jump and avoid the so-called benefits which are assumed to be achieved by the Bill. I am talking about exempting the extraordinary, the great and the nationally important; there are only a few.

A landlord who might secure benefits, if the clause were to be included in the Bill, will be subject to a code of estate management practice, which will have to be approved by the Secretary of State. Such a code will specify the management arrangements, and I understand that the proposal is that the Secretary of State for National Heritage would be responsible for that provision.

We in this country have good protection from the destruction of distinguished buildings and from the making of insensitive alterations to such buildings, but there exist some areas of enormous value which, although they are subject to statutory controls, need more powerful protection. By that I mean the discipline and benefit of leasehold controls.

Hon. Members are pressed for time, but I quote briefly from a book written by a man named Malcolm in 1810 about the squares of London and how they came to be a great feature of our capital city. From their auspicious start, the squares have been the envy of the world. Malcolm wrote:

"the exertions of our fathers in the general improvement of houses and streets, have left us with little to do. Repairing-leases contribute greatly to the handsome appearance of the houses, everything is in order."

Even the Labour Government in 1966 went some way to recognising the benefits of leasehold. Their White Paper entitled "Leasehold Reform in England and Wales" states:

"There are some comprehensively managed leasehold estates where enlightened management contributes greatly to the well being of the residents by maintaining the character of estates. It would not be fair to deny leaseholders on such estates the right of enfranchisement, but it would be equally unfair to the other residents on the estate if the exercise of this right prevented the benefits of comprehensive management from being any longer effective."

I remind the House that that comes from a Labour White Paper. It goes on:

"The Government propose that if the estate is recognised by the appropriate Minister as a well managed estate, enfranchisement will be subject to an agreed scheme for continued estate management, with suitable provision for determination in the event of disagreement."

That was the view of the then Labour Government.

That Government pressed on and enacted section 19 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, which has had mixed success. The scheme of management arrangement has proved to be workable only where it has been administered by a trust with the primary aim of securing long-term preservation of an area or where only a small proportion of it could be enfranchised.

It simply cannot be right that we risk national monuments in the lottery of enfranchisement. I hope, therefore, that, through amendment No. 119, we might provide national monuments with better protection, provide a better and more practical solution than section 19 of the Leasehold Reform Act, provide a fair deal to tenants, although not enfranchising their leaseholds, support the statutory powers of conservation areas and listed buildings, and prevent avoidance by others who seek a loophole.

It is easy to be wise after the event. There will be no going back on this matter. Once the great estates of London and elsewhere have been broken up, they will never be put back together. The example of Bournemouth springs to mind, but there are bound to be many others. We shall lose the cohesion, good management—of which there can be no question—the architectural appearance and one of the great attractions of our national capital.

Mr. Roger Evans: In support of what my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) has just said, I add a further argument. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) failed to analyse ownership, public intervention or timing, all of which are relevant to the issue of whether heritage is to be preserved. Amendment No. 119 is specifically designed to deal with that problem in the context of the legislation.

If one adopts the blunderbuss approach, as the hon. Member for Burnley did, to say that the previous Duke of Westminster destroyed Butterfield's masterpiece of Eaton hall in the 1960s is unarguable. No one would let the present duke do anything like it. At the same time, the atrocities that the late Lord Cadogan proposed in the 1960s for Chelsea would nowadays be regarded as the dark ages, but there must be some carefully qualified value judgments.

If the hon. Member for Burnley looked, for example, at a video of the film "Passport to Pimlico", he would see that there is something in the argument that the Duke of Westminster's withdrawal from the southern part of his estate has not been associated necessarily with the degree of social control that leads to improvement.

I am prepared to concede fully that possibly public intervention in certain circumstances leads to improvements of the environment. I am prepared to say that Southwark council, under Labour control in the 1970s, did some excellent work until it ran out of resources or will. I would even go so far as to say that the historic buildings section of London county council had a unique distinguished record for preserving the environment and the valuable parts of it. I would go so far as to concede that, in the sales of council houses, covenants were not imposed to protect the environment sufficiently. That has happened.

What we are talking about in the context of the Bill and amendment No. 119, in particular, is that certain parts of our country are especially distinguished with the richness of their architectural history and value to the environment. The failure of English freehold law has existed since the statute quia emptores—that one cannot impose a positive obligation on a freehold purchaser, whether it is to paint a front door or to turn up in armour on horseback for 40 days a year.

It may have been a good policy at one time, but the fact that it has been the case since the middle ages has meant that, for example, one can scarcely buy a freehold flat in England. One can buy a freehold flat in Scotland. That is why England developed differently under a different code of law. In Paris, one can control the development of Baron Hausman terraces because one needs a permit from the prefect. It is different in England.

8.15 pm

The issue with which we are dealing in the amendment is a peculiar product of England's architectural history and legal heritage. My specific concern is the essential weakness in clause 62 for estate management schemes. My hon. Friend the Minister rightly values the importance of such schemes. I am sure that he will join me in wanting to see such schemes encouraged, rather than deterred.

The danger inherent in the legislation is that there *is* no incentive for a landlord who is getting out because he has been enfranchised, to insist on a scheme. Amendment No. 119 suggests that there would be a positive requirement for estate management schemes in specific areas of heritage value, which should be designated as such by the Secretary of State for National Heritage. That is an extremely valuable aspect to reassure those of us who are concerned about the heritage aspects of the Bill.

I underline another peculiar anomaly of England—cathedral closes vested in deans and chaplains. For centuries, they have been exempted from the law of mortmain. In other words, they can accumulate land and pass it on from one to another. Until recently, corporations could not do that. Their powers of mortgaging have been limited so they could not go bust or bankrupt, and their powers of leasing are still controlled by section 2 of the Ecclesiastical Leases Act 1572.

We have here an example of a unique time capsule where an urban environment has been maintained in perpetual succession to an exceptionally high standard over many centuries. One of the great disappointments of the noble gothic cathedrals of France is that they are utterly devoid of anything similar. They may be jewels in their own right, but they have been wrecked by revolution and confiscation from the social and environmental context in which they were set.

What I am suggesting to my hon. Friend the Minister is simple: we do not have a tradition——

Mr. Raynsford: What about Chartres?

Mr. Evans: Chartres is not as fine as Wells or Salisbury. The rich canons of Chartres were all despoiled at the revolution, for understandable social reasons. The dean and chapter of Barchester in England have always been beneficent.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Will my hon. Friend consider the plight of the abbey of Cluny in that context?

Mr. Evans: I endorse the fate of the abbey of Cluny. It was one of the tragedies of the French republic after the revolution. We have seen it from Mont St. Michel to the burial place of the Plantagenets. The revolutionaries turned their finest monuments into prisons, dungeons and casernes. That is not the English tradition.

I may have chided my hon. Friend the Minister earlier for his intellectual brutalism with the rich tapestry of the English law of leaseholds. Undoubtedly, under the legislation he has no intention of damaging heritage. The heritage issue has entered the argument only because others have raised with the Minister the question whether there may be in the context a threat which is peculiar to England and the English position.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider amendment No. 119 as a practical means not to hinder the process of enfranchisement but simply to ensure that all this takes place on proper terms so that public interest in our heritage is protected. The only requirement of the amendment that is likely to have a practical effect is that there should be agreed an estate management scheme.

Mr. Pike: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if he is absolutely serious about what he is saying, it is possible that something would not be classified as a heritage area *under the new clause within the period of 12* months or because the situation existed at the start and therefore could be disposed of? In five or 10 years' time, such an area may be regarded as heritage because people's views change over time.

Mr. Evans: I am sorry; I disagree entirely with the idea that permissive aesthetics is a time problem. Since the 1960s, we have seen the rise of public conscience and consciousness on the issue of heritage. In the past two decades, that consciousness reached a much higher level than it had been since 1914. I do not accept that the level of consciousness will go up and down. *[Interruption.]* The sedentary intervention from the Labour Front Bench and stupidity on a vital issue of national heritage is a reflection of their lack of concern to analyse the issue seriously and consider its impact. It may well be a sign of ignorance, but I shall say no more.

The point at stake is that it is feasible to set up a safeguard that the new clause introduces. The Minister may wish to reconsider the precise terms of the safeguard. I respectfully agree with the hon. Member for Burnley, and I am a little surprised that those who drafted the new clause included such a tough time limit as 12 months. I do not see why the time limit could not be extended. The new clause deals with that particular problem.

If my hon. Friend the Minister would give way on the substance of the argument for amendment No. 119, he would do so to the universal approbation of the conservation lobby, the delight of his Back Benchers and the enlightened opinion on conservation and architectural matters in the United Kingdom generally. I conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a minor matter: the Bill has forgotten Wales, and Welsh heritage should be mentioned specifically in such provisions.

Mr. Fishburn: Although I hope to catch your eye later in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a number of amendments to widen the net of leasehold reform, as I believe that leasehold reform should be available to the maximum number of people, there is no doubt that there is something germane in the heritage argument. It depends on where we draw the line.

Since the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, there has been a tremendous improvement in the squares in my constituency where people enfranchised themselves—because they have bought their own houses, they have put money into those houses and into the squares. One of the great changes in London over the past 20 years has been that, where house owners have enfranchised themselves, they have improved whole swathes of London. That has been all too visible in Kensington and north Kensington.

However, there is a narrowly drawn argument for protecting the heritage which was persuasively put by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) and those who argued for the cathedral closes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will realise that, if we are confident about leasehold reform affecting the largest

number of people, we should be confident about excluding specific areas where the heritage for historical reasons would be hurt.

Sir George Young: Everyone who has spoken in the debate is united by concern for our heritage; what may divide us is the best way of achieving that objective.

I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), among others, for putting the case so plausibly. He said that he detected some gloom on the Government Front Bench and I cannot think why he reached that conclusion. Morale is high and we are enjoying a refreshing and constructive debate with our hon. Friends on the Back Benches; the only shadow is the Minister of State's voice, which is approaching the end of its lease.

About an hour ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) called me an intellectual Jacobite. He has now called me an intellectual brutalist. It is not my objective to vandalise Britain's heritage; on the contrary. However, I detected some inconsistency in his argument. First, he argued that our heritage is safe in the hands of the interests that now own it—indeed, he said that it was safe only in their hands and could not be trusted to anyone else —but he went on to say that one could not rely on those interests to implement estate management schemes and that somehow their commitment to heritage would evaporate if they were confronted with the option of introducing an estate management scheme at no cost to themselves. Either they have our interests at heart, in which case they would implement estate management schemes, or they do not, in which case we can rely on the leaseholders.

At the heart of the debate is the point that was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn)—whether the only way of safeguarding our heritage is to insist that sensitive buildings remain in single ownership or whether one can rely on the interests of leaseholders to safeguard and even enhance that heritage.

New clause 15 and amendments Nos. 1 and 2 would exempt from enfranchisement properties which the Treasury has designated under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 as conditionally exempt from inheritance tax. There is concern that if the properties are enfranchisable there would be serious implications for some estates. The concern is first that the disposal of part of an estate could trigger a review by the Inland Revenue of the conditional exemption. In short, if the estate is being broken up, is there any case for continuing the exemption? Secondly, there is the concern voiced by my hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) and for Monmouth that the coherent management of the estate would be lost. I suspect that those issues are likely to be of greatest concern to rural estates and the example given was not in one of our cities.

Amendments Nos. 116 to 199 would exempt from the rights to enfranchise properties falling in heritage areas proposed by a new schedule—both flats and higher-value houses coming within the scope of enfranchisement under the Bill. I expect that those provisions would be of greater importance to some of the urban estates, although there might be wider application as well.

I shall now deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East about inheritance tax. Exemption from liability to inheritance tax is, of course, a matter for my colleages at the Treasury. I understand that it is granted in respect of outstanding historic buildings or landscapes, so that the estate does not have to be broken up in order to meet the tax liability. The exemption or designation is usually conditional on undertakings being given to maintain, repair and preserve the estate, and on public access being granted.

When there are disposals from an estate that has been or is being granted conditional exemption, the Inland Revenue will quite properly want to review whether designation remains appropriate. Enfranchisement is as much a disposal as any other sale. It will be necessary to pay any inheritance tax due on the proportion of the estate which is being sold, but that is only right, as the former freeholder will have the cash to meet the tax liability.

I turn to a point on which I may be able to help my hon. Friends. Each case will need to be examined on its merits, but I see no reason why, in general, the sale of the freehold through enfranchisement should necessarily lead to designation being removed from the rest of the estate. After all, enfranchisement can take place only where the property has already been demised by way of a long lease. My hon. Friend was concerned that disposal of one part of an estate might automatically lead to designation being removed from all of it. Of course, one would need to discuss it with the Inland Revenue, but there is no particular reason why the entire benefit of designation should be lost if any proportion of the estate were enfranchised.

The sale of a freehold will not result in the break-up of an estate in the same way as the sale of the contents of a house can separate paintings of sculpture, for example, from their context. The buildings will still be there, in the same relationship to each other, whoever owns the freehold.

Conditional exemption from inheritance tax does not prevent the freeholder from selling long leases for a premium as long as the terms of those leases are in keeping with the conditional exemption. If they are, there should be no reason why the leaseholder should not enfranchise. It would not be right for the freeholder to benefit from such sales and also benefit, at the leaseholders expense from his inability to enfranchise.

Where designation depends on standards of maintenance, or on access rights, it should be possible for the former freeholder to ensure that these obligations remain on the former leaseholder through an estate management scheme. I shall say more about that later.

Amendments Nos. 116 to 119 would provide a much wider exemption covering areas which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage would be required to designate as heritage areas. Designation would apply if an area is within a conservation area and is of outstanding architectural or historical interest. The suggestion is that these areas can be effectively managed and will retain their architectural and historical merit only if the existing leasehold arrangements are left unchanged. That cuts right across our desire to keep exemption from leasehold enfranchisement to an absolute minimum and keeping them on the face of the Bill. It could drive a coach and horses through the Bill, giving the Secretary of State, for National Heritage the power to exempt any properties he sees fit.

I wish to make two preliminary points. First, it is possible to have areas of fine architecture or historical interest without the leasehold system. One has only to look at Paris or Edinburgh to see evidence of that. There are

[Sir George Young]

other means by which standards can be maintained. Listed building control and the designation of conservation areas spring to mind. If those need strengthening, that would be a separate issue.

Secondly, times can change. I suspect that some of the opposition to enfranchisement when it was debated in 1967 was on the basis that the break-up of the London estates would prevent redevelopment, rather than that it would harm the heritage. I do not want to dwell too long on this point, other than to observe that the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association has circulated to hon. Members press cuttings concerning the demolition of a number of London squares by one of the great estates earlier this century.

However, the key issue is whether it is necessary that estates should continue in single ownership if they are to be managed effectively and leaseholders be denied the right to enfranchise. I do not accept that, as a general proposition, landlords are necessarily better at management or more likely to care for and preserve a historic building than the leaseholder who lives in it. There are many cases, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said, in which leaseholders have restored and cherished historic buildings on an estate, often with their own resources and perhaps to a higher standard than the freeholder would have done.

Indeed, it has been argued that the leasehold system acts against the proper care and maintenance of property. If a leaseholder of a house knows that he has only a short-term and diminishing interest, he clearly has less incentive to plan for the long-term care of the property.

8.30 pm

I believe that our proposals on estate management schemes are the answer to the problems mentioned by my hon. Friends. Our proposals will allow the freeholder to continue to exercise influence over the use, maintenance and redevelopment of property, even though the leaseholder has enfranchised. Provided that they meet the conditions set out in clauses 62 and 63, there is no reason why freeholders should not apply for such schemes to cover their estates.

Estate management schemes are intended to allow the landlord to retain powers of management over houses or flats which become enfranchised. The terms of an estate management scheme can deal with the redevelopment, use or appearance of the property. They can empower the landlord to carry out work to maintain or repair properties. They can impose obligations in respect of property used in common.

More than 100 estate management scheme applications were approved after the 1967 Act was passed. I believe that they have been effective in areas such as Dulwich and Hampstead in preserving the quality of the area. For example, there is a scheme in operation in Belgravia, where several houses have enfranchised under the existing Act but are generally indistinguishable from other houses in the street which have remained under the control of the original landlord.

Leasehold valuation tribunals will have to approve estate management schemes and consider the reasonableness of what is proposed. In considering applications, they will have regard to the past development and present character of an area and to architectural and historical considerations, as well as to the circumstances generally. Such schemes are likely to enhance historic areas and cathedral closes, which were mentioned so movingly by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth. We are also considering suggestions to amend our proposals, and we are in consultation with local authority associations with a view to giving local authorities the power to promote estate management schemes.

It would not be right to frame exemption from enfranchisement in terms of the application of tax law. Leaseholders' rights should not depend on the taxation circumstances of the freeholder. Nor is it necessary that those who live on the great estates need be denied the chance to own their freehold. The Government's view is that leaseholders are fully capable of caring for the buildings in which they live and that the system of estate management schemes provides adequate safeguards where in the general interest there must be coherent management of an area as a whole.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I realise that my hon. Friend is coming to a conclusion, but nothing has been said about the attitude of English Heritage to the Bill and the effects that it might have on heritage areas. Rumour has it that English Heritage has a strong view that the Bill will be damaging for the heritage but was firmly told by the Department that it was one of the Department's agencies and should behave itself. Perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify the position.

Sir George Young: When my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East moved his new clause, he said that he had been in contact with English Heritage, so it is legitimate to assume that he articulated some of the points that English Heritage had made to him. The Government's view is the one that I have just set out. We do not believe that the only way to safeguard our national heritage is to grant the exemptions. We believe that there are other ways of achieving the goal that we all share.

Mr. Pike: The Minister said that there would be some consultation with local authorities about management schemes. There is no reason why English Heritage could not also be involved in that discussion. Will the Minister assure us that it will be involved? We support the concept of estate management schemes and the widest possible discussion on them.

Sir George Young: I do not believe that English Heritage is pressing for those powers at this stage. The local authority might be involved if, for the sake of argument—this would be an exception—neither the existing freeholder nor the new freeholder wanted to promote an estate management scheme. It might then be sensible for the local authority to be able to do so. That would be a case of last resort. The estate management scheme costs the freeholder nothing because the costs are recouped through the leaseholders.

If the freeholder had a continuing commitment to the country's heritage, it would be odd if he failed to promote an estate management scheme, especially if he did not have to fund it. We are considering the possibility of a safety net. We are talking to local authorities about whether they would welcome such a power if, in unusual circumstances, no one else was interested in promoting a scheme. I hope that the House will not feel it necessary to press the new clause to a Division.

Mr. Ainsworth: I was clearly mistaken earlier when I saw furrowed brows on the Government's Front Bench and took them to betoken gloom. They clearly betokened pensiveness. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for his thoughtful response to the new clause and amendments. In view of the words that he has just spoken and the undertakings that he has given, in the hope that he will continue to liaise with both the Department of National Heritage—it is good to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage in his place listening to the debate—and with the Treasury—it was good to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer listening to the debate, too—and so that I may see what further progress can be made in safeguarding heritage buildings in the context of the provisions of the Bill, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 18

ABOLITION OF LOW RENT TEST FOR HOUSES

'.—(1) In section 1(1)(a) of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 the words "at a low rent" shall be omitted.

(2) Section 4 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 shall cease to have effect.'.—*[Mr. Pike.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Pike: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 22, in clause 5, page 5, line 40, leave out 'at a low rent'.

No. 120, in clause 7, page 8, line 16, leave out from 'exceed' to end of line 29 and insert '£250'.

No. 100, in page 8, line 16, leave out from 'namely—' to end of line 29 and insert—

'(a) £250, or

(b) one-third of the market rent on the relevant date.'.

No. 23, in page 8, line 17, leave out 'two thirds of' and insert 'one and a half'.

No. 24, in page 8, line 26, leave out 'two thirds of' and insert 'one and a half times'.

No. 121, leave out lines 34 to 36.

No. 122, leave out lines 6 to 15.

No. 114, in clause 59, page 63, line 25, leave out from beginning to end of line 47 on page 64.

No. 123, page 63, line 36, leave out from beginning to end of line 37 on page 64.

No. 124, in clause 60, page 63, line 45, leave out from beginning to end of line 37 on page 64 and insert—

'*Alternative rent limits for purposes of section 1A(2)*

4AS.—(1) For the purposes of section 1A(2) above a tenancy of any property falls within this subsection if at any time during the tenancy either:

(a) No rent is payable under it; or

(b) The rent so payable does not exceed the maximum limit.

(2) The maximum limit is:

(a) Two thirds of the annual letting value of the property (on the same terms) on the date of the commencement of the tenancy; or

(b) If greater than (a), two thirds of the fixed amount (if any) of the rental applicable to the property.

(3) The fixed amount applicable to any property is:

(a) The rateable value of the property on the relevant day where either—

(i) The tenancy was entered into on or after 1st April 1963 but before 1st April 1990; or

(ii) The property has a rateable value on 31st March 1990 and the tenancy was entered into on or after 1st April 1990 but in pursuance of a contract made before that date.

(b) In any other case £5,000 if the property is in Greater London and £1,000 if elsewhere.

(4) Where the property comprised in the tenancy includes property other than the house and premises:

(a) The rent payable under the tenancy shall be deemed to be that part of the rent which is fairly attributable to the house and premises;

(b) The rateable value shall be taken to be that part of that value which is fairly attributable to the house and premises; and

(c) The letting value of the property at any time shall be taken to be the letting value of the house and premises at that time.

(5) It shall be presumed that the rent payable under a tenancy does not exceed the maximum unless the contrary is proved.".

No. 125, in page 64, line 20, leave out from beginning to end of line 22.

Mr. Pike: The new clause and amendments all deal with the low rent test. We hope to get a more positive response from the Government tonight on the matter. Opposition Members are disappointed that the Government have not tabled an amendment to take some action on the problem. We are not alone in that view. Several of the amendments in the group were tabled by Conservative Members. Unless we get a positive response from the Minister and an assurance that the Government will take action, we shall press new clause 18 to a Division. I make that clear in case there are any doubts or misunderstandings, so that people know where they are. I am aware that other amendments in the group may be moved formally at the appropriate stage and pressed to a Division. We intend to test the feeling of the House on the lead new clause 18.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State said:

"but we are perfectly prepared to reconsider where that low rent test should bite."—[*Offical Report, Standing Committee B*, 17 November 1992; c. 104.]

That was on 17 November. We are now three months on. It would be an understatement to say that we were disappointed that the Government had not tabled an amendment to change the position.

It comes down to the type of principle we have been trying to debate. We believe that people should be able to get the enfranchisement provided for in the Bill and that there should not be provisions in the Bill that prevent that. Some hon. Members have tried to take us further back the other way and to preclude more people from being able to exercise enfranchisement. We have seen the Government fighting fairly hard, but being squeezed, to try to hold the position as near as possible and to make the minimum concessions.

If the Government are serious about what they said, that one of the fundamental objectives of the Bill is to ensure that as many people as possible should have the right to enfranchise, they must recognise that this low rent test puts an obstacle in the way of many people who wish to enfranchise. That would be totally wrong and inconsistent with what the Government say that they are trying to do. So we hope that the Government can rethink this and try to respond positively.

In the debate on new clause 15, the Minister repeatedly said that it was not his wish to see people precluded from owning their own properties. He was extolling the virtues of that and of being able to acquire the freehold. Those are very much the views that we are advocating in this debate.

[Mr. Pike]

We move the new clause very much in that spirit, because we want to see people able to exercise their right to enfranchise and not be excluded by a test that will exclude more people than it ought to.

This is a matter of great concern, particularly in the London area. It will be of great concern to many people, who will see their opportunity to acquire freehold barred by a Bill which, when it was foreshadowed in the Queen's Speech, made them think that at long last the Government were to take action. They thought they were going to have the right to acquire a freehold, and now they see that the Bill, at its last stage in this House before going to the other place, still has a bar to stop many people exercising a right to acquire freehold. That would be an unfortunate situation.

In the Lord Chancellor's consultative paper on commonhold, published in November 1990, in paragraph 4:11 there is a reference to the low rent test:

"It is so unlikely that there is a significant number of cases of residential long leases at a full rent suitable for conversion to commonhold, that the complication of a low rent qualification cannot be justified bearing in mind, especially, that special provision would have to be made to deal with cases where some leases were at a low rent and others were not".

Now there seems to have been a shift in the Government view. I do not want to get involved in the commonhold issue, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would immediately rule me out of order. We all wait for the day when the Government can introduce that legislation. Members on both sides of the House have actively campaigned for the commonhold principle to be established. We regret that it is not possible to do it this year and hope that it can be done next year.

8.45 pm

In the first part of this Bill, we have a low rent test, which will remain unless we carry this new clause or one of these amendments and will bar many people from exercising the very principle that the first part of the Bill claims to set out to achieve for occupiers of these properties.

I want to refer to one or two examples of people who know how serious it is. I know that many hon. Members who were on the Committee have had letters on the subject, but it is relevant to refer to some in the context of this debate, because they highlight how crucial is the low rent test and how easy it has often been to ensure that the levels of ground rent have been fixed at a figure that would bar people from being able to exercise their right to acquire freehold.

A Mr. Dyson wrote:

"This anomaly is the 'low rent' provision which states that to qualify for enfranchisement leaseholders must have rents which are less than ⅔ rateable value on grant of lease or if lease issued after April 1990, rent must be less than £1,000 in London or £250 elsewhere. This rule currently applies to houses (1967 Leasehold Reform Act)".

It then says just how this would bar him in the present situuation from acquiring the property. The ground rent at the start of the lease was £230 per annum and rateable value at the start of the lease was £338. Two thirds of £338 is £226, so for the sake of £4 that individual is barred from exercising his right of enfranchisement. That is the present situation with that house and it will apply if we do not do something to abolish the low rent test or amend it to ensure that such people are not barred. If the ground rent of £230 had been just £4 lower, he would have qualified, and that must be nonsense.

Another letter, from a T. J. O. Hickey, refers to the two-thirds rule and says that it means that in order to qualify for enfranchisement or extension of a long lease over 21 years there must be a ground rent of less than two thirds of rateable value at the time that lease was granted. He says that the premium charged by the landlord for the lease in 1984 in this case was very close to the market value of the freehold. The rent was fixed at £280 a year in order to be above two thirds of the then rateable value, in this case by £5.

That individual believes that that was clearly done under the legislation of that time to make sure that it was just above the crucial figure. The market rent, the rack rent, would have been much greater, and plainly this tenure was closer to ownership than to renting. I think that the Minister would say that the intention of this sort of legislation is to ensure that such people are not barred. I do not believe that it is the Government's intention to bar that individual from acquiring the freehold and being able to enfranchise. I do not believe that that is what the Government want, but they fail to recognise the genuine difficulty. Even at this late stage, if they recognised that and did something, they could solve this problem.

I received another letter, after we debated the matter in Committee. It was expressing disappointment that the Committee had not been able to see a positive end to the low rent test and that the Government had not been prepared to accept any of the amendments or options that were debated in the Committee.

The letter stated:

"As you can imagine, I am deeply concerned that legislation supposedly designed to assist leaseholders might paradoxically destroy the value of their homes, in most cases their principal asset."

I am sure that the Minister would not suggest for a moment that the low rent test was intended to prevent enfranchisement, or to devalue properties. If the Bill is not changed, however, such side issues will be bound to arise.

Members of the Standing Committee received many useful briefings from the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association, which deals with many of the people affected by the current problems, and which hopes that most if not all will be able to enfranchise when the Bill is enacted. It hopes for a leasehold extension for those who cannot do so. The association is extremely concerned about the low rent test. In a briefing note sent to us in November, it said:

"Finally, we would like to draw attention to paragraph 6 of the enclosed note which indicates that the Price Waterhouse/Caws and Morris Report"—

a report that we debated, and which was referred to several times in Committee—

"demonstrates that in 1989 Central London properties would have frequently failed to clear the proposed 'low rent' barrier even if their ground rents had been fixed at no more than 5 to 10 per cent. of the potential rack rent of the property concerned. Such ground rents would have had relatively little effect on the premium paid, but would, under the Government's present proposals, nevertheless render the property unenfranchiseable. If the retention of some form of 'low rent' test is, for whatever reason, deemed necessary, it must, therefore, we suggest, be formulated in a way which leads to the barriers being placed at far higher levels which genuinely approach the attainable rack rent for each property concerned."

I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House want to speak in this important debate. Let me make it

clear, however, that Opposition Members solidly believe that the low rent test needs to be either changed or abolished. A number of Conservative Members also believe that the Government are wrong in this instance, and I know that they, like me, hope that the Minister will say that the Government are prepared to table an amendment in the other place at an appropriate stage, even if nothing can be done now.

If the Minister cannot give that undertaking, we shall have to try to force a vote with the intention of defeating the Government. If we do that, the Government will have to recognise the overwhelming concern expressed by hon. Members. That concern is not unique to the House of Commons; it is felt by the very people whom, according to the Government, the Bill is designed to help. If the Government want those people to be enfranchised, they must think again, even at this late stage. Unless they change the low rent test, many people will be barred, and the finger of blame will be pointed where it should be pointed—at the Department of the Environment, and at Ministers who must accept responsibility for not being persuaded by an overwhelming case. Our case is that the test is wrong, and that it needs to be changed as quickly as possible.

Sir John Wheeler: I am very pleased to follow the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who spoke in a non-partisan way about an issue that concerns hon. Members on both sides of the House. I agreed strongly with almost everything he said until his closing words.

I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment have received a great deal of correspondence from Conservative Members—including me—over many years. They have treated that correspondence, and the arguments contained in it, with great courtesy, and I am very grateful to them. Whatever the House decides tonight will not reflect in any way on my hon. Friend the Minister, or on his officials, who have had to deal with the matter for so long.

I strongly support reform of the low rent test. I have never been convinced of the need for any such test. It is very telling that, when the matter was examined in detail in Committee—as the hon. Member for Burnley pointed out—a good many Conservative Members were so unimpressed by the justifications advanced for the clause that my hon. Friend the Minister was forced to reconsider. It is disappointing to discover now that my right hon. and hon. Friends have been unable to accept an amendment that reflects the widely held and genuine concerns of my constituents and many others.

I remain unimpressed by any of the arguments—such as they are—that have been used to defend the low rent test. Recently, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State wrote to me, drawing attention to the importance of the private rented sector. He did not want that sector to be damaged by acceptance of the amendments. I see a great difference between encouraging the private rented sector and what the amendments seek to achieve; I see no conflict.

We are told that a low rent test is needed to verify that a leaseholder has purchased a genuine long lease—that is, one of over 21 years for which a premium has been paid. The purpose of the test is to distinguish such leases from those of over 21 years for which no premium has been paid, and for which a market rent is charged. No one—not even my hon. Friend the Minister—has been able to find an example of the latter category. The low rent test is there to address circumstances that simply do not exist.

Even the Lord Chancellor recognised that in his much-quoted circular on commonhold, which was mentioned earlier. Later in this Parliament, a substantial commonhold Bill will be presented; the issue will return to the House if we do not address it now.

We are told that the low rent test remains because it existed in earlier legislation. But surely, the main function of new legislation is to improve the old statutes. We are not good legislators if we carry forward into the new obvious mistakes from the old.

We are also told that people knew about the low rent test when the agreement was made to purchase a lease. Therein lies the greatest reason for looking again at the low rent test. Many individuals buying long leases had no idea of the wider significance of the ground rent level. That is made clear time and again in the correspondence that most of us have received. People feel cheated.

Consider, for those buying a long lease in my constituency—in, say, St. John's Wood—the difference between a ground rent of £1,000 and £1,010. It may seem only £10, but to the freeholder, with his expensive lawyers well versed in property law, the difference is not just in £10. It is the difference between enfranchisement and disfranchisement. They know that and they use the low rent test to get around the spirit of any leasehold-reforming legislation. Such legislation has been around since 1967, so the inevitable march of reform has been going on a long time.

9 pm

Not only is the individual leaseholder disfranchised, but, by manipulating the low rent test for new leaseholders, freeholders can disfranchise others in the block who meet all the stated criteria. Under the Bill, at least two thirds of a block must be enfranchiseable. So in a block of, say, four or five flats—typical in my constituency; such blocks make up the bulk of leasehold units—a freeholder need only ensure that one flat fails the low rent test effectively to disfranchise all the rest. Do we intend that to be the effect of this legislation? That loophole should be closed once for all; otherwise, it will be a constant cause of discontent and will return to haunt us.

If the Government insist on having a low rent test, it must be realistic and less open to abuse. The current low rent tests relate to a series of values all of which are out of date. How can we justify a test which depends on a comparison with rating valuations from the 1960s and 1970s, especially as we have abandoned the rating system?

Many of the amendments attempt to address that issue. I am not given to voting against the Government, but there comes a time when the duty to one's constituents' on an issue of this kind overrides the commitmente of support to the Government, whom I sincerely and honourably support. If the House divides on the issue tonight, I shall vote for my constituents' interests and in favour of the new clause.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: It is again a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and to endorse wholeheartedly everything he said. I particularly support his plea that we view the clause without party political bias.

[Ms. Glenda Jackson]

It is clear from correspondence that hon. Members in all parts of the House have received directly and from the invaluable briefing documents of the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee and its contingent six organisations that the part of the Bill with which we are dealing strikes at the very basis of the measure and, in a sense, at the authority of the House.

I say that because the legislation is designed to move forward the whole process of leasehold reform, yet, time and again, constituents and groups have written to us saying that they believe—they are correct in their belief—that their freeholder has deliberately set their ground rent at a level which debars them from enfranchisement.

In every case, the leaseholder has spent much money on the fabric of the property, carrying out essential repairs. We are not talking about a new coat of paint. I have received letters from constituents—admittedly, the initial price of the property may have been low—telling how they have replaced a roof, done work on the foundations of the property and replaced windows, long before dealing with paper and paint on the walls. They have believed, and I agree with them, that they owned their property. The low rent provision denies them that right in the eyes of the law. Tonight the House has an opportunity to free them from this injustice.

I have referred to the invaluable briefings that we have received from the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee. Its view is that

"the low rent test is particularly iniquitous . . . what is clear, however, is that if the low rent test remains at the levels proposed, a number of house and flat-owners who are in every sense the owners of their homes will be unfairly and arbitrarily excluded from the legislation."

I have letters from householders who confirm that statement. One asks us to stress the need for the low rent provision to be set at a more realistic figure for London than the current £1,000 a year. The couple in question

"purchased a 62 year lease on these premises from the Grosvenor estate, in an area where freeholds are rare. We paid a substantial capital premium to the freeholder . . . as we have responsibility for the repair, maintenance, insurance and all other long-term occupiers' responsibilities: but we are denied the long-term capital growth . . . The property was neglected by the freeholder, and we have spent £70,000 on capital works".

Referring to a new clause that we discussed earlier, the couple say:

"Maintaining the fabric of an estate is easy if it is always at someone else's expense."

The whole heritage of the part of London and the estate in which the couple lived depended on who lived there—I cannot say the householders, because that is what we are arguing about tonight—being committed to their homes. Indeed, the couple state:

"The proposed bill is not stealing properties from the great estates."

Another letter runs as follows:

"The low rent clause means we do not currently have the right to enfranchise . . . the lease was of course structured this way to exclude us from enfranchisement rights."

The writer of the letter

"is amused when I hear the argument that freeholders are the guardians of the heritage".

The couple in question received only one cursory visit from their estate representative in eight years.

There are more letters in the same vein. I know that hon. Members on both sides are anxious to speak in this debate, so I will only repeat that we have an opportunity tonight to free the many people who have lavished not only money but love, dedication and time on their homes. We are sometimes in danger of examining the proposals in the Bill solely in terms of bricks and mortar, but it should not be forgotten that what we are discussing are family homes. It should be part of the duty of the House to preserve them.

Mr. Fishburn: The early part of today's debate was very much taken over by a number of my right hon. Friends who are truly the heavyweights of our party—but now they have left, leaving the Floor to the true voice of those who believe in leasehold reform. Gone are the august but distant Members for the shires; left in the House are those of us who live in the heart of London and other areas such as Eastbourne where we know all too well the problems of leasehold law.

I begin by contratulating Ministers on holding the line so well during the first part of this debate. I should not like the absent Secretary of State to think that the relative silence of those of us who have campaigned for so long for leasehold reform meant that we agreed with the august heavyweights. The Minister knows as well as I do that the rules of the House make it difficult for junior Members to speak early in a debate.

Ministers have stuck to their manifesto commitment. they have stuck by the Second Reading vote; most importantly, they have stuck by the Standing Committee that deliberated over the Bill for the past three months. In that Standing Committee the Government first realised that the overwhelming majority of us were in favour of abolishing the low rent test and that is why we tabled the amendment—not least because the Government promised to tell us their view of its abolition at this stage.

Let there be no misunderstanding: a majority of the Standing Committee were in favour of doing away with the test altogether, which is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that the Lord Chancellor—who has much to his credit, not least that he is a Scot and has not been used to the absurdities of leasehold law—echoed that opinion in his paper on commonhold, saying that there is no locus or purpose in a low rent test and that it is inherently bogus.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State knows as well as the Lord Chancellor and the Standing Committee that the provisions of the low rent test are bogus. They are a fig leaf to hide the private parts of a few estates and are truly without any tradition in English law. They have been inserted in the Bill artificially, to restrict the number of people who can benefit from leasehold enfranchisement.

The Secretary of State's most legitimate defence is, "We've got to get this Bill through Parliament." I wholly understand that. A political balancing act is taking place. The low rent test has no real significance or legal purpose and it is a case of, "You understand, Dudley, we have to get this through, we must restrict the number of people who can enfranchise so as to buy off those who oppose the Bill." That is politics and it is why the Secretary of State is such an august politician.

The Secretary of State is right that he has to make that balance, but he would be wrong to reject amendments that do away with the low rent test. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said, unless we get this right tonight it will come back to haunt us when commonhold returns to the House and when the

next manifestos of the Conservative party and the Opposition are written. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister does not wish to find himself going through these arguments again in 1994, 1995 and 1996 and nor do I.

The Secretary of State would also be wrong politically to hold on to the low rent test, because although he would perhaps reduce the criticism from certain quarters, whose absence we have noted, he would disfranchise tens of thousands of people—articulate, middle-class Tories who have paid mightily for long leases, usually in the heart of London and in many towns and cities on the south coast. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) in his place. Those people will feel increased resentment that a Bill has gone out of its way to disfranchise them and that much effort has gone into saying, "You can't enjoy the enfranchisement proposals that we are offering to others."

That is not the Conservative way. Those of us who have been fighting for leasehold reform for a long time—many people have fought for it far longer than I—have been doing so because we believe that leasehold as a form of tenure is wrong.

9.15 pm

We have seen it not as a form of tenancy, but as a form of ownership. People who are disbarred from enfranchising themselves by the low rent test are as fully owners of their long leases as anybody else in the land. We run the risk in classless Britain of listening to the very rich in order to disfranchise those who are middle class.

The low rent test is wrong for another reason. It is a bogus formula based on rateable value. Rateable value—when were those words last heard in the House? I can recall the Secretary of State coming to my by-election in 1988 and saying, "We will do away with all these rates; rateable value is a thing of the past; an unsatisfactory way of raising local taxes." And he produced out of the hat the poll tax. Three years later, he produced out of the hat the council tax. That is fine and good, but rateable value, with each and every new local tax, recedes into the dim distance of London's history.

Yet this Bill has written throughout it a number of clauses which refer to rateable values as far back as 30 years ago, and does that specifically to disfranchise a number of people, principally in London, but also throughout the country. It cannot, and does not, make sense.

As if the reference to rateable value were not enough, we are told that certain leases that have ground rents of over £1,000 a year should not be able to qualify for enfranchisement. Yet, for an enormously expensive flat costing, say, £1 million, a ground rent of £1,000 stands in the same proportion as does a ground rent of £100 for a flat worth £100,000. Unless we are careful, under this Government it will be the rule that the more one pays, the fewer rights one has. That is not a good principle on which to go forward.

The low rent test is perhaps most pernicious for the reason that my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North gave—its knock-on effect, or multiplier. Take a block of flats, disfranchise two or three people, and is it really possible to imagine that the rest of the leaseholders in that block will be able to get the two thirds that is necessary to qualify for leasehold enfranchisement?

Those who will feel resentment at this exclusion will not just be those who are excluded, but the much wider pool—that is why I number them in tens of thousands—who will not be able to enfranchise themselves because certain flats in their block are disregarded by the law since they fail the low rent test.

In effect, whole swathes of London will be disfranchised and whole armies of Tory voters will feel let down. Worse than that, as the years advance it will open up a two-tier market in London and the towns in the south, which rely so heavily on leasehold reform. Some properties will be enfranchised and will then perhaps convert to commonhold. They can be sold in perpetuity and their owners can raise money on them from building societies and can afford to invest in and improve their premises, to give them that new lick of paint, or put in those new rolled steel joists which are so necessary. Those that are enfranchised will be able to market at a premium; those that are disfranchised by this provision and its knock-on effect will be unable to do so. Their properties, as their leases dwindle in years, will become less saleable. The blight that was so apparent in my constituency 15 to 20 years ago before the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 began to motor will again be apparent in the centre of our capital city. It is that which will come back to haunt us.

The low rent provision is wrong because it is intellectually dishonest. A long lease is a long lease, a rental agreement is a rental agreement, and never the twain shall meet. They do not meet because of some reference to a rateable value or because of an arbitrary figure plucked out of the sky. They are two different animals and there is no cross-over point. That is the joy and clarity of English law. A leasehold of over 21 years has been held under English law to be equal in many aspects to a freehold. It was held in the 1967 Act to be the trigger point at which people could enfranchise. No one—not some people, but no one—in the capital city can be found who undertakes a 21-year rental agreement for which he is also prepared to pay a capital sum in advance.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North said, the provision addresses a problem which does not exist, but we know why it is in the Bill. It is there because it addresses a problem that does exist—the need for the Front Bench and the Government to do a balancing act betwen the restrictions demanded by certain interests and the full enfranchisement measure that is demanded by the people of London and those who live under the misery of leasehold law.

I end with a warning. There is an indication of which the party should be aware: the Labour party is slowly letting loose its old chains to the established interests that bound it to electoral disaster time after time. The block vote is going; trade union influence is going; clause IV is going. Yet the Government, after a radical decade, risk slipping back through this legislation into the arms of established interests rather than going forward with radical reform. For that reason and for the reasons which I have outlined I shall join my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North in pushing the amendment to a Division.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): That was an excellent speech by the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). I doubt whether I can follow its quality. He spoke so persuasively about the impact of the low-rent test on Conservative voters that I am slightly undecided about

[Mr. John Denham]

whether I wish to see success or failure in the Division Lobby. Perhaps it would be better if some of us from the Opposition Benches absented ourselves.

Obviously the House should do what is right and not what is to party advantage. What I heard in the excellent speeches of the three hon. Members who preceded me was hon. Members speaking genuinely in the interests of their constituents whom they have taken the time and trouble to meet and correspond with; they have studied the cases put in front of them and have realised that the low-rent test must go if the interests of their constituents are to be met. The Government should conclude from the comments already made that they can only emerge with credit if they listen to the voice of the House on the issue.

It is agreed across the Chamber, as it was in Committee, that to seek to extend a right such as leasehold enfranchisement is good and proper. We have debated whether the mechanism of commonhold is the better way of doing it, but it was agreed that the right should be extended.

It was also accepted in principle by both sides in Committee that if the right were to be extended, there would be some circumstances in which restrictions would have to be applied. There was no suggestion by either side in Committee that tenants should simply be able to confiscate their landlords' property, although we had debates about the appropriate valuation to be put on enfranchisement.

There was no disagreement about the principle that some limit on qualifying tenancies was necessary, although there was a debate on the number and the types of properties. It was accepted that some restrictions would be necessary to make enfranchisement workable and fair. But if the Government are to impose a restriction, it is essential that it is seen to be just, fair and easily understandable by those to whom it will apply.

We are talking about people's homes, in which they have invested thousands of pounds on their own behalf and been required to invest thousands on their landlord's behalf. They read press reports and the Government's earlier statements and expected and hoped to be able to free themselves from neglectful landlords. A leaseholder whose right to enfranchisement is to be restricted has a right to an assurance that those restrictions are fair, just and understandable.

The problem with the low rent test is that people will not regard it as fair, just or understandable. They will see it as an arbitrary measure which the Government introduced for no intellectually honest or good reason but which has enormous implications for their lives and futures as leaseholders and, as they regard themselves, the real owners of their property. They will find three entirely different bases for calculating low rent in the Bill, which apparently are arbitrarily set according to the date on which they took on their lease. Experts in housing law will be able to identify exactly why there is one test before 1963, another test after 1963 and another more recent test, but to any ordinary person those different tests will seem quite arbitrary. As the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said, the Bill is an opportunity not to reaffirm previous housing legislation but to establish a fairer basis for enfranchisement. That is what we should be doing.

I well remember our debates in Committee and the Lord Chancellor's arguments against a low rent test. I do not recall a convincing case being advanced that the low rent test would operate in the interests of people seeking the right of enfranchisement. I understand the argument hangs on the issue of needing a distinction between renting and genuine leasehold, where people are, to all intents and purposes and in their own minds, purchasing their own property.

Is there really any practical possibility of someone who thought that they were renting a property finding out that they have a right to enfranchisement and then demanding to exercise it? I simply do not believe that. We could search the streets of London and knock on the doors of leasehold properties but fail to find anyone who thought that they were renting property only to find that under this law they had the right to enfranchisement. I do not believe that that problem exists. Even if it did, it could exist only in a tiny number of cases. If there were some unfairness in those people getting a right to enfranchisement, the injustice that might be done would be nothing compared with the injustice that will be done to thousands of people by the low rent test.

I fear that the low rent test is included in the Bill as a result of the concerted lobbying which was widely reported outside the House, although it was not especially evident in Committee. We rarely heard the views of the landlords' lobby in Committee, but I believe that the low rent test is included as a result of lobbying by big interests against the interests of ordinary people who happen to be leaseholders. It is a crucial test of the willingness of the House to stand up to such a lobbying exercise, such backroom or corridor lobbying and influence peddling, and to stand up for the interests of leaseholders who want the right to enfranchisement.

I hope that before too long the House will remove the low rent test from the legislation.

9.30 pm

Mr. Waterson: My starting point is that the Bill is bold and far-sighted. It will benefit thousands of leaseholders not only in my constituency but throughout England and Wales. It is precisely because I take such an enthusiastic view of this aspect of the Government's legislative programme that I want as many people as possible to benefit from it.

I echo the two excellent and memorable speeches made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). I mean no disrespect to Opposition Members by paying particular attention to my right hon. and hon. Friends' remarks.

I strongly support the amendments that I and my hon. Friends have tabled. Like many colleagues who were members of the Committee, I was unconvinced by the justification for the low rent test, and I remain unconvinced. We have heard how pressure was put on the Government during the Committee to reconsider the problem, and I share the feeling of disappointment that we are still discussing this version of clause 7. Certainly, nothing has been said today or in Committee to convince me that we need a low rent test. There is no practical reason for it.

As we have heard, the test is not needed to distinguish between long and short leases. The test for that is the

number of years of the lease—if it is more than 21 years, it is by definition a long lease, and if it is fewer than 21, it is a short lease. The test is not needed to differentiate between premium long leases, which have a token ground rent, and long leases with a market rent. It is not needed because, simply, there are no properties with long leases and market rents.

I shall not weary the House by being the third or fourth hon. Member to quote the Lord Chancellor's now memorable report of November 1990, save to repeat that it underlines the argument, with which I agree, that the low rent test seems to be aiming at a non-existent problem.

The effect of the low rent test is to give freeholders—present and future—a simple means of circumnavigating the legislation. It is so easy. The proposed low rent threshold is so low, and there are numerous examples of ground rents being set by freeholders at just a few pounds above that level. We have heard some examples of that today.

What are the results? The freeholder wins in two ways. First, the leaseholder, having paid a premium for his lease, discovers that the smart freeholder has set the ground rent that little bit higher and that he is therefore disfranchised. We know that that will happen because history tells us so. We need only consider the leasehold houses in Hackney and Islington where the leaseholders cannot enfranchise under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 because the freeholder has set the ground rent just a couple of pounds higher than the official low rent level. That has been done deliberately to get around the Act. All that the low rent test will do is to produce anomalous results, especially in London. We have all had letters from leaseholders, especially in central London, who are deeply concerned about the effect of the test.

Even better from the freeholder's point of view is the fact that he can use the loophole to disenfranchise whole blocks at one go. He has only to apply a rent slightly above the low rent level in a small proportion of flats in a block and he has effectively made it impossible for the others to enfranchise. They will simply not be able to meet the two-thirds hurdle which is necessary to be able to enfranchise under the Bill. That is a wonderful loophole for a landlord. Having seen the extent to which landlords have been prepared to go to scupper the Bill in Parliament, who can doubt that they will seize on the low rent test as a simple way in which to get round the legislation?

Ideally, I should like the whole concept of a low rent test to go. It serves no practical purpose except to give landlords a way out. If for some reason it is left and we have to have a low rent test of some sort, we should at least make it a realistic test. For many leasehold properties, the low rent test is a factor of their rateable values. Surely it is wrong to pass new legislation that is based on historic and outdated rating levels when the rates themselves have already been abolished. There is deep concern that the low rent test will lead to the exclusion of genuine leasehold flats which have low rateable values which date back to 1973, but whose ground rents rose dramatically in the late 1980s as a result of the property boom.

The Bill gives us the opportunity to clear up that anachronism if the new clause is accepted. By linking the low rent test to current market levels, we shall have a system that satisfies the Government because it retains a low rent test and satisfies everyone else because it blocks the obvious loopholes. I very much hope that the Government will accept the amendments. I regret to say that if they do not, they are unlikely to enjoy my support in the Lobby this evening.

Mr. Raynsford: This has been a fascinating debate, because there has been unanimity among speakers of all parties so far. That unanimity should give a clear warning to the Government that they would be foolish to proceed on the basis of trying to get the low rent test incorporated in the Bill.

The case is strong, and it has been argued persuasively and forcefully by a number of hon. Members this evening. There is no need for the low rent test and if it is imposed, it will create serious anomalies. Those anomalies will be exploited by people who seek to obstruct leaseholders who would otherwise be entitled to enfranchise and will thus deny the opportunity of enfranchisement to a substantial number of leaseholders. The test would therefore effectively wreck the impact of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) put the argument forcefully and effectively when he said that a failure to get it right on this occasion would come back to haunt us. I took part in the discussions on the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. The Act was an attempt to tackle the problem of freeholders maltreating leaseholders and abusing their position. It was an attempt to rectify some of the problems. The warnings that we voiced then—that, because the legislation was not right, we should have to come back and deal with the matter again—were true. Such a warning is even more true this evening.

My first observation concerns the lack of any need for the low rent test. We have heard frequent references to the Lord Chancellor's Department's view in the consultation paper on commonhold. It would be an absurd anomaly if, were commonhold to come back to the House perhaps in the next Session or perhaps in the subsequent Session, we were to debate the issue simply because the Government had insisted and managed to obtain a majority in favour of the low rent test in this legislation, when, in the commonhold legislation, there was seen to be no need for it. The whole issue would have to be dealt with again, and there would be obvious anomalies.

The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association has provided valuable information through the indefatigable Joan South and others and assisted hon. Members to consider all the issues. The association makes it clear that it is not a problem and that it is a spectre which the Government have conjured up but have not been able to substantiate.

The Consumers Association, in its response, makes exactly the same point. In its survey of leaseholders throughout the country—we are not talking about a purely London problem; we are talking about a problem which affects more than 750,000 leaseholders throughout the country, including many constituencies outside London—it could not find one person in respect of whom the Government suspect that the anomaly might arise, who could be construed as a long leaseholder when in fact he or she was a tenant. It is a non-existent problem, and the Government should recognise that.

The anomalies that will be created have been referred to frequently. I do no more than quote one example involving a leaseholder in Hackney, London, who very persuasively writes:

"I own a long lease on a house in Hackney which I purchased in 1982 for £47,000. The lease has about 30 years to run. I paid £230 per annum ground rent and the rateable

[Mr. Raynsford]

value at the start of my lease was around £340 per annum. It is clear that my lease, like many others, has been deliberately manipulated to make me unenfranchiseable. Obviously, that odious qualification will be exploited by landlords to make flats unenfranchiseable."

That could not be put more effectively. Thousands of leaseholders in that position are already debarred.

As sure as can be, if the low rent test remains in the legislation, freeholders seeking to prevent the will of Parliament and to prevent their leaseholders from enfranchising will, in all future lettings, engineer ground rent figures to ensure that they are above the figure of £1,000 in London or £250 elsewhere, and thereby ensure that leaseholders are disfranchised.

The low rent test is a charter for the freeholder who seeks to frustrate the wishes of Parliament. It is a charter for the person who does not want to allow the Bill to proceed. It would be a disastrous mistake if we were to give comfort to the enemies of the Bill—people who have been seeking to frustrate it, people who represent vested interests, and people who represent the old privileges—if they were to achieve a victory by the back door when the argument has gone so forcefully against them.

The Government have failed entirely to produce any evidence to support their case that there is a need for the test. In Committee, on other issues we heard the Minister argue that it was necessary to produce evidence to justify amendments and changes that the Opposition sought. In the absence of convincing, solid evidence of a real problem —the Minister has so far failed to produce it, and I doubt whether he will do so tonight, but I shall listen attentively —it would be very foolish indeed to allow the low rent test to remain in the Bill and thereby create anomalies and the opportunity for people to frustrate the wishes of Parliament.

The case has been made overwhelmingly by many hon. Members. I sincerely hope that, at this late hour, the Minister will heed them and will respond positively and make it unnecessary for a Division to occur. If there is a Division, I sincerely hope that Conservative Members who, for whatever reason, were hesitant to support us in Committee, will not feel inhibited tonight and will vote in favour of getting rid of the low rent test. That would be a vote in favour of leasehold enfranchisement and in favour of people exercising their right.

We know that it is proper for people to have the right to control their own homes and not to depend on the interests of freeholders and landed interests who will seek to exploit their traditional ownership in order to frustrate the opportunities, wishes and aspirations of leaseholders.

Sir George Young: This has been a debate of the highest quality. The quality has been in no way diminished by the fact that all the arguments have been on one side.

I begin by referring to a point made by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) when he urged the Government to adopt the same attitude as they had adopted in earlier debates—to resist the freeholder case. There is a distinction between this debate and earlier ones, in that the new clauses and amendments which were tabled in the earlier ones sought to take rights away from those who will have rights granted to them under the Bill. The Government resisted that.

This debate is slightly different in that it seeks to add to the Bill additional rights for those who do not have them at present. It would be consistent for the Government to resist the arguments in the earlier debates and resist those which have been raised this evening, as I propose to do.

First, I commend the consistency of my hon. Friends. Having made their points, they voted as they propose to vote tomorrow: they will vote for Third Reading. It would be somewhat perverse for Opposition Members to vote today to abolish the low rent test and then vote tomorrow to abolish enfranchisement. That is wholly inconsistent but we have been told that tomorrow evening Labour Members plan to vote against Third Reading.

9.45 pm

Mr. Straw: Labour Members listen to the arguments on the merits. I give the Minister an absolute guarantee that, if he accepts the argument for that amendment—which comes from the Conservative as well as the Labour side —we will support the Bill on Third Reading. What will happen if the Minister does not accept the amendments remains to be seen.

Sir George Young: I am not quite sure if the hon. Gentleman realises what he said. In Standing Committee, Labour Members made it clear that they would support the Bill if it did not contain simply enfranchisement provisions. They voted against the Bill on Second Reading and in Committee—and I am sure that they plan to vote against it tomorrow—because it contains provisions for compulsory competitive tendering and the tenants' veto on housing management.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that his is prepared to trade the principal objections which his hon. Friends deployed hourly and daily in Committee if the Government concede the amendment. I see a look of gloom on some of his hon. Friends' faces. In Committee, they defended the past daily. As a result of one flippant intervention from the shadow Secretary of State, their principles are simply waived aside.

Mr. Straw: The intervention was far from flippant. I should like the Minister to address the merits of the case which have been powerfully put by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley and some of my hon. Friends. It is no good the Minister waffling on about what he fantasises are the possible decisions made by the Labour party to which we are party and he is not. He needs to get down to the merits of the case. What possible justification is there for ruling out a large number of tenants on the basis of the so-called low rent test?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I will address the merits of the argument shortly. He said that the Labour party's objection to our proposals on compulsive competitive tendering are negotiable. They are not principles at all; they are negotiable. He said that they will support the Bill on Third Reading if the Government concede the amendment. That is trading the objections of principle which his hon. Friends made in the Standing Committee. Labour Members must get their act together.

My hon. Friends the Members for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) made some moving speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington chided the Government for not being radical enough. If he had listened to the earlier debate, as I did, I am sure that he would agree that many

of our right hon. and hon. Friends think that we have embarked on a radical reform. It seems to be something of a paradox that an hour ago we were accused of betraying the freeholder and now we are accused of betraying the leaseholder. I shall address the merits of the case put by my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and others.

We debated the matter at some length in Committee and undertook to look again at the issues surrounding the test and to return to it on Report. Let me make it clear that it has been one of the most difficult decisions that we have had to take. We have consulted, discussed and debated the matter. We have seen hon. Members and representatives of leaseholders. We understand just how complex it is and that there are extremely strong arguments for retaining the test as well as for abolishing it. That said, I have to tell the House that the Government have decided that the low rent test should be retained in its current form. Let me explain to the House why we have reached that conclusion.

The comparison of the annual ground rent to the rateable value—or, in the case of pre-1963 leases, the letting value—is a simple test used to distinguish what are, in theory, renting tenancies from "ownership" tenancies. It appears in roughly the same form in several pieces of important landlord and tenant legislation—including the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, the precedent for the Bill, and the Rent Act 1977. It has had quite an impact on the residential property market over several decades and we should not therefore relinquish or alter it lightly.

We have already provided that the test for flats be applied to the ground rent and rateable or letting value during the first year of the lease, rather than the date of the claim, as a concession to bringing within the scope of the Bill leases with rent reveiw clauses. Many leases are subject to such clauses which have effect periodically, typically every five, 10 or 20 years. The reviews are often linked to an inflation index or similar provisions in an Act and are included to maintain the level of ground rent payments by periodic adjustment. However, rent review clauses vary in many ways and can produce vastly different results.

When the leases are first granted, the ground rent is low —less than two-thirds of the rateable or letting value. But a review will often push the ground rent up beyond the low rent threshold—something which most leaseholders cannot be expected to predict. With the old-style test which took account of the rent and rateable value on either a fixed date—March 1965 in the 1967 Act—or the first day of the term, some leaseholders would have found themselves unable to satisfy the low rent test—and unable to enfranchise. The new-style test is designed to help them.

We propose also to amend the Leasehold Reform Act to give leaseholders in houses the choice between the original low rent test and this new one for flats. For leases granted since 1 April 1990 when rental equivalent values were first employed, a different test applies.

The argument has been put several times that the requirement that a qualifying tenant be a long leaseholder is a sufficient test of ownership. That is not the case. Leases which are not at a low rent would fall within the rent and housing Acts unless the property has a rateable value in excess of the prescribed limits. These are by definition renting tenancies.

The Government believe that the low rent test provides an important distinction between the rental and the long lease market and marks the extent of the transfer of equity between landlord and tenant. It is important to enfranchise only those interests where the freeholder has given up all but a residual interest in the property. We do not wish to extend enfranchisement or the right to buy to the private rented sector and the low rent test is a means of achieving this. We know that there are long leases with rents of £5,000 or £10,000 a year, so we cannot rely on the long lease test alone.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) challenged me to see whether we had any evidence that there were such leases and I have in front of me a letter from one of the major estates in London, which says:

"We have well over 50 properties defined in statute as 'long' but where the rent is in excess of £5,000 pa and many of these are over £10,000 pa."

So there is a need for a distinction between leases and rented property.

Sir John Wheeler: As a baronet, my hon. Friend is generous to give way, but he is skating on thin ice. Not one Member on either side of the Chamber has spoken in support of the Government in this debate. Will he allow that when the debate goes to their Lordships' House, their Lordships may take the voice of this House as the authentic voice on the issue?

Sir George Young: It is not for me, albeit as a baronet, to guess what will happen at the other end of the Palace. In the preceding debate, there was unanimity on this side of the House on requiring leaseholders to pay far more than my right hon. Friend would like. Not one Conservative Member made the case that I am sure that my right hon. Friend would have wished. None the less, the Government resisted those arguments, and we had to endure some criticism for doing so. So my right hon. Friend cannot rely too much on the weight of opinion among Conservative Members. He may find that the argument works to his disadvantage in later debates.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Will my hon. Friend allow me to place it on record that the fact that a contrary voice was not heard was due to the certain knowledge that he would be robust on the subject?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, albeit at this late stage in the debate, for a voice in support of the case which the Government are deploying.

The low rent test ensures that long leases granted at a high rent, perhaps—in the case of houses—at a premium which reflected the non-enfranchiseable nature of the lease, or where the landlord continues to have a high financial interest in the block, cannot be enfranchised. There is evidence—I have deployed it—that there is some blurring of these lines which makes a division important, particularly in London where there is some overlap of ground rents of long leases and market rents.

Amendment No. 124 refers to "annual letting values". While I acknowledge their inclusion for pre-1963 leases in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and the Bill under discussion today, I dispute that they are the appropriate means to determine whether a lease is at a low rent or not.

The reason for their inclusion in 1967 was to take account of the delay in a rating revaluation after the second world war. This meant that after the war the incompatibility between genuine ground rents and any test based on pre-war rateable values was sufficient to justify the use of letting or rental values instead. As all residential

[Sir George Young]

rents were statutorily controlled at that time, there was a single market in rents which made the test effective and easy to apply.

That approach simply would not work today, with leases granted since the introduction of enfranchisement for houses and since the deregulation of rents in the letting market because of the wide gulf that exists between regulated rents and market rents. I acknowledge that in a few cases some landlords have been granting new leases on houses at high rents to avoid enfranchisement. But in those cases the price of the house and that paid for the lease should have reflected the status of the lease and the fact that it was not enfranchiseable.

The precedent for this Bill, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, has been on the statute book for 25 years and leaseholders should have known when purchasing their leases that they would not be able to enfranchise. I know that some may not have been aware of this, but we cannot legislate for that reason alone. Nor should we forget that these tenants are already outside the scope of the Leasehold Reform Act. This evening we are not taking away any rights that people already have.

Leases have been created and arrangements have been built around the existing framework. Different legislative regimes apply to high and low ground rents, although in different contexts to enfranchisement, and leases have been drafted in full knowledge of this. It would be wrong to move the goal posts now.

In the case of flats, it is far less likely that ground rents have been manipulated in any way. Enfranchisement for flats is a recent development—first announced to the House in July 1991. As I said earlier, different statutory limits apply for leases granted since April 1990, these being £1,000 in Greater London and £250 elsewhere.

I realise that the announcement that the Government have made will cause disappointment to many interests in the House. Nonetheless, we decided that there are valid arguments for retaining the low rent test in its present form and I invite the House to resist the new clause.

Mr. Pike: The Minister claimed to know how Labour Members would vote tomorrow. He was mistaken, because, even if he had been a fly on the wall at our meeting earlier, he would have found that we made no decision on our vote on Third Reading tomorrow——

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Housing and Urban Development Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Pike: It was our intention to see how we progressed today and during the debate on important parts of the Bill that we shall discuss before Third Reading tomorrow. I was disappointed at the Minister's response. Perhaps the reason why his voice is affected is that he has no confidence in the points that he is having to make. I do not believe that he believes the things he was telling us; he has been leaned on—whether by the Secretary of State or someone else, I do not know. I do not believe that he was convinced by the argument and the case that he made. I am convinced that he believes that what we have been arguing for is the right course and that what he has been saying weakens the objectives that the Government have been stating for the Bill.

In response to the intervention by the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), the Minister made the valid point that every contribution from both sides was solid in the view that this low rent test was wrong and should be either changed or abolished. The comparison that the Minister chose was false, and a red herring, because he referred to unanimity on the Conservative side on the previous clause. In this debate the unanimity has been across the floor of the House.

The arguments have been well made, but it is right to refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). He made two important points, which I believe Conservative Members need to take into account when they decide which way to vote in a couple of minutes.

The hon. Gentleman's first point was that if a Division had been pressed on this in Committee there would have been a majority opposed to the Government's view. Government Members chose not to press the Government on that occasion because of assurances that they would look again at the issue and come back, probably with a new proposal, at Report stage. Those hon. Members must be disappointed that the Government have failed them tonight and failed the people who have leasehold properties. Secondly, it is not just the individual who is affected by the low rent test; it can have an effect on the whole of a property because of the voting numbers necessary. The effect can therefore be extended to people who are not themselves directly disqualified by the test.

The Government have got it wrong and I hope that Conservative Members will vote with us on new clause 18 and stand by the people who want to enfranchise and get the opportunity that the Government claim to offer them —from which they will be barred unless we win new clause 18.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 294.

Division No. 146] **[10.04 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Boyes, Roland
Adams, Mrs Irene	Bradley, Keith
Ainger, Nick	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Allen, Graham	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Alton, David	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Burden, Richard
Armstrong, Hilary	Byers, Stephen
Ashby, David	Caborn, Richard
Austin-Walker, John	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Barnes, Harry	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Barron, Kevin	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Battle, John	Cann, Jamie
Bayley, Hugh	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Beckett, Margaret	Chisholm, Malcolm
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Clapham, Michael
Bell, Stuart	Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Clelland, David
Benton, Joe	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Bermingham, Gerald	Coffey, Ann
Berry, Dr. Roger	Cohen, Harry
Betts, Clive	Connarty, Michael
Blunkett, David	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Boateng, Paul	Corbett, Robin
Boyce, Jimmy	Corbyn, Jeremy

Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael

Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 4

PREMISES EXCLUDED FROM RIGHT

Amendment proposed: No. 21, in page 5, line 21, leave out '10' and insert '20'.—*[Mr. Fishburn.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Baldry: The Minister of State and I said in Committee that we would reflect further on the right threshold for commercial use, because clause 4(1) excludes from enfranchisement premises where more than 10 per cent. of the internal floor area is given over to commercial use.

We have considered the matter extremely carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has been a powerful advocate in favour of raising the threshold to 20 per cent. of the internal floor area. We have come to the conclusion that it should remain at 10 per cent. That threshold was chosen carefully, after extensive sampling and taking of expert advice.

There is great concern that our proposals for residential property should not spill over into the commercial market, as anything that undermined the generally satisfactory workings of that market would be unwelcome.

I am aware of the concerns of tenants residing in mixed-use property that will be excluded from enfranchisement. Many of them have argued for the 10 per cent. threshold to be increased. The business sector is, however, just as concerned that enfranchisement should not affect the commercial property market and commercial tenants are concerned about the implications of control by leaseholders who are inexperienced in the management of commercial property.

The commercial parts of a block are much more valuable than the residential space. Commercial space is typically worth 15 to 20 times as much as residential space, and if the threshold were raised, residential tenants might have to purchase property that was worth more than their own interest. In those circumstances, in many cases the participating tenants would not be able to afford to buy the freehold, and would be left with no benefit because they would not have the right to buy a new lease. They would be given the right without the remedy. We concluded that increasing the threshold, and thus the number of mixed-use blocks eligible for enfranchisement, would not help leaseholders and could harm many of them.

There are arguments on both sides, but we think that we have struck the right balance. We must remember that

leaseholders with leases that are not capable of enfranchisement will have the right to lease renewal under chapter II.

If experience shows that 10 per cent. threshold is causing problems, it can be dealt with using the reserve powers in clause 4(3), which allow the Secretary of State to specify a different percentage threshold later should the need arise, although we do not think that that is likely to be necessary.

I hope that I have reassured hon. Members that the threshold should remain at 10 per cent., and I invite my hon. Friend to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Fishburn: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 11

NOTICE BY QUALIFYING TENANTS OF CLAIM TO EXERCISE RIGHT

Amendment made:

No. 79, page 244, line 21, at end insert—

'1985 c. 71.	The Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985.	In section 6(3), In Schedule 2, paragraph 12.	"12,". —*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Schedule 3

THE INITIAL NOTICE: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made:

No. 66, in page 172, line 4, at end insert—

'Restrictions for purposes of s. 12(3) on tenant electing to become participating tenant during currency of claim

7A.—(1) Where a relevant notice of claim is given, a qualifying tenant of a flat may not subsequently make an election under section 12(3)—

(a) if he was prohibited from participating in the giving of the notice by virtue of paragraph 1, 2(1), 3(1) or 4(1) above; or

(b) at a time when he would be so prohibited from participating in the giving of a relevant notice of claim, if such a notice were to be given then.

(2) Where a relevant notice of claim is given, then except with the leave of the court, a qualifying tenant of a flat may not subsequently make an election under section 12(3) at a time when any proceedings are pending to enforce a right of re-entry or forfeiture terminating his lease of the flat.

(3) Leave shall only be granted under sub-paragraph (2) if the court is satisfied that the tenant does not wish to make such an election solely or mainly for the purpose of avoiding the consequences of the breach of the terms of his lease in respect of which proceedings are pending.

(4) If—

(a) leave is so granted, and

(b) the tenant makes such an election,

the tenant's lease shall be deemed for the purposes of the claim to be a subsisting lease despite the existence of those proceedings and any order made afterwards in those proceedings; and, if the claim is effective, the court in which those proceedings were brought may set aside or vary any such order to such extent and on such terms as appear to that court to be appropriate.

(5) References in this paragraph and paragraph 7B below to making an election under section 12(3) are references to making such an election to participate in the making of the claim in respect of which the relevant notice of claim is given.

Effect of tenant's election on certain notices given by landlord.

7B.—(1) This paragraph applies to a qualifying tenant of a flat who, following the giving of a relevant notice of claim, makes an election under section 12(3).

(2) Where in the case of any such tenant—

(a) a landlord's notice terminating the tenant's lease of the flat has been given or served as mentioned in paragraph 2(1) above (whether or not the notice has effect to terminate the lease), but

(b) that notice was not given or served more than four months before the date when the tenant makes his election under section 12(3),

the landlord's notice shall cease to have effect on that date.

(3) If—

(a) any such landlord's notice ceases to have effect by virtue of sub-paragraph (2) above, but

(b) the claim made in pursuance of the relevant notice of claim is not effective,

then paragraph 2(4) above shall apply to any landlord's notice terminating the tenant's lease of the flat which—

(i) is given under section 4 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 or served under paragraph 4(1) of Schedule 10 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and

(ii) is so given or served within one month after the expiry of the period of currency of that claim;

and paragraph 2(5) above shall apply accordingly.

(4) Paragraph 7A(5) above applies for the purposes of this paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

No. 67, in page 172, line 39, leave out from 'premises,' to end of line 41.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 12

THE PARTICIPATING TENANTS

Amendments made:

No. 41, in page 16, line 39 leave out 'subsection (4))' and insert 'paragraph 7A of Schedule 3)'.

No. 42, in page 16, leave out lines 43 to 45.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 18

REVERSIONER'S COUNTER-NOTICE

Amendment made:

No. 43, in page 25, line 15 [Clause 18], at end insert 'section 30 and'—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 20

TENANTS' CLAIM LIABLE TO BE DEFEATED WHERE LANDLORD INTENDS TO REDEVELOP

Amendments made:

No. 44, in page 27, line 29, leave out 'landlord' and insert 'reversioner'.

No. 45, in page 27, line 36, leave out 'landlord' and insert 'reversioner'.

No. 46, in page 27, line 37, leave out 'tenant' and insert 'nominee purchaser'.

No. 47, in page 28, line 5, leave out 'any' and insert 'the specified'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Schedule 4

VESTING ORDERS UNDER SECTIONS 21 AND 22

Amendment made:

No. 68, in page 175, line 14, at end insert—

'Supplemental

5.—(1) In the provisions specified in sub-paragraph (2) references to a binding contract being entered into in pursuance of the initial notice shall be read as including references to the making of a vesting order.

(2) Those provisions are—

(a) section 12(12);

(b) section 13(12) (except so far as it provides for the interpretation of references to the nominee purchaser);
(c) section 14(10);
(d) section 16(5) (b);
(e) section 25(1); and
(f) section 27(4) and (5).

(3) In section 34(2) (except so far as it provides for the interpretation of references to the proposed aquisition by the nominee purchaser) the reference to a contract entered into in pursuance of the initial notice shall be read as including a reference to a vesting order.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 23

APPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT LANDLORD CANNOT BE FOUND

Amendments made:

No. 48, in page 32, line 3, after 'person', insert 'or persons'.

No. 49, in page 32, line 26, leave out first 'any' and insert 'every'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Schedule 5

PURCHASE PRICE PAYABLE BY NOMINEE PURCHASER

Amendment made:

No. 69, in page 179, line 12, after 'the', insert 'minor'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

No. 70, in page 179, line 25, leave out from 'year),' to end of line 26 and insert

'of the remainder of the term of the minor intermediate lease as at the valuation date.'.

Clause 30

CONVEYANCE TO NOMINEE PURCHASER

Amendment made:

No. 50, in page 39, line 45, leave out 'subsection (7)' and insert 'subsections (7) and (8)'.—[*Mr. Baldry.*]

Schedule 6

CONVEYANCE TO NOMINEE PURCHASER ON ENFRANCHISEMENT

Amendment made:

No. 71, in page 182, line 45, leave out 'or' and insert 'and'.—[*Mr. Baldry.*]

Schedule 8

GRANT OF LEASES BACK TO FORMER FREEHOLDER

Amendment made:

No. 72, in page 186, line 31, leave out 'at' and insert 'immediately before'.—[*Mr. Baldry.*]

Clause 34

INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER I

Amendment made:

No. 51, in page 41, line 26, leave out '(2)'.—[*Mr. Baldry.*]

Clause 35

RIGHT OF QUALIFYING TENANT OF FLAT TO ACQUIRE NEW LEASE

Amendments made:

No. 52, in page 42, line 29, after '(3)', insert

'Subject to subsections (3A) and (3B) below,'.

No. 53, in page 42, line 36, at end insert—

'(3A) In its application in accordance with subsection (3) above section 5 shall have effect with the omission of subsection (5) of that section; but where apart from this subsection—

(a) a person would be regarded for the purposes of this Chapter as being (or as being among those constituting) the qualifying tenant of a flat, and
(b) that person would also be regarded for those purposes as being (or as being among those constituting) the qualifying tenant of each of two or more other flats contained in the building in which that flat is contained,

then, whether that person is tenant of the flats referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) under a single lease or otherwise, there shall be taken for those purposes to be no qualifying tenant of any of those flats.

(3B) Subsection (6) of section 5 shall have effect for the purposes of subsection (3A) above in its application to a body corporate as it has effect for the purposes of subsection (5) of that section in its application to a body corporate.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 41

LANDLORD'S COUNTER-NOTICE

Amendment made: No. 54, in page 46, line 34, leave out 'Where the landlord receives the tenant's notice, he' and insert 'The landlord'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Schedule 12

PREMIUM AND OTHER AMOUNTS PAYABLE BY TENANT ON GRANT OF NEW LEASE

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 201, line 35, leave out sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) and insert—

'(2) The marriage value is the difference between the following amounts, namely—

(a) the aggregate of—
  (i) the value of the interest of the tenant under his existing lease,
  (ii) the value of the landlord's interest in the tenant's flat prior to the grant of the new lease, and
  (iii) the values prior to the grant of that lease of all intermediate leasehold interests (if any); and
(b) the aggregate of—
  (i) the value of the interest to be held by the tenant under the new lease,
  (ii) the value of the landlord's interest in the tenant's flat once the new lease is granted, and
  (iii) the values of all intermediate leasehold interests (if any) once that lease is granted.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)—

(a) the value of any interest of the tenant shall be determined as at the valuation date;
(b) the value of any such interest of the landlord as is mentioned in paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) of that sub-paragraph is the amount determined for the purpose of paragraph 3(1)(a) or paragraph 3(1)(b) (as the case may be); and
(c) the value of any intermediate leasehold interest shall be determined in accordance with paragraph 8, and shall be so determined as at the valuation date.'.

No. 74, in page 203, line 9, after 'the', insert 'minor'.

No. 75, in page 203, line 22, at end insert 'as at the valuation date'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 61

PRICE PAYABLE BY TENANT ON ENFRANCHISEMENT BY VIRTUE OF SECTION 59

Amendment made: No. 55, in page 64, line 43, leave out from first 'of' to end of line and insert

'any one or more of the provisions of sections 1A and 1B'. —*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Schedule 14

SECTION 9 OF THE LEASEHOLD REFORM ACT 1967, AS AMENDED

Amendment made: No. 76, in page 209, line 52, leave out from first 'of' to 'above' in line 53 and insert

'any one or more of the provisions of sections 1A and 1B'. —*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 62

ESTATE MANAGEMENT SCHEMES

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 65, line 11, leave out from first 'of' to 'above)' in line 12 and insert

'any one or more of the provisions of sections 1A and 1B of that Act (as inserted by sections 59 and (Tenancies terminable after death or marriage'.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 72

REQUIREMENT RELATING TO INFORMATION ETC. HELD BY SUPERIOR LANDLORD

Amendment made: No. 57, in page 76, line 29, leave out from '(c)' to 'or' in line 30 and insert

'if a date is specified in the notice under subsection (3)(d) of that section, either approve the date'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 80

JURISDICTION OF LEASEHOLD VALUATION TRIBUNALS

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 83, leave out lines 22 and 23.

No. 59, in page 83, line 27, at end insert—

'(aa) the terms of any lease which is to be granted in accordance with section 32 and Schedule 8;'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 82

AGREEMENT INCLUDING OR MODIFYING RIGHTS OF TENANT UNDER CHAPTERS I AND II

Amendment made: No. 60, in page 86, line 42, at end insert—

'and section 52(5) shall apply in relation to the lease as it applies in relation to a lease granted under section 52.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 86

POWER TO PRESCRIBE PROCEDURE UNDER CHAPTERS I AND II

Amendment made: No. 61, in page 90, line 7, after 'claim' insert

'made by the giving of a notice under section 38'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 89

GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF PART I

Amendment made: No. 62, in page 91, line 39, leave out from 'floor' to end of line 44 and insert—

'(a) which forms part of a building and

(b) which is constructed or adapted for use for the purposes of a dwelling, and

(c) either the whole or a material part of which lies above or below some other part of the building;'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

New clause 16

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

. After section 22 of the 1987 Act there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Management agreements with housing co-operatives.*

22A.—(1) In this section 'housing co-operative' has the meaning given in subsection (1) of section 22 except that the reference in that subsection to the Secretary of State's approval shall be construed as a reference to his approval in relation to the purposes of this section.

(2) On an application by a housing co-operative a local authority shall make an agreement with them for the performance by that housing co-operative, on such terms as may be provided in the agreement, of the local authority's functions under section 17(1) relating to the management of houses which are subject to the agreement.

(3) Before making such an agreement the local authority shall satisfy themselves that the housing co-operative—

(a) have the approval of the Secretary of State;

(b) are able to perform the functions competently and efficiently;

(c) are representative of the tenants of the houses.

(4) Where the local authority refuse to enter into an agreement on the grounds that the housing co-operative do not satisfy paragraph (b) or (c) of subsection (3), the housing co-operative may appeal to the Secretary of State who may confirm or reverse the decision of the local authority.

(5) Where the Secretary of State reverses the decision of the local authority, the authority and the housing co-operative shall make the agreement.

(6) Where the local authority and the housing co-operative are unable to agree on the terms of the agreement, the housing co-operative may appeal to the Secretary of State who may determine the terms of the agreement.

(7) An agreement to which this section applies shall be made only with the approval of the Secretary of State, which may be given either generally or to any local authority or description of local authority or in any particular case, and may be given unconditionally or subject to any conditions.".'. —*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 110 to 112.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: New clause 16 gives tenants who form themselves into a housing co-operative the right to manage their homes. It is an important part of our proposal under the tenants charter to strengthen the powers of individual tenants and involve them in the management of their homes. We believe that it will fundamentally improve the control which tenants have over their houses if they are given the right to manage.

There are a number of requirements in the new clause which offer important protection for existing tenants.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

First, the way in which the houses are managed is very important to the tenants of those houses, and we need to be certain that a co-operative taking over the housing management function is competent to do the task that it sets out to do. There is no point in handing over management to a group of tenants whose interests will have moved on to other matters in six months' time.

Secondly, the co-operative needs to be efficient. While it is our desire to give more control to tenants, if their costs are twice the normal management costs, tenants will suffer. Consequently, there is a need to maintain efficiency.

Finally—this is particularly important in view of the fact that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) gave me notice of his concern—the local authority needs to be satisfied that the co-operative is representative of the tenants in that area and of that group. Again, such protection for tenants is common sense.

Amendment No. 110 seeks to amend section 17(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, which provides that the general management of houses held for housing purposes by local authorities shall be vested in and exercised by the authorities. This removes any possible impediment to the powers of a local authority to contract out its housing functions under section 17.

Amendment No. 111 is consequential and amendment No. 112 is the formal repeal in schedule 21.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I am grateful to the Minister for answering my concerns, of which I gave him notice. I am not sure that what he said relates to what is on the face of the new clause. He said that this clause was about giving tenants the right to form themselves into housing co-ops with the right to manage their own homes. What the new clause says is that, if the housing co-op applies to take over the management, regulation and control of local authority housing stock, the local authority shall then make an agreement with that housing co-op, with certain protection being built in, in terms of the ability of the housing co-op to carry out the functions which it has taken over and the fact that that housing co-op should be representative of the tenants of the houses.

As I understand it, if an agreement on this issue cannot be reached between the housing co-op and the local authority, the Secretary of State has powers to intervene and to force an agreement on terms which he thinks fit. In other words, the Secretary of State will be the ultimate arbiter of the terms of the agreement.

My main concern relates to the expression "housing co-operative" as it is used in the new clause. It says:

"'housing co-operative' has the meaning given in subsection (1) of section 22"

of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. In that section the housing co-op is described as

"a society, company or body of trustees for the time being approved by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section".

That definition leaves open the interpretation that the housing co-operative could exist already and may not have been formed for the tenants in that area. It leaves open the possibility that where there is a housing co-operative in one area, under the new clause it would be entitled to try to take over houses in an adjoining area which at that time belonged to the local authority.

10.30 pm

When the new clause says that the local authority must satisfy itself that the housing co-operative is

"representative of the tenants of the houses",

does that mean the tenants of the houses which the housing co-operative already has, or the tenants of the houses which it may wish to take over in an adjoining area? I hope that it is the latter. Even if it is, how is the local authority to satisfy itself that the housing co-operative is respresentative of those tenants whom it has taken over? As is made clear in the new clause, it is the housing co-operative which initiates the takeover process, not the tenants themselves.

The Minister should give us the assurance that when the process is set in train there will be consultation with the tenants individually and collectively and that before any takeover is allowed by a housing co-operative from an adjoining area or from within the area, there will have to be a ballot of the tenants affected, with a clear majority in favour of such a change. As I read it, there is nothing in new clause 16 which allows for consultation with tenants individually or collectively or for a ballot to ensure that a majority of tenants are in favour of such a change.

On the basis that it should be for the tenants to decide, not for the Secretary of State for Scotland, for a local authority or for a putative housing co-operative, the new clause would be a retrograde step for people in Scotland.

Given the serious position of homeless people, particularly in Scotland where the homeless figures are rising alarmingly, for the Scottish Office Minister to table new clauses which would take more houses away from local authorities, the only group in Scotland with a statutory requirement to house the homeless, does not seem to be a wise step. Rather than trying to weaken further the housing activities of local authorities, the Secretary of State should be presenting proposals for investment in local authority housing and for the provision of more finance to local authorities to enable them to meet the statutory requirements which he places upon them.

I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify the loose wording of new clause 16 and make it clear that only tenants living within a local authority area will have the right to form a housing co-operative such as is referred to. Equally, he should make it clear that before that happens, tenants will be consulted individually and collectively and that tenants will have the right to a ballot whose result will be binding.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can give the assurance which the hon. Gentleman seeks. In this context we are discussing management co-operatives. The concern of the hon. Gentleman seems to relate to completely different legislation about voluntary disposals. He will recall debating that across the Floor of the House in bygone years. Very strict safeguards are written in for voluntary disposals. The new clause has nothing to do with that.

As to the wording, I am reassured by the Scottish Office lawyers that the statement that

"the local authority shall satisfy themselves that the housing co-operative . . . are representative of the tenants of the houses"

means that it must be the tenants in the area concerned; it cannot be an outside body coming in. I am informed that it is clear on the face of the Bill and there is no room for dubiety on that point. If the hon. Member wishes, I shall be glad to send him the safeguards about voluntary disposals from other legislation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 8

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

'( )—For section 27 of the 1985 Act (management agreements) there shall be substituted the following section—

"27.—(1) Subject to the provisions of section 27A, a local housing authority may agree that another person shall exercise as agent of the authority in relation to—

(a) such of the authority's houses as are specified in the agreement, and

(b) any other land so specified which is held for a related purpose

such of the authority's management functions as are so specified.

(2) In this Act 'management agreement' and 'manager', in relation to such an agreement, means an agreement under this section and the person with whom the agreement is made.

(3) A management agreement shall set out the terms on which the authority's functions are exercisable by the manager.

(4) A management agreement may, where the manager is a body or association, provide that the manager's functions under the agreement may be performed by a committee or sub-committee, or by an officer, of the body or association.

(5) References in this section to the management functions of a local housing authority in relation to houses or land include—

(a) functions conferred by a statutory provision, and

(b) the powers and duties of the authority as holder of an estate or interest in the houses or land in question.".'.—*[Mr. Battle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time

Mr. Battle: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following: New clause 9—*Consultation required before management can be entered into*—

'( )—For section 27A of the 1985 Act (Consultation required before management agreement can be approved) there shall be substituted the following sections—

"27A. (1) A local housing authority who propose to enter into a management agreement shall serve notice in writing on the tenant of each house to which the proposal relates informing him of—

(a) such details of their proposal as the authority consider appropriate, but including the identity of the person who is to be the manager under the agreement and the standards of service proposed to be required by the agreement

(b) the likely consequences of the agreement for the tenant, and

(c) the effect of the provisions of this section,

and informing him that he may, within such reasonable period as may be specified in the notice, make representations to the authority.

(2) The authority shall consider any representations made to them within that period and shall serve a further written notice on the tenant informing him—

(a) of any significant changes in their proposal, and

(b) that he may within such period as is specified (which must be at least 28 days after the service of the notice) communicate to the authority his objection to the proposal,

and informing him of the effect of subsection (3) (approval to be withheld if majority of tenants are opposed).

(3) The authority shall not enter into the management agreement if it appears to them that a majority of the tenants of the houses to which the agreement relates do not wish the proposal to proceed.

(4) In the case of secure tenants the provisions of this section apply in place of the provisions of section 105 (consultation on matters of housing management) in relation to the making of a management agreement.".'.

Amendment No. 115, in clause 115, leave out lines 15 to 43.

Amendment No. 115, in clause 116, line 44, leave out from beginning to end of line 5 on page 117.

Amendment No. 116, line 13, at end insert

'and shall not enter into any agreement that has not received majority support of those tenants who have been consulted.'.

Mr. Battle: We now move to part II of the Bill, which deals with public tenancies and local authority housing. It is ironic that under part I the Government argued for giving tenants rights, but tonight they have drawn back from that, despite an assurance that was given in Committee, and have suggested that rather more was on offer at first sight than has proved to be the case.

Clauses 115 and 116, which originally were clauses 113 to 115, pave the way for the compulsory competitive tendering of housing management and remove tenants' rights to be consulted and their veto over the contracting out of the management of their homes. Under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, tenants have the right to be consulted on all matters reflecting housing management, but the Bill removes that right in order to extend CCT. It seems that the only purpose of CCT is to remove tenants' rights.

Under section 27 and 27A of the Housing Act, a local authority may contract out any of its housing management functions only after consulting tenants and obtaining the Secretary of State's consent. Consent shall not be given if it appears that the majority of tenants are opposed. The Bill gives the Secretary of State powers to make regulations delegating arrangements for approving management agreements to local authorities and proposes to remove the requirement that a management agreement cannot be approved if a majority of tenants oppose it. We oppose that diminution in hard-won tenants' rights, because we believe that tenants should be given that primary right. We hope that the Government will not remove those passages from the Bill.

Interestingly, the rubric of clause 115 says "Management agreements" and the rubric to clause 116 says

"Consultation with respect to management agreements".

I argue that the rubric should read, "rights with respect to management agreements", to enshrine tenants' rights in law. I gather that more than 100 tenants' organisations responded to the Government's consultation paper, "Competing for Quality", and all opposed the removal of their primary right to have a say in what happens to their housing management. Tenants and their organisations are clear that their rights are being taken away by the abolition of the provision for consultation that was enshrined in the 1985 Act. Surely, as users of local authority housing management services, tenants should be the final arbiters of whether CCT should benefit them. It should be up to them to take the decision about who manages their homes, because such decisions are no less important than decisions on ownership.

New clause 8 is intended completely to replace clause 115. It will allow a local authority to enter into a management agreement with some other body to manage its housing stock after consultation with tenants, individually and collectively, provided that the majority of

[Mr. Battle]

tenants affected are not opposed. That is intended to replace current provisions, under which the Secretary of State must give his consent to each agreement. Under the Bill, the Secretary of State may give a general consent, but the stipulation that a majority of tenants should not be opposed is effectively removed. We want to put the power back where it belongs—at local level—rather than hand more to the Secretary of State.

New clause 9 would require consultation to take place before a management agreement could be entered into. It would replace completely the existing clause 116 in order to reinstate the requirement that tenants are consulted individually on any proposed management agreement and the requirement that the agreement may not be entered into if a majority of tenants are opposed to it. It would also require the local authority to notify tenants of the identity of the proposed manager and of the terms of the agreement, a requirement which is in the existing legislation but which is to be deleted by clause 116.

We hope that the Government will respect tenants' rights. We believe that the tenants' right under the Housing Act 1985 to be consulted and to be able to veto the extension of compulsory competitive tendering for their housing management should be fundamental. We are opposed to its removal because nothing is more important to tenants than the management of their homes.

The process should be tenant-led and tenant-driven. The tenants should be involved from the outset instead of the process being Secretary of State-led. The provisions run counter to its being tenant-led and tenant-driven and they undercut tenants' rights. Under the present clauses, tenants will not necessarily have the final say in who manages their homes.

It is worth pointing out that the National Housing Forum, which brings together all the key organisations involved in promoting access to decent homes for all, said:

"The Forum is deeply concerned that the Housing and Urban Development Bill contains clauses which will remove existing tenants' rights to veto the introduction of CCT to the management of their homes. It feels that tenants should be able to decide if CCT is the best option for their housing."

The National Tenants and Residents Federation, severally and individually through its member organisations, has submitted numerous petitions to the House to beg the Government to leave their primary right to a veto in statute.

One petition states:

"The Humble Petition of local authority tenants of councils in England and Wales Sheweth That Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, part of the original Tenants Charter of the Housing Act 1980, gives a most important right to council tenants in England and Wales in that it obliges their landlord authority to consult them on matters of housing management. The right of tenants to be consulted and to have their views taken into account when any subsequent decision is made is the foundation for tenant participation in housing management.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House: Will instruct the Government to make no amendment to reduce tenant's rights under section 105, Housing Act 1985 . . . and to therefore strike out"

what then was

"Clause 114".

The new clause would satisfy that petition. I hope that the Government will take note of it and of the fact that more than 5,000 tenants, representing tenants' organisations, petitioned the House on 3 December to let hon. Members know exactly what they thought of proposals to reduce tenants' rights to consultation. National tenants' organisations and the National Tenants and Residents Federation have organised petitioning of the House to say that they wanted to retain that primary right.

The new clause would reinstate the right and would interpret the Government's intentions more positively. The Government offer hollow talk of the right to manage, but, in legislation, they remove rather than enhance tenants' rights. The Bill flies in the face of sentiments expressed in the tenants charter because, in practice, the Government are undermining tenants' rights.

Tenants' rights should be extended, not withdrawn. Tenants should have the final say in who manages their homes. If they are dissatisfied with the service, they should be collectively free to choose other social landlords—not only private companies—to provide an alternative.

If they are satisfied with the current service, they should be spared the costly process of tendering. In other words, any trigger for tendering should be in the hands of tenants and not in those of the Government or the Secretary of State. I hope that the Minister will accept the new clause.

10.45 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I appreciate that Ministers have fought hard for an excellent Bill and have achieved a great deal against mighty odds. I congratulate them on what has been achieved, although the Bill does not go so far as some of us would wish.

I hope that the implications of the new clause will be considered carefully; we do not want it to distort what is already not a particularly level playing field. In my constituency there are a number of retirement leaseholders of properties built by McCarthy and Stone, a company of which hon. Members may have heard. These leaseholders do not have the right of consultation. Indeed, they have no rights when it comes to deciding who will manage their properties. The management company that is determined by the property developer is a subsidiary of that company.

Council tenants have the right to decide and the right also of full consultation, while retired people—innocent people who, in my view, have been taken in to some degree by private developers—do not have the right to decide. Instead, they have to accept a management company that is owned by the developer.

Tenants of council properties ar being given more and more rights, but someone who buys a retirement leasehold flat has to sign a document that states that, if he sells the property, 1 per cent. of the proceeds will be returned to the developer. The development companies have fought hard to stop the rights of retirement leaseholders being extended. They have opposed the proposal that the leaseholders should have the right to enfranchise their leaseholds, which is something for which Ministers have fought hard.

If the new clause is to be accepted, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear much in mind the persecution of retired, elderly people who are buying properties from companies such as McCarthy and Stone and who are deprived of the right to decide which company will manage their property. They are instead instructed to take on a company that is a subsidiary of the development company. The terms that are set out in their leases can be described only as oppressive.

I hope that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who introduced the new clause so fairly and so well, will accept that there must be a level playing field. It cannot be right if one group has many justifiable rights while others have hardly any rights.

If my hon. Friend the Minister is prepared to accept the new clause, or even if he is about to say that he will consider it carefully, I hope that he will give me the simple assurance that he will examine the deprivation of rights and entitlements that is suffered by a substantial group of retired and elderly people who seem to have no one to fight for them. They seem to have been prevented from securing a fair deal. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that he will try to ensure that there will be a level playing field and that private leaseholders will be able to obtain some rights that compare with the justifiable rights of council tenants to which the hon. Member for Leeds, West referred.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will go so far as to say that he will be pleased to meet two or three representatives from developments such as Homecove house and Homeground house at Southend, where residents have fought hard to establish the rights—not great rights or privileges—that are available to every householder or tenant in other properties. If my hon. Friend is prepared to give such an assurance, there is no reason why he should not look upon the new clause with some favour.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will work hard to ensure that there is a level playing field and that one group does not have all the rights while others are persecuted, deprived and exploited.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It is encouraging to see the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) point so effectively to the huge hole in the middle of the Government's legislation. Of course, the Bill is not really about tenants' rights, and that is the sad aspect. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)—I gladly support his new clause—made the case for improving tenants' rights, inasmuch as the Government have gone down that road, but the real hollowness of the legislation is shown by the hon. Member for Southend, East.

Many of my hon. Friends and I have argued for years that the crucial issue is the management of rented property, regardless of to whom it belongs. If one has a bad landlord, it does not matter whether it is public, private or charity, one deserves the right to get out of its clutches. I have said on many occasions that there is nothing worse than having the power to put a private landlord in prison but still remain his tenant when he comes out of prison. That is ludicrous and wrong; it puts the tenant in an impossible position.

If the Government were seriously addressing tenants' rights, the Bill would include a provision to extend to tenants in all sectors the right to change their landlord. Council tenants, housing association tenants and private sector tenants should have the right to change their landlord. It is true that there have to be different rules for each sector and that there have to be different circumstances for each, but each case should be driven by the tenants. The tragedy and the hollowness of the Bill is that it is driven by the Secretary of State.

The other aspect of the Bill that is so offensive and which the new clause addresses is that, to rub salt into the wound, tenants have to pay for a process that they themselves might not wish to go through. They might be perfectly happy with their present council landlord. They might feel that it is doing a very good job. The landlord might be a Conservative council, a Labour council, or any variation in between. The tenants might be perfectly happy with what they have and might not wish to change it. As a result of the legislation, unless the new clauses are accepted, tenants will be obliged to go through a system for which they will have to pay out of their rent. That is grossly unfair. It has nothing to do with tenants' rights; it is all to do with punishing council tenants.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), in a rather more surreptitious way than his predecessors adopted, is saying, "This is the way we get rid of council housing." I have always understood the Conservative party's argument, which is, "We want councils no longer to be housing managers." It is a silly argument and it is wrong in a variety of ways, but I understand it. The point is that choice should be with tenants, not with the Government, not even with the council or with anybody else.

Before the previous election, the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Ridley as he now is, was open enough to say, "I want to put an end to council housing." He was very specific about that. His aim was very explicitly stated, and it was put into practice by many Conservative councils who thought that they would try to sell off council housing. The hon. Member for Acton has moved back on that. He is recorded as saying, "Council housing will continue for many years."

The hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the early stages of the first Margaret Thatcher Government in the early 1980s. I remember when the body of the baronet and his bike were found washed up on a beach with various Tory knives sticking out of his back, with the fingerprints of Lady Macbeth of Finchley all over them. They were there because the hon. Gentleman was pursuing policies at that time in the Department of the Environment which were not regarded as in keeping with the Thatcherite policies of the time.

The wheel has moved a semicircle, and the Minister is now trying to back off from what Lord Ridley was doing, because, more than most, he recognises that it would be a disaster to get rid of council housing without replacing it. A policy of giving tenants the right to buy would have been brilliant if it had been matched by a duty to replace. One simply cannot get rid of a million houses without creating a crisis. That was one right which the Government gave.

The Government still want to get rid of council housing, but by the rather more circuitous route of putting it out to tender, in the hope that tenants will find that private management is better. In some cases, tenants will find that private management is better, although in some cases it will be worse. That is the problem.

To make tenants choose and make them pay for having the choice presented to them when they may be perfectly satisfied is not the way to recognise tenants' rights. It is also profoundly dangerous. I like new clause 9 because it will ensure that tenants are properly informed.

The Minister is wise after the event. Perhaps he knew at the time the danger that the Government were getting into when they allowed tenants the right to buy in blocks of flats that needed major repairs. We now have the horrendous scene about which the Labour party warned the Government for many years. If we had pepper potting, as it is called, in council blocks that needed a lot of money

[Mr. Clive Soley]

spent on them, tenants who bought flats would face horrendous bills. That is precisely what happened in Labour and Tory boroughs and elsewhere.

The only way out of the trap is to allow local authorities to buy back. The hon. Members for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), who are looking quizzically at each other, should feel more guilty about the matter than anyone else because the policies in Wandsworth aggravated the housing problem in that area.

If we are talking seriously about tenants' rights—as we should be—we should at the very least support the new clauses. We need to go much further. We need to say that the quality of the management of one's home matters more than almost anything else. Rent levels, tenants' right and quality of management are what should drive any rented policy. Nothing else should matter. I am not fussed about ownership.

If tenants have a bad landlord, they must get shot of him, no matter who it is. If tenants have a good landlord, they do not want the hassle and expense of management of their housing going to tender and then to some other organisation which they do not especially want. Tenants may not want any change but they must go through the system because they have no choice. Tenants must put their hands in their pockets and pay their money for something which they do not want and which might end up being a lot worse. The local authority must then accept the change if the new landlord puts in the lowest tender and meets certain other criteria. That is totally unacceptable because the tenant might not want it that way.

We are not talking about tenants' rights: we are talking about another attempt to push council tenants out of council control without having any clear policy or strategy other than a slight reversal of the recommendations and policy which were put forward so clearly and powerfully —although I strongly disagree with them—by Lord Ridley. Lord Ridley was clear in what he wanted to achieve. The Minister is still not clear. He is saying that he wants council housing to continue, but he is putting enough blocks on the possibility of making it work effectively to push it out of that sector. If he were pushing tenants into better management and lower rents, I would say that it was terrific, but he is not.

The tenants in the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Ealing, Acton should have had a choice of a housing manager who did not put up their rents by £30 per week. The Conservative council in Ealing put up rents by £30 per week. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the Minister muttering from a sedentary position that it was because of a Labour party policy. It was not a Labour party policy. It was a clear and determined effort by the Conservative council. No other council in the country found it necessary to increase rents by that amount.

Sir George Young *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I shall give way shortly. The reason why Ealing council did it that way was because it wanted to put the burden on tenants when it could have done what most local authorities did, which was spread the burden.

Sir George Young *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I shall give way. I simply want to ensure that the Minister makes the right intervention. I am looking forward to this and I want to get it wound up suitably.

The issue for Ealing council was to spread the burden in such a way that the tenants had to take most of the burden, instead of other people. Hon. Members should remember that the reason why rents increased around the country generally was because of the Government's directive in terms of the other subsidy given to councils.

Sir George Young: I am afraid that this has very little to do with the new clause, but the hon. Gentleman has pushed his luck. If he reads the district auditor's report on Ealing, he will find that rents went up in Ealing because of the creative accountancy of a Labour administration that borrowed, knowing perfectly well that the debts would not have to be repaid until after the borough elections. It is there in black and white in the district auditor's report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have heard enough about Ealing.

Mr. Soley: I respect what you are saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but Ealing is relevant to tenants' rights. To some extent, tenants have the right to determine rents. Problems arise if a council deliberately puts up rents. The audit was irrelevant as the decision was taken to put all the burden on to the tenants and not on to the ratepayers. The increase came from the Government.

11 pm

All good councils and housing associations discuss rent increases with their tenants. Under the new clause, tenants would lose that influence over a new competitive tenderer. A competitive tenderer may take over in Ealing and put up rents again with minimal consultation. Whether we are talking about a Conservative council such as Ealing or a company that takes over the properties after putting in a low bid, the tenants' rights are lost. That is why all the tenants' organisations have written to hon. Members on both sides of the House pointing out that tenants were losing their rights. That should not be happening.

What the Minister knows in his heart is necessary, but what, because of his party's ideological position, he cannot deliver, is a proper reform that gives tenants in the private sector, the public sector, housing associations and charitable groups the right to get rid of a bad landlord. We need nothing more.

Mr. Denham: I thought that the speech of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) was important. It was rather surprising to hear about problems in the private sector due to changes of landlord in the context of the new clause, but the hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to say that the principle should be extended. I hope that the Minister was not sitting on the Front Bench wondering why we were talking about McCarthy and Stone properties when we should be talking about council tenants. There may be some lessons to be learned from what has happened in that part of the private sector, in the plans that the Minister appears to have, according to recent newspaper articles.

If in future private building companies will be able to bid for Housing Corporation funds to undertake the development of social housing, it is likely that the situation in respect of retirement properties for private sector tenants will affect ordinary families who rent properties built by private sector companies.

The *Financial Times* tells us that the Minister is being pushed by groups of London Tory Members. I hope that any move in that direction is backed from the start with an absolute cast-iron guarantee that any tenants of properties created in that manner have the right to choose their landlords from the outset. If they do not, the imbalance between what is now proposed for council tenants and those in the private sector or the housing association movement will become even more stark.

We have heard some comments about the strategic issues, but we should rehearse the reasons why tenants believe that they should have the right to veto any change in management. I am sure that we will hear from the Minister, as we did in Committee, about all the different stages of consultation in which tenants will have an opportunity to contribute to the CCT process, but the Government must accept that whatever the involvement in consultation, it is no substitute for a say in the final decision as to who gets the contract to manage their homes. That is not an ideological position. It comes from the experience of tenants and the way in which they see their properties being managed. Fundamentally, it comes down to one of the great problems in competitive tendering.

It is possible to write into a specification physical and specific items that can be measured. But aspects of management or of public service such as the attitude, outlook, manner and caring nature of staff are impossible to include in a written specification with any degree of certainty about what will be produced.

When tenants look at the management of their estates, they can reasonably specify the time that it should take to have a repair done and the efficiency with which it is done and that it should be done to the tenant's satisfaction. They can check whether that has been achieved. They can state that there must be a local housing office and specify its opening hours and that it must run an appointments system. Standards can be set and monitored for ground maintenance. The physical and specific elements of a competitive tendering contract can be written down.

However, it is not possible satisfactorily to write into a specification for a tender for housing management, for example, how housing officers resolve disputes between neighbours and the extent to which they show care and sensitivity in bringing together neighbours with a variety of conflicts to resolve disputes with the least pain to each party. It is not possible to specify matters such as whether staff take the time to listen to elderly or inarticulate people who take some time to describe their problem.

Tenants need to know not just the efficiency with which rent arrears are chased but the sensitivity with which debt problems and financial difficulties will be understood and worked through. Tenants should be supported so that the local authority receives its rent but the tenants' financial difficulties are not exacerbated by being forced to go to private moneylenders or find other ways of raising the money.

Those aspects of the quality of local authority management or any housing management are likely to be as important to tenants as the physical and specific matters which can easily be written down. It will be on non-specific matters that tenants will want to have the final say.

As the Bill is drafted at present, not only will tenants not have a right of veto but they will not know who is likely to take over the running of their homes. They may know who is competing for the contract, but they will certainly not have a veto on who takes over. At best, the only information that the tenants will have towards the closing stage of the tendering process will be the physical and specific parts of the contract specification and the price. They will not be able to check out the management style and human approach of those who will be responsible day to day for the quality of the management of their homes. That is why tenants throughout Britain are so angry about what the Government are doing.

There are great strengths in public sector management in specifying performance levels and creating a division between those who are responsible for specifying the quality of service that should be provided and those who provide it. That is why many of the better-run authorities were introducing such specifications for the in-house management of their local housing offices and housing management services, well before CCT appeared on the agenda. It is an excellent way of telling tenants what the council proposes to achieve.

It is insupportable that the management should be changed to a different organisation or new company without allowing the tenants to veto the choice of organisation, if they are not happy about it. The House knows that there is only one reason why the Government have chopped the tenants' veto out of the Bill. It is because they believe that such a veto would be a disincentive to competition from the private sector. There is no democratic basis for removing the veto. There is no argument of good housing management.

The Government have simply been told by private sector management companies that they would not be interested in putting in bids if they felt that the tenants would have the opportunity to reject them if they did not like the service that was on offer. That may be a disadvantage to the ideologically motivated Conservative Members who are determined to drive private sector management into public sector housing, but I do not believe that it is any basis for overruling straightforward democratic rights for council tenants in the way the Government propose, and I hope that tonight the rights can be restored by acceptance of the new clause.

Sir George Young: This has been a fascinating debate with a substantial number of misunderstandings littering it. One misunderstanding which the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned was that somehow Baroness Thatcher and I did not get on. We got on very well indeed. We got on so well that she put me in her Administration not once, but twice—an honour not extended to many other people.

The other misunderstanding was that Labour Members do not seem to understand what the shadow Secretary of State is up to. A few moments ago we heard that he was prepared to trade in their objections to the tenants' veto if we would simply abolish the low rent test. That is exactly what he said. While we had all these objections to compulsory competitive tendering, the hon. Member for Blackburn wrote an article in *Tribune* in which he said:

"The wide acceptance between contractor and provider that CCT has produced has been sensible"

All those debates in Standing Committee about not liking compulsory competitive tendering have been swept aside by the aggressive, forward-looking shadow Secretary of State who failed to take his team into his confidence.

Mr. Denham: I do not have the advantage of having seen the *Tribune* article, but I will read it. My contribution

[Mr. Dell'en]

recognised that a division between the part of an authority responsible for specifying the standard of service and that responsible for delivering the quality and meeting the specifications is a perfectly good management tool and if that is what my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn was recognising, I welcome it.

Sir George Young: I am quite happy to make available the *Tribune* article, headed, "Jack Straw, New Radical". I hope that the hon. Member will accept that one cannot get CCT for housing management and the tenant veto. The two are incompatible. It is either compulsory competitive tendering or we have a tenants' veto. We cannot have both.

Mr. Battle: Does not the Minister accept that the real dilemma and incompatibility is the Government arguing that tenants can have their rights and at the same time foisting CCT on them?

Sir George Young: I shall come in a moment to tenants' rights. The hon. Member, I am sure unwittingly, misled the House when he said that tenants would no longer be consulted and that we were going to take away their right to have a say. I wrote it down. Those were his very words. If he looks at page 116 of the Bill he will see exactly what rights tenants are being given which make it clear that they will be consulted and will have a say.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister accept that his Bill removes the tenants' right to veto? Is that true or not?

Sir George Young: Right. Let me address directly the whole question of tenants' rights. The Bill gives tenants a right to manage, a right undreamed of by Labour when it was in power. Tenants will have a right to take over management of their estate. They will not be dependent on a local authority, which has been the position. They will not be dependent on a local authority giving away or subcontracting that right. They will have a right to manage their estates. It was not a right that the hon. Member mentioned in his speech at all.

We had this debate at length in Standing Committee. At present, tenants have a right of veto. We are proposing much more meaningful rights which involve tenants in the whole process of drawing up the specifications of the contract, interviewing the contractors, and monitoring it. If the hon. Member is interested in tenant involvement and tenant power, there is far more in the Bill than a simple crude veto at the end of the process. We are now discussing with tenants the new rights that are enshrined in the Bill and there is an appetite among tenants for the rights extended to them in the Bill.

Mr. Raynsford: What is the tenants' view? The Minister talks of the more sophisticated rights, but he does not mention their simple democratic right to have a final say over who will manage their homes. What have tenants told the Minister's Department? Do they want to keep that democratic right or not?

Sir George Young: Tenants throughout the country are anxious to have the right to manage their estates and the Bill gives them that right. They are also interested in the real rights conferred on them by the Bill to draw up the specifications of the contracts for their estates. They do not have that right now. They have no right to interview the contractors, or to monitor how well the contractors do. Those rights, which the Bill extends to tenants, are far more meaningful than the right to a crude yes or no when the local authority has drawn up the specifications without talking to tenants, and has chosen the contractors without consulting them. Hon. Members who tour the local authority estates will find that, under the present Government, there are more estate management boards and tenant management co-operatives than ever existed when Labour was in power. Tenants have a real appetite for reform and change.

11.15 pm

The Opposition's amendments try to perpetuate the ideas of a bygone age—an age of centralist bureaucracies, when local authorities told tenants what they intended to do. That is not the way in which to manage public housing in the 1990s, or in the 21st century. The way forward lies in close, meaningful consultation with tenants from the outset, building partnership and trust, and that is what the Government propose. I urge the House not to accept the new clause. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) must contain himself. If he wants to intervene and the Minister gives way, that is fair enough.

I assume that the Minister has finished his speech. I call Mr. Battle.

Mr. Battle: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister mentioned extending tenants' rights and to their having a say in the drawing up of contracts; but he d not give tenants the primary right to say yes or no to the contract itself. What is more, the tenants now have to pay for the whole process, even if, at the end of the day, they are against it.

I am tempted to press the Minister. I may be wrong, but was he not the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment when the Housing Act 1985 was passed? Was section 27A of that Act an aberration? Did not the Government argue then that they were giving tenants rights? If so, why do they now feel that they should remove those rights? They cannot have it both ways. They are promoting measures that deal specifically with the removal of a right enshrined in the 1985 Act—the primary right to veto, allowing power to remain with the tenants. The Government want to foist CCT on local authorities.

In Committee, the Minister made it clear that the initiative would be Secretary of State-led or local authority-led, but it certainly would not be tenant-led. We should be considering the issue from that angle, not from the angle that the Government are presenting.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend has made a powerful point. The Minister is going back on what the Government did before. Has my hon. Friend also noticed, however, that the Minister did not answer the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)? As he and I have both pointed out, an incredible situation now obtains: tenants can have a bad landlord in prison who cannot be changed, and can be made to change a very good landlord whom they do not want to change.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend has made a telling point —as, indeed, he did in his speech. The Government purport to offer people rights when it suits them, but they

step back when we ask for those rights to apply across the board. We have already observed their attitude to the rights of leaseholders who want enfranchisement.

Let me conclude by quoting the words of Cora Carter, secretary of the National Federation of Tenants, who is a tenant from Huddersfield:

"The Government talks of extending tenants' rights, but when you look at the Bill, it is taking them away. Tenants should be consulted on all aspects of housing management." We would add that tenants should have real rights, not references to rights in charters which are fundamentally undermined in proposed legislation. I urge hon. Members to support the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 75, Noes 220.

Division No. 147] **[11.19 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lament, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter

Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 92

LANDLORD'S NOTICE OF PURCHASE PRICE AND OTHER MATTERS

Amendment made: No. 80, in page 94, line 25, leave out 'multiplier' and insert 'relevant amount and multipliers'.

Clause 95

RIGHT TO ACQUIRE ON RENT TO MORTGAGE TERMS

Amendments made: No. 81, in page 97, leave out lines 5 to 15.

No. 82, in page 97, leave out lines 19 to 26 and insert—

'(3A) Where, in the case of a dwelling-house which is a house, the weekly rent at the relevant time did not exceed the relevant amount, the minimum initial payment shall be determined by the formula—

$$P = R \times M$$

where—

P = the minimum initial payment;
R = the amount of the weekly rent at the relevant time;
M = the multiplier which at that time was for the time being declared by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this subsection.

(3B) Where, in the case of a dwelling-house which is a house, the weekly rent at the relevant time exceeded the relevant amount, the minimum initial payment shall be determined by the formula—

$$P = Q + (E \times M)$$

where—

P = the minimum initial payment;
Q = the qualifying maximum for the year of assessment which included the relevant time;
E = the amount by which the weekly rent at that time exceeded the relevant amount;
M = the multiplier which at that time was for the time being declared by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this subsection.

(3C) The minimum initial payment in respect of a dwelling-house which is a flat is 80 per cent. of the amount which would be the minimum initial payment in respect of the dwelling-house if it were a house.

(4) The relevant amount and multipliers for the time being declared for the purposes of this section shall be such that, in the case of a dwelling-house which is a house, they will produce a minimum initial payment equal to the capital sum which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, could be raised on a 25 year repayment mortgage in the case of which the net amount of the monthly mortgage payments was equal to the rent at the relevant time calculated on a monthly basis.".

No. 83, in page 97, line 37, after 'section' insert—

"'net amount', in relation to monthly mortgage payments, means the amount of such payments after deduction of tax under section 369 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (mortgage interest payable under deduction of tax);

'qualifying maximum' means the qualifying maximum defined in section 367(5) of that Act (limit on relief for interest on certain loans);

'relevant amount' means the amount which at the relevant time was for the time being declared by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section;

'relevant time' means the time of the service of the landlord's notice under section 146 (landlord's notice admitting or denying right);".

Clause 97

LANDLORD'S NOTICE ADMITTING OR DENYING RIGHT

Amendment made: No. 84, in page 98, line 24, leave out 'mulitiplier' and insert 'relevant amount and multipliers'. —*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 105

MORTGAGE FOR SECURING REDEMPTION OF LANDLORD'S SHARE

Amendment made: No. 85, in page 103, line 13, leave out '(5)' and insert '(4)'.

No. 86, in page 103, line 18, leave out from beginning to end of line 7 on page 104 and insert—

'(3) The following, namely—

(a) any advance which is made otherwise than for the purpose mentioned in subsection (2) and is secured by a legal charge having priority to the mortgage, and

(b) any further advance which is so secured,

shall rank in priority to the mortgage if, and only if, the landlord by written notice served on the institution concerned gives its consent; and the landlord shall so give its consent if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose.

(4) The landlord may at any time by written notice served on an approved lending institution postpone the mortgage to any advance or further advance which—

(a) is made to the tenant by that institution, and

(b) is secured by a legal charge not having priority to the mortgage;

and the landlord shall serve such a notice if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose.'

No. 87, in page 104, line 17, at end insert—

'(6A) The approved purposes for the purposes of this section are—

(a) to enable the tenant to make an interim or final payment,

(b) to enable the tenant to defray, or to defray on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) the cost of any works to the dwelling-house,

(ii) any service charge payable in respect of the dwelling-house for works, whether or not to the dwelling-house, and

(iii) any service charge or other amount payable in respect of the dwelling-house for insurance, whether or not of the dwelling-house, and

(c) to enable the tenant to discharge, or to discharge on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) so much as is still outstanding of any advance or further advance which ranks in priority to the mortgage,

(ii) any arrears of interest on such an advance or further advance, and

(iii) any costs and expenses incurred in enforcing payment of any such interest, or repayment (in whole or in part) of any such advance or further advance.

(6B) Where different parts of an advance or further advance are made for different purposes, each of those parts shall be regarded as a separate advance or further advance for the purposes of this section.'

Clause 107

REPAYMENT OF DISCOUNT ON EARLY DISPOSAL

Amendments made: No. 88, in page 105, line 31 [Clause 107], leave out "to (2C)' and insert 'and (2B)'.

No. 89, in page 106, leave out lines 1 to 37 and insert—

'(2A) The following, namely—

(a) any advance which is made otherwise than for the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (2) and is secured by a legal charge having priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this section, and

(b) any further advance which is so secured,

shall rank in priority to that charge if, and only if, the landlord by written notice served on the institution concerned gives its consent; and the landlord shall so give its consent if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose.

(2B) The landlord may at any time by written notice served on an approved lending institution postpone the charge taking effect by virtue of this section to any advance or further advance which—

(a) is made to the tenant by that institution, and

(b) is secured by a legal charge not having priority to that charge;

and the landlord shall serve such a notice if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose."

(4) After subsection (4) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) The approved purposes for the purposes of this section are—

(a) to enable the tenant to make an interim or final payment,

(b) to enable the tenant to defray, or to defray on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) the cost of any works to the dwelling-house,

(ii) any service charge payable in respect of the dwelling-house for works, whether or not to the dwelling-house, and

(iii) any service charge or other amount payable in respect of the dwelling-house for insurance, whether or not of the dwelling house, and

(c) to enable the tenant to discharge, or to discharge on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) so much as is still outstanding of any advance or further advance which ranks in priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this section,

(ii) any arrears of interest on such an advance or further advance, and

(iii) any costs and expenses incurred in enforcing payment of any such interest, or repayment (in whole or in part) of any such advance or further advance.

(4B) Where different parts of an advance or further advance are made for different purposes, each of those parts shall be regarded as a separate advance or further advance for the purposes of this section."'

Clause 118

VOLUNTARY DISPOSALS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Amendments made: No. 91, in page 118, line 29 [Clause 118], leave out 'to (2C)' and insert 'and (2B)'.

No. 92, in page 118, line 35, leave out from beginning to end of line 22 on page 119 and insert—

'"(2A) The following, namely—

(a) any advance which is made otherwise than for the purpose mentioned in subsection (2)(b) and is secured by a legal charge having priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this section, and

(b) any further advance which is so secured,

shall rank in priority to that charge if, and only if, the local authority by written notice served on the institution concerned gives their consent; and the local authority shall so give their consent if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose.

(2B) The local authority may at any time by written notice served on an approved lending institution postpone the charge taking effect by virtue of this section to any advance or further advance which—

(a) is made to the purchaser by that institution, and

(b) is secured by a legal charge not having priority to that charge;

and the local authority shall serve such a notice if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose."

(2) After subsection (4) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(5) The approved purposes for the purposes of this section are—

(a) to enable the purchaser to defray, or to defray on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) the cost of any works to the house,

(ii) any service charge payable in respect of the house for works, whether or not to the house, and

(iii) any service charge or other amount payable in respect of the house for insurance, whether or not of the house, and

(b) to enable the purchaser to discharge, or to discharge on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) so much as is still outstanding of any advance or further advance which ranks in priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this section,

(ii) any arrears of interest on such an advance or further advance, and

(iii) any costs and expenses incurred in enforcing payment of any such interest, or repayment (in whole or in part) of any such advance or further advance.

(6) Where different parts of an advance or further advance are made for different purpses, each of those parts shall be regarded as a separate advance or further advance for the purposes of this section."'

Clause 119

VOLUNTARY DISPOSALS BY HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Amendments made: No. 93, in page 119, line 26 [Clause 119], leave out 'to (2C)' and insert 'and (2B)'.

No. 94, in page 119, line 32, leave out from beginning to end of line 18 on page 120 and insert—

'(2A) The following, namely—

(a) any advance which is made otherwise than for the purpose mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)(b) and is secured by a legal charge having priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this paragraph, and

(b) any further advance which is so secured,

shall rank in priority to that charge if, and only if, the housing association by written notice served on the institution concerned gives its consent; and the housing association shall so give its consent if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose.

(2B) The housing association may at any time by written notice served on an approved lending institution postpone the charge taking effect by virtue of this paragraph to any advance or further advance which—

(a) is made to the purchaser by that institution, and

(b) is secured by a legal charge not having priority to that charge;

and the housing association shall serve such a notice if the purpose of the advance or further advance is an approved purpose."'

No. 95, in page 120, leave out lines 21 and 22 and insert—

'"(5) The approved purposes for the purposes of this paragraph are—

(a) to enable the purchaser to defray, or to defray on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) the cost of any works to the house,

(ii) any service charge payable in respect of the house for works, whether or not to the house, and

(iii) any service charge or other amount payable in respect of the house for insurance, whether or not of the house, and

(b) to enable the purchaser to discharge, or to discharge on his behalf, any of the following—

(i) so much as is still outstanding of any advance or further advance which ranks in priority to the charge taking effect by virtue of this paragraph,

(ii) any arrears of interest on such an advance or further advance, and

(iii) any costs and expenses incurred in enforcing payment of any such interest, or repayment (in whole or in part) of any such advance or further advance;

and in this sub-paragraph 'service charge' has the meaning given by section 621A of the Housing Act 1985.

(6) Where different parts of an advance or further advance are made for different purposes, each of those parts shall be regarded as a separate advance or further advance for the purposes of this paragraph.".'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 127

RENT TO LOAN SCHEME: RELATED AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 101, in page 133, line 18, at end insert—

'( ) In section 71, in subsection (1)(d), after "63(2)" there shall be inserted "or (3)".'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 131

RIGHT TO COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Amendment made: No. 102, in page 138, line 5, after 'when', insert '(i)'.

No. 103, in page 138, line 10, at end insert—

'(ii) there is a change of landlord;

(iii) it is assigned to a new tenant.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 111

NEW RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO SUCH DISPOSALS

Amendment made: No. 90, in page 114, line 2, at end insert—

'and any reference to a block of flats specified in a notice under section 84(2) above is a reference to a block each of the flats in which is so specified.'—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 136

FURTHER PROVISION AS TO ALLOCATION OF HOUSING

Amendment made: No. 104, in page 141, line 32, after 'housing', insert

', or of housing in respect of which the local authority may nominate the tenant,'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Clause 138

OTHER AMENDMENTS OF 1987 ACT

Amendments made: No. 105, in page 142, line 14, after '(price)', insert '(a)'.

No. 110, in page 142, line 11 after '(1)', insert—

'In section 17 of the 1987 Act (management of local authority houses), in subsection (1), the words "and exercised by" shall cease to have effect.

(2) .'.

No. 111, in page 142, line 11, leave out 'the 1987' and insert 'that'.

No. 106, in page 142, line 15, at end insert—

'(b) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

"(3A) There shall be deducted from the discount an amount equal to—

(a) any previous discount, or the aggregate of any previous discounts, received by—

(i) the tenant;

(ii) the tenant's spouse (including a person living with him as if they were husband and wife), if living with him at the time of the purchase in relation to which the discount is being claimed;

(iii) a deceased spouse or person mentioned in paragraph (ii), if living with the tenant at the time of death;

(iv) any joint purchaser of the house,

on any previous exercise of the right to purchase a house under this Part or under Part V of the Housing Act 1985; less

(b) any amount of such previous discount recovered under section 72 or under section 155 of the Housing Act 1985.".'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Further consideration adjourned.—[Mr. Chapman.]

To be further considered tomorrow.

NOISE AND STATUTORY NUISANCE BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Noise and Statutory Nuisance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

MEDICINES INFORMATION BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Medicines Information Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of a Minister of the Crown in consequence of the Act.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

MEDICINES INFORMATION BILL *[Ways and Means]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Medicines Information Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the taking into account, in determining the amount of fees to be fixed in accordance with section 1 of the Medicines Act 1971, of any expenses of a Minister of the Crown in consequence of the Act resulting from that Bill; and

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ordered,

That Mr. Stanley Orme be discharged from the Trade and Industry Committee, and Ann Coffey be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Sunderland University

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.32 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Tonight I am paying a tribute to the staff and students of the new Sunderland university. I decided to speak about the university because, as one of the Members of Parliament representing Sunderland, I am extremely glad and proud that university status has been achieved, for the benefit of the staff, students and community.

Every institution has to have a leader. In Dr. Anne Wright we are fortunate to have a person who will lead the university into the 21st century. Dr. Wright has already stamped her mark on the city of Sunderland in a big way. She has ensured that there is a major relationship with industry and has speedily established strong links with the wider community.

The pro-vice-chancellor has said:

"The next decade is going to be a time of great change for the university."

It is also a time of great change for the city of Sunderland. The two will work closely together as the 21st century aspiration begins to come to life.

A contributor to "Sparks", the university staff magazine, says:

"Hand in hand with the changes go vast benefits for the city of Sunderland and its residents—generating directly and indirectly thousands of full-time and part-time jobs, encouraging investment and supporting new businesses."

That can only be to the good. Too many jobs have been lost in the city, and activity at the university in many different ways will result in very many jobs being created.

The pro-vice-chancellor recently wrote:

"The university currently has around 48 buildings, some of which are very recent purpose built, others which are longer in vintage. As we cope with the changes taking place in our education, it is our aim not to diversify the campus further but to have a smaller concentration of more purpose built accommodation."

Once again, that will benefit the people of the area and create more jobs.

It has been a good time for those who wish to participate in some way in welcoming the new university and at the same time welcoming the new city status of Sunderland.

There are many problems in the north-east and Sunderland has had more than its share. We have seen the destruction of the shipping industry and the decimation of the collieries. However, this evening I wish to concentrate primarily on the role of the university.

For many years Sunderland has had a polytechnic and it has produced a rich vein of students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. According to the history book the poly was designated in 1969, but its origins can be traced back to 1860, and I reckon that that is a few years before my time and the Minister's time.

Sunderland polytechnic was one of the first. To a large extent the poly was able to flourish because of the full support of the local authority, then the Sunderland borough council. Thirty years later, the polytechnic lost its title and the university of Sunderland was born. The change to university status has my full support. In reality it was too long in coming. The change from polytechnic to university has led to some interesting situations.

My niece Julie, for example, left school in the hope of getting on an undergraduate course. Julie took the first part of her degree at the Leicester polytechnic. Later, she did a year in industry, and she will graduate, it is hoped with a good degree from the de Montfort university. There must be many students throughout the country who have had experience similar to that of my beloved niece Julie.

In the past, some students who could not get on a university course settled for a place in a polytechnic. There were two different institutions, and one did not have the same bite as the other. In effect, the university place meant more than the polytechnic place, although I must confess that I never believed that to be the case. It has been asked "What's in a name?" In this instance, a great deal, I would think.

I had many friends who worked in the polys and they produced research of the very highest level, comparable with that of any university. For some time I had a very bright woman working in my office. Hanna had completed a master's degree at Sunderland poly in economics, and her husband completed his PhD at Sunderland poly too. Yes, I am pleased that our higher education institutions are now known by the same name—university.

The university of Sunderland has had a strong school of art over the years, and I was extremely glad to be invited to meet the head of the art department, Flavia Swan. Flavia runs a large school of art where students turn out work of the highest quality in painting, sculpture and other subjects.

However, I was more than pleased when I discovered that there was a photography course in the department. The quality of the work that I saw was very good. The two teachers on the course had to work hard to satisfy all the demands of the students. I suppose I could get away with a hint at this time. I should like to see the photography department strengthened and an exhibition area built in one of the new buildings—accessible, I should hope, to the public.

For many years we had to use the silver halide process, though in the next century we will see new processes using computers and digital methods to create new styles of photographs. I am fortunate to be invited to the university photographic department from time to time to chat to students about short-term and long-term changes in photography. I look forward to continuing to do that.

The university has plans to grow in size to 16,000 students by 1996 and to achieve its target of 18,000 students by the year 2000. Dr. Wright believes that the distinction between full-time and part-time attendance modes will fade as modularisation advances.

Additionally, the number and types of courses have changed to meet the changing demands of our ever growing and more complex society. Many new departments and courses will flourish, either by additions to existing ones or the creation of new ones. It is a most exciting time for all of us who have looked forward to the new university and its growth plans.

An important aspect of a university is its relationship with industry. I was glad to be invited by Dr. Wright to hear a fine speech by Peter Wickens, director of personnel and information systems for Nissan. He had been awarded an honorary professorship of the university. I can think of no one more deserving of such an honour. Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd. is based in my constituency; it builds fine cars and has created thousands of jobs for the local population. We are very fortunate to have Nissan in

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

Washington. The company has a role to play in the city of Sunderland and in the north-east generally. As Nissan prospers, it is only to be expected that other companies will locate in the area.

In partnership with industrial giants—Nissan, Vickers, Grove Worldwide, Komatsu—the university's school of engineering and advanced technology has launched the first course in the United Kingdom to combine specialist training in automotive design and manufacture. Practically based, and taught in a purpose-built design studio setting, that unique programme offers options from graduate to postgraduate level. The programme is geared towards producing highly skilled and flexible graduates for direct entry into the north-east's burgeoning automotive industry.

The availability of specialist consultancy and expertise has been a major factor in the decision of several Japanese companies to locate in the north-east. The university has a Japanese studies division which supports Japanese industries moving into the region and provides practical training for local companies looking to expand into the Japanese market.

The university also has an important role in the community which can be illustrated by two interesting projects. The Hendon nature space is an award-winning, student-run nature reserve developed on derelict industrial land for use by local school and community groups.

The university, Sunderland football club and the city have a role to play. Many believe that the heart of the city is Roker park, Sunderland football club's ground. The university plays an important role by sponsoring a soccer player and running a certificate course in crowd and stadium management—a brilliant innovation. The course has been designed in partnership with Sunderland football club, local authorities and the emergency services. It is the first course in the United Kingdom to provide specialist training in safety for stadium managers and stewards. Disasters such as Bradford, Heysel and Hillsborough have shown the need for such a co-ordinated approach to crowd safety. It is a credit to the university that it has established such a suitable course.

The university is also committed to improving access to its courses for women, mature students and other groups who all too often miss out on higher education. The university of Sunderland recruits more students from access courses than any other north-east university. We recruited 300 in 1992 and more than half the current student body was 21 or over at entry. Graduates in 1992 —this must be fairly unique—included a family of four: a mother, father, daughter and son-in-law, who all graduated on the same B.Ed course. To top that, a 70-year-old grandmother graduated on the same course.

I have given the Minister notice of some questions that I should like to have answered. First, the long overdue opening up of higher education pioneered by the university of Sunderland and the former polytechnic has been a considerable achievement. However, given the Government's current policy of consolidating student numbers in the higher education sector, is there not a danger of much of this excellent work being undone?

Secondly, the north-east has one of the lowest higher education participation rates, and there is a real danger of mature students being squeezed out by the consolidation. Is not this to be regretted, bearing in mind the urgent need for a skilled work force to lead the economy out of recession?

Thirdly, Sunderland, along with many other new universities, performed well in its first entry to the Higher Education Funding Council for England research rating exercise, despite the fact that the former polytechnics have historically received only 1 per cent. of Government funding for this area. Will the Government take this considerable achievement into account and develop a more equitable funding system for research in the unified higher education sector?

Finally, given the university of Sunderland's excellent links with business, industry and the community, will the valuable role of higher education institutions be properly addressed in the measures being introduced on employment and retraining?

I should like to conclude with the words of Dr. Wright, whom I respect and admire greatly. During an address at the annual awards ceremonies for 1992, she said:

"A new city, with a new university, but in celebrating change we also celebrate history and continuity, the University of Sunderland has the same commitment to providing knowledge and skills, confidence and capability for life and for work, to fulfil individual potential and contribute to society and its economy."

11.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I congratulate the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on his good fortune in securing the Adjournment debate and on his extremely positive and constructive message of a success story. I am also delighted to have the opportunity to speak about the higher education sector and, in particular, about the extremely high quality of education and research at Sunderland, one of our new universities. As the hon. Gentleman said, the enterprise and initiative of the vice-chancellor, Dr. Anne Wright, and the senior management of the university are creating many exciting developments in the north-east.

As the hon. Gentleman said, Sunderland university has grown quickly from small beginnings into one of the leading higher education providers and a major employer in the area. When it began life as a polytechnic in 1969, it had just 1,000 students. The number has increased steadily, and there are now 11,000 students studying full and part time. Indeed, the figure has risen by 3,000 since 1989 alone.

The growth is remarkable, but it reflects what has been happening throughout higher education in the past decade. Encouraged by the Government's policies for growth, universities, the former polytechnics and colleges have been educating more and more people. Last year, student numbers were more than 60 per cent. higher than when the Government came to power in 1979. During that period, the proportion of young people entering full-time higher education has doubled from one in eight to well over one in four. We remain well on target to see participation reach one in three by the end of the decade.

Expansion has not merely meant more of the same. During the 1980s, the proportion of female students, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. increased from just over 40 per cent. to about one half. Mature entrant numbers rose faster than those of young entrants. I find it remarkable that by 1990 more mature students were entering higher education than young students.

We see no reason to suppose that the recent developments are likely to discriminate against mature students. We have safeguarded the fees position of the part-timers which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, mature students will so often be. I think that his fears on that issue are not justified.

The figures that I have given are statistics. As the hon. Gentleman said, what lies behind them is the reality that thousands of young people whose parents never went into higher education and many of whom never even thought about it, have benefitted from one of the best educations in the world. Perhaps even more satisfactory is the fact that thousands of older people who missed out when they were at school have returned to education and received a qualification.

That is a development of enormous economic and social significance not only in Sunderland but nationally. Apart from the benefits to the people themselves, which are important, the country as a whole can only profit from an investment on that scale in its most potent and precious resource—its people and their personal skills.

Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that the growth in student numbers has not been at the expense of quality. More has not meant worse. Despite rapidly increasing numbers, entry standards have been maintained. The proportion of first and upper second class degrees awarded by universities, former polytechnics and colleges has increased substantially.

Although those figures relate to teaching, expansion has not been confined to teaching alone. During the 1980s, universities' earnings from research grants and contracts more than trebled. Increasingly, the private sector—industry, business and commerce—looks to our universities and colleges to provide the expertise and research facilities that it needs to compete in world markets. That includes not only British companies but those from the European Community and further afield. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman mentioned Nissan's involvement in his local university.

The hon. Gentleman asked about research. I remind him that the new universities—although they are new and have not traditionally conducted large amounts of research—have the benefit of drawing on a pool of £16 million earmarked as pump-priming finance for the former polytechnics and new universities. That was a positive and imaginative move.

It is particularly valuable that, at Sunderland university, over 40 per cent. of all students are studying the sciences, engineering and technology. This rises to over half if subjects and professions allied to medicine are included. I know that it has not been particularly easy for some universities and colleges to attract students to study science. I therefore commend the achievement of Sunderland, on which I hope that it will build.

The commitment to science goes hand in hand with the contribution Sunderland university is making to its local community, especially the business community. Perhaps this can be seen most clearly in the new industry centre that has opened recently on the campus. The centre aims to offer industry the highest possible standards in training, consultancy and manufacturing services, and may pick up some revenue for the university in the process.

Contained within the centre is a micro-technology centre, one of the north-east's leading microcomputer training and consultancy organisations; there is also an advanced manufacturing systems centre, reputed to be the most up-to-date facility of its kind anywhere in the United Kingdom providing consultancy services in computer integrated manufacturing and design systems; and a scanning electron microscopy centre offering a 24-hour turnaround service.

The university's commitment to local industry and business is matched by that to local residents. That is equally important given the circumstances of the city. For too long, the world of higher education has often seemed remote, not to say elitist, for many of the people who live just a stone's throw from the walls of a university or higher education college. To combat this, Sunderland has worked closely with local further education colleges in the area to ensure that, for those who wish to enter higher education, there is close integration of course work and teaching. That makes Sunderland university a warm and welcoming place of learning.

So much for the past and the present. What of the future? The Government announced their funding plans for HE in last year's autumn statement. The plans mean that a total of £3·9 billion will be available to HE institutions in 1993-94, an increase of £265 million, 7·3 per cent. in cash or 4·4 per cent. in real terms, in available public funding for HE. That builds on successive increases of 10 per cent. in each of the past three years and provides for an 8·5 per cent. growth in full-time equivalent student numbers next year and 106,000 extra places by 1995-96. That means that the current record levels of participation can be maintained over the next three years before they are projected to rise to one in three by the year 2000. There is a useful period of consolidation, a time for universities and colleges to take stock—something I know that many have been seeking.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the implications for Sunderland, and I feel that institutions that have expanded especially fast may benefit from a pause before a period of further expansion. That would not be to their disadvantage. At the same time, institutions will need continuing improvements in efficiency by making better use of their resources, and I am sure that they will make them.

I stress that, by 1992, we had already reached participation rates that we had projected in our White Paper would not be reached until 1994 or 1995. That shows that universities and colleges such as Sunderland have responded magnificently to the challenge of expanding and making productivity gains. But the rate of expansion has been so great that it now makes sense to pause and take stock, and to put some additional emphasis on further education.

Like many other universities and colleges, with Government support Sunderland university is building for the long-term future. It is developing its existing campus, and a new building for pharmaceutical sciences will soon be in operation. In co-operation with the Tyne and Wear development corporation, the university is building a new campus site on the north bank of ther River Wear estuary, covering 25 acres of former industrial operations. Appropriately for a university, the site includes the historic seventh-century church of St. Peter's, where the Venerable Bede studied.

The plans are for a four-phase development over 10 years. Eventually, the site will house the business school, computing and information systems, the school of education, the school of art and design, a conference centre, a heritage centre, and a learning resource centre.

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

Also, 450 direct and indirect jobes will be created by the first phase of the development, and more than 1,000 will be created when the project is completed.

But growth is not just a matter of spending money and increasing accommodation. Institutions can maximise the use of their resources through distance learning. To its great credit, Sunderland university has embarked on a major initiative, which I much support, to develop open and distance learning across the massive range of its courses, using a range of media to reach the maximum possible number of students, ever developing the community campus-based radio station, Wear FM community radio. It is pioneering and developing computer-based learning, including the use of external data, satellite and cable television. It is transforming its learning materials into high-quality distance learning packages, which are very valuable for part-time mature students with family and domestic responsibilities.

Those are very positive developments. I take great pride as a Minister in our diverse higher education system. It is buoyant, optimistic and successful. In the university of Sunderland—a new university; a former polytechnic—we have a prime example of much that is good in higher education today. I join the hon. Gentleman in commending its vice-chancellor, Dr. Wright, her staff and the students for their continuing achievements. I wish them every success for the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 10 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Arab-Israel Dispute

1. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards resolving the Arab-Israel dispute.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): There has been some progress towards resolving the Arab-Israel dispute since the Madrid conference in November 1991. The deportation of Palestinians last month is a setback. We are urging all sides to take the necessary steps, in accordance with Security Council resolution 799, to ensure that that does not disrupt the peace process.

Mr. Clappison: My right hon. Friend raises the question of the deportees. Does he not agree that movement on both sides of the Arab-Israel dispute is needed and, in particular, that the Palestinians need to undertake confidence-building measures to allay Israel's legitimate security fears, and that there needs to be a widespread willingness among Palestinians to take part in the peace process and to bring violence and extremism to an end?

Mr. Hurd: I certainly hope that the Palestinians will continue to take part in the talks with Israel and that they will consider carefully the proposals for an interim period of autonomy. However, if the Palestinians are to do that, there must be further action by Israel, with regard both to the deportation of Palestinians, which I have already mentioned, and to Israel's general practices in the occupied territories which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State illustrated in a speech in Geneva yesterday.

Mr. Ernie Ross: What does the Foreign Secretary intend to do to build the Palestinians' confidence so that they will participate again? As the Israeli Government have demonstrated that they have no intention of moving in any way, shape or form towards the United Nations, what confidence can the Palestinian negotiators have? When we debated the issue a few weeks ago, I asked the Secretary of State what guarantees of safety he could give members of the Palestinian delegation if they enter into the talks again while the deportees are still somewhere between Lebanon and Israel and the Israelis are still adopting against the Palestinian population measures that are wholly unacceptable to the international community?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is not right to say that Israel has made no move in any shape or form. On 1 February the Israeli Cabinet decided to allow 100 of the deportees to return, to halve the term of exile of the remainder, and to take various other measures. That is not sufficient, but it is a move in the right direction. I welcome the fact that American Secretary of State Warren Christopher is to visit the area next week and that the new American Administration have taken over the baton from the previous Administration and are clearly giving the peace process a high priority.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if there is ever to be peace in that troubled part of the world, its history has to be taken into account and that the Egyptian Government's recognition in recent times that they have to live in peace with Israel is an essential ingredient which other Arab nations should take on board?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed; I agree with my hon. Friend. Equally, the Israeli Government have to accept, as they have done, the principle of United Nations resolution 242 —"land for peace". Only on that basis will the peace process make progress.

Dr. John Cunningham: Is it not essential for the credibility of the United Nations, and for the confidence of the Islamic world in general, that we be seen to insist that the acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolutions is universally applicable? Is not the problem simply that Israel has set its face against any attempt to comply with Security Council resolution 799? Is it not also an error to try to fragment the solidarity of the Palestinians, as has been suggested, however much one deplores the activities of Hamas?

Finally, I ask the Foreign Secretary to condemn, as we do, the use of live ammunition by the Israeli security services in the occupied territories, especially against children. Is it not deplorable that a growing number of children are being killed as a result of those activities?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), the Minister of State, gave the figures to the European Commission of Human Rights in Geneva yesterday. It is reported that 216 children have been injured since 1 December 1992 and that 12 have been shot dead by Israeli defence forces. That is why I said what I did earlier.

The Israeli Government have partially moved towards compliance, but they have not complied fully with the Security Council resolutions. I hope that the Israeli Government will go further.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: If, two years ago, Iraq had withdrawn from only a quarter of Kuwait, would my right hon. Friend really have used the words that he has just used in the context of the Palestinian deportees about that situation? Is it not perfectly clear that when there is such a blatant breach of international law a little bit of persuasion is required, and pressure?

Mr. Hurd: I believe in persuasion backed by pressure. However, I do not think that my hon. Friend is right to equate the two circumstances absolutely. The aggression of Iraq against Kuwait and the decision to deport the Palestinians are both wrong, but they are different in character. The United Nations has taken different measures in respect of each and we wish to pursue the aims of the United Nations in respect of both.

UN Security Council

2. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the future structure of the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement.

7. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy concerning reform of membership of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Hurd: The increased effectiveness of the Security Council has renewed interest in its role. Several countries would like permanent membership. Any expansion in membership would require an amendment to the United Nations charter. Negotiations on this would be long and complicated. Our aim is to ensure that the Security Council continues to operate effectively. We would not favour any arrangement that undermined its authority or prejudiced the position of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Eagle: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the momentum gathering for Britain to lose its permanent place on the United Nations Security Council would not have built up if the Government had not delivered such a disastrous economic performance? Is it not the case that a third-rate economic performance means that we are now increasingly being regarded as third rate in the world at large?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know of anywhere except this country where it is suggested that we should lose our permanent seat. No such suggestion has been made by any of those who have suggested that new members should be added. The hon. Lady's conclusion is false and it is based on a false assumption.

Mr. Robathan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the arguments being advanced for a change in the composition of the Security Council are not new and that they are far less valid now than they were before, in view of the increased effectiveness of which my right hon. Friend speaks, as illustrated by the Gulf war coalition and in other United Nations operations around the world?

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that although economic performance is obviously important, the contribution made to United Nations forces by other countries does not match Britain's contribution? Indeed, some of the countries put forward as potential permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are conspicuous by their absence when it comes to United Nations operations overseas.

Mr. Hurd: Some of those countries have constitutional restraints. However, my hon. Friend is entirely right: the two countries doing the most on the ground for United Nations peacekeeping across the world as a whole are France and Britain, and the two countries doing the most for United Nations peacekeeping in terms of getting supplies to the towns and villages of Bosnia are Britain and France. The facts that my hon. Friend gives put the theoretical arguments in some perspective.

Mr. Rogers: The Opposition, like the Government, support the aims of the United Nations. We should like its remit to be broadened politically and to be supported financially. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that if the United Nations is to retain our support and trust, it must behave even-handedly with regard to resolutions that it has passed and that if there is to be any restructuring, it should be carried out on the basis of considered debate and not on the basis of gratuitous comment by any country?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address that remark to those on the Opposition Back Benches, who seem to leap into the debate with very little regard to reality. I agree that a discussion has started and we cannot stifle that debate, but we have no intention of altering our own position as a result of it.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is easy to pass United Nations resolutions—the number has probably increased 20-fold in the past 20 years—but that if the United Nations is to retain credibility it must expand its influence and that influence must be backed by the support of its member countries? As my right hon. Friend said, far too few countries put their money where their mouth is.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. As a result of the end of the cold war, quite suddenly over the past couple of years there has been a build-up in the number of conflicts in which the United Nations is expected, not least by hon. Members, to intervene. The difficulties of intervening effectively are clear: The resources of the United Nations—the assets available to the Secretary-General—are inadequate for the purpose.

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many resolutions he has proposed to the Security Council in the last 12 months on matters relating to international security.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Since 1 January 1992, the United Nations Security Council has adopted 83 resolutions: 67 concerned matters relating to international security; 11 specifically invoked chapter VII of the charter. The United Kingdom voted in support of all the resolutions. Members of the council, the Secretary-General and parties to the disputes engage in close consultations during the drafting of Security Council resolutions. The United Kingdom has played a full and active part.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In so far as the western powers appear to lack a strategy for getting rid of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, is it not time that the British Government promoted, within the Security Council, resolutions that would underpin the position of the Iraqi National Conference—that is to say, the Iraqi opposition?

Mr. Hogg: Our first objective must be to ensure that Saddam Hussein complies with the existing resolutions of the Security Council and, incidentally, with the no-fly zones—and that we propose to do.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the staggering number of resolutions passed in a single year reminds us all of the importance of maintaining strong armed forces? Does he further agree that the proliiferation of nuclear weapons in many of the trouble spots that the resolutions affect—in the long term, potentially including Iraq—further reminds us of the importance of keeping a full range of nuclear capability?

Mr. Hogg: On the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, I agree. On the former part of his question, my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that we deploy some 3,756 soldiers in United Nations peacekeeping operations and are the second largest contributor to such operations.

South Korea

4. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with South Korea.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Our relations with the Republic of Korea are excellent. We look forward to a further strengthening of them during the next Administration in the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Parry: Given the good relationship that exists between the United Kingdom and South Korea, will the Minister consider using his influence by asking the South Korean Government to cancel the war games—Exercise Team Spirit—on the Korean peninsula for the sake of peace and detente?

Mr. Goodlad: We have consistently supported efforts to achieve peaceful reunification of the two Koreas, as has the hon. Gentleman. That can be achieved only through direct north-south contact. We were disappointed that the ninth round of bilateral prime ministerial talks was cancelled in December and we hope that talks will resume shortly.

Exercise Team Spirit, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, is to be a routine defence training exercise involving United States and Republic of Korea forces. The purpose is to exercise combat readiness command control, host nation support and logistic support for the command that might be required to defend South Korea. The exercise, which is normally held annually in the spring, demonstrates the United States commitment to the defence of South Korea. It is a purely bilateral matter for the United States and South Korean Governments.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the so-called Democratic Republic of Korea is on the verge of economic collapse? Does he think that there is now a greater opportunity for both Koreas to unite for the benefit of their people and of world stability?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend makes a very perceptive point.

Yugoslavia

5. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position on the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hurd: We and our European Community partners are lending full support to the efforts of Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance. We believe that the plan that they have put forward offers the best prospect for a peaceful solution. We are following discussions in New York closely and taking part in them. We urge all the parties to negotiate seriously and to abide by the agreements reached at the negotiating table.

Mr. Williams: While accepting that the Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia is the only one on offer, what does the Secretary of State have to say to those in the new Clinton Administration who say that the proposals reward ethnic cleansing?

Mr. Hurd: We are waiting for the policy decisions of the new Administration. We have been in touch with them, and I had a good talk with Secretary Aspin last weekend. I believe that we shall shortly get a statement on the American position which will recognise the importance of the Vance-Owen process.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is considerable anxiety and disappointment on the part of Bosnian refugee men living in Chertsey at their failure to be reunited with their families? Is he satisfied with the reception of processing arrangements in refugee camps in the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Hurd: If my right hon. Friend will send me details, I will take up the Bosnian matter with my Department. I will also take up the matter of the refugees in his constituency with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

The record of the United Kingdom in receiving those who need to come here and who are nominated by international agencies to come here is a good one, but the main thrust of our effort must be to enable those who have been forced from their homes to survive and get through the winter as close to their homes as possible and then to return.

Sir Russell Johnston: In the area of conflict prevention, what action is being taken to reduce tension in Kosovo? Is it not time that we set aside Greece's anachronistic objections to the recognition of Macedonia?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman will know, there is much discussion going on in New York at present about the way in which that country could be admitted to the United Nations. That is the essential step and I do not despair of getting agreement on it fairly soon.

The hon. Gentleman is quite right: Kosovo is a dangerous spot. Everyone accepts that it is part of Serbia and everyone should accept that it is entitled to the sort of decent autonomy that it had before 1988.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that our troops are deployed in the former Yugoslavia not to fight a war but to deliver humanitarian aid? Will he take

this opportunity to congratulate our armed forces on performing a difficult and dangerous task with considerable success?

Earlier, my right hon. Friend said that the United Nations does not have the resources with which to fulfil its new role in the world as peacemaker and peacekeeper. In the light of the report of the Select Committee on Defence published this week, is he convinced that the United Kingdom has the resources to fulfil its role as a member of the United Nations Security Council?

Mr. Hurd: We have the resources to do what we are doing, which is very substantial. The United Kingdom is second only to France across the world in how we join in United Nations peacekeeping. We have more troops in Bosnia for the humanitarian purpose than any other country. The exercise was treated as perhaps rather negligible when it started, but, thanks to the work of the British troops, it has turned into the only piece of substantial good news to come out of that area this year. Hundreds of thousands of Bosnians, who all the experts predicted would die this winter, are being kept alive—partly because the weather is a bit milder than usual, but mainly because of the efforts of allied troops among whom the British are pre-eminent. Our troops have escorted 244 convoys, carrying 18,480 tonnes of food, medicine and other supplies to the towns and villages of Bosnia. The RAF has delivered 4,773 tonnes by air into Sarajevo.

Mr. George Robertson: May I add my tribute to our troops engaged in the humanitarian work in Bosnia? Reports came out over lunchtime that the Clinton Administration have decided on a deployment of troops for future peacekeeping in the area, combined with further aid and the possibility of a special envoy. We would welcome that as a supplement to the Vance-Owen proposals, not as a replacement for them.

Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the House expects him to continue to press for the continuing pursuit of those guilty of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia? The whole world has been revolted by verified reports of actions that clearly fall within the description of war criminality, especially reports of the systematic mass rape of women in that area. For the perpetrators of such obscenities there must never be a hiding place.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says. We have emphasised that point repeatedly. The lawyers are now hard at work trying to overcome the difficulties in establishing an international tribunal for that purpose. I believe that that work has to bear fruit in the Security Council.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that more should be done by the United Nations and the Western European Union to deal with sanction breaking in Yugoslavia, particularly the importation of oil by barges, which I believe is happening on a massive scale?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with that. I discussed it with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister this morning and I have discussed it with the Romanians and the Bulgarians in the past week. For those of us who believe that peaceful pressures are crucial, it is important that those pressures should be effective, and they are increasingly effective on the Adriatic. The Romanians have begun to turn away barges loaded with oil bound for Serbia. It is crucial that all the riparian states, Ukraine and, indeed, all the neighbours of Serbia should do their best to make those pressures effective.

Israel

6. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that the Government of Israel complies with United Nations resolution 799.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have repeatedly urged the Israelis to comply with United Nations Security Council resolution 799, most recently in a meeting berween Euopean Community Foreign Ministers and the Israeli Foreign Minister in Brussels on 1 February. The Israeli Government have now taken a helpful step in the right direction. We hope that they will build on this. We are urging all concerned that the top priority is to resume the peace process.

Mr. Watson: In answer to an earlier question today, the Foreign Secretary said that different measures had been adopted by the United Nations in respect of resolutions on Iraq and on Israel, as indeed they have: the resolutions in respect of Iraq were speedily enforced, but those in respect of Israel have never been enforced. It is now eight weeks since resolution 799 was adopted unanimously, demanding that all the deportees be returned to their homes as quickly as possible. The Foreign Secretary and his Ministers must be aware of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali's report to the United Nations Security Council last month on the enforcement of resolution 799, which finished with a strong recommendation that whatever—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have a question from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Watson: I am coming to it, Madam Speaker. The point is—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question now.

Mr. Watson: My point relates to the Secretary-General's report—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is Question Time. I insist on a question being put. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can ask his question.

Mr. Watson: Will the Foreign Secretary and his Ministers ensure that the Secretary-General's report of last month, which demanded that the deportees be returned home as soon as possible and that whatever measures are necessary should be taken immediately, is endorsed and that fellow members of the Security Council are encouraged to ensure that that happens as speedily as possible?

Mr. Hogg: As my right hon. Friend made plain, we regard the deportation of 450 people as a gross breach of the fourth Geneva convention and a gross infringement of human rights, and that is why we support resolution 799. As my right hon. Friend described, the Israelis have taken a welcome step forward, but it is only a step forward. We expect them to comply with resolution 799 and we shall do our best to induce that to happen.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is no justification in international law or international morality for Israel to deport people from the land that it occupies to a third country? Does he accept that it is not the first time that that has happened but just the most dramatic example? Will he ensure that this country and the world community keep the pressure on Israel to come back into the community of nations, by ceasing that practice and restoring every last one of those people to their homeland?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a good deal of sense. As I said in reply to the previous question, there is no doubt that the deportation was a gross violation of human rights. It was unlawful and we have criticised it in many ways, including resolution 799. As my hon. Friend has said, this is not the first example of such a violation and our view is that deportation must stop and that Israel must comply with resolution 799, which we supported.

Mr. Galloway: Since I have just returned from the area, will the Minister accept from me that people in the occupied territories are in the depths of despair about the failure of the powers to do anything about making Israel implement resolution 799? The fine words that he has spoken today are all very well, but when will the Governments and powers do something about it? Is the Minister aware how isolated and vulnerable the Palestinian negotiators in the territories are, as they have asked their people to put faith in the peace process and international diplomacy? Lastly, the Secretary of State said a few weeks ago that he would not meet the Palestine Liberation Organisation because he was not convinced of the usefulness of so doing. Is he aware how useful it is to the forces of extremism and reaction in the Palestinian arena that he does not do so?

Mr. Hogg: I am trying to pick up the central theme of the hon. Member's multi-headed question. I agree that the Israelis' actions in deporting the deportees did a grave disservice to the peace process in the middle east and encouraged the forces of extremism. For that reason and for many others, we very much hope that the Israelis will rapidly comply with resolution 799.

Nigeria

8. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Nigeria.

Mr. Hurd: My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey and I have each recently visited Nigeria. Relations between our two countries remain close and we look forward to a smooth transition to civilian rule in August.

Miss Nicholson: Can the Secretary of State assure me that Her Majesty's Government will do everything possible to ensure a smooth transition? After all, the President pulled back from the transition to democracy some months ago and is now talking about August 1993. Can he also assure the House that he will do everything possible to encourage the President to come to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, as the last agreement lapsed in April 1992, which has created year-end inflation in August 1992 of 51 per cent?

Mr. Hurd: Those are both important matters. I was encouraged by my talks in Nigeria, both with the President and with members of the new civilian transitional council, under a remarkable Nigerian and friend of this country —Mr. Shonekan. A smooth transition to civilian rule is essential and I believe that it will happen. As my hon. Friend said, the economic situation is more intractable. We shall continue to encourage the Nigerians to come to reasonable terms with the IMF.

Mr. Corbyn: In his discussions with representatives of the Nigerian Government, did the Foreign Secretary raise the question of Nigerian participation in the west African force in Liberia? Did he ask them about the objectives of that force and what is being achieved in Liberia, where the most terrible civil conflict is taking place, with masses of casualties? Does not he think that a ceasefire must be brought about in that country and can Nigeria help with that?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed, I discussed that issue, and the hon. Gentleman's account is correct. Nigeria leads a number of west African countries that have forces in Liberia and are trying to bring the fighting to an end and restore stability to that tormented country. They have been frustrated at their lack of success so far. Since then, I have discussed with one or two people how the international community can help those countries and help to bring about a return to peace in Liberia.

Malawi

9. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the fairness of the referendum being planned in Malawi on whether to allow multi-party elections.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): If the referendum is to carry any credibility, it is essential that it should be conducted under conditions that are acceptable to the United Nations and to those groups in Malawi advocating democratic reform.

Sir George Gardiner: We all welcome the deferral of Malawi's referendum in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations technical team. However, does not my hon. Friend deplore the fact that the Malawi authorities have still not agreed to the United Nations recommendation that there should be one ballot box for all votes, not one ballot box for yes votes and one ballot box for no votes? Does he not deplore the fact that the Malawi authorities have ignored the United Nations recommendation that an independent referendum commission should be appointed? Worst of all, those authorities have ignored the United Nations recommendation that the laws that allow for detention without trial should be suspended during the conduct of the referendum campaign. Is that not a travesty of democracy?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British Government are also pleased that the date of the referendum has been delayed. I agree with my hon. Friend about the many shortcomings that he has identified. Clearly, the referendum must be held in conditions of which the United Nations approve if the Malawi Government are to seek to have further aid from

aid donors in future. The United Nations must be satisfied of the conditions, as must all reasonable people such as my hon. Friend.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister agree that a pre-requisite of any free election and referendum should be freedom of speech, freedom to campaign, hold meetings, issue leaflets and freedom from fear? Certainly there should be no political detainees. What steps are the Government taking through the Commonwealth to ensure that those conditions begin to obtain in Malawi? Does the Minister agree that it stretches credulity to think that there could be a referendum in Malawi as early as next month and that the conditions could obtain by then?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The referendum will not be next month. President Banda has announced that it is to be in June, which is what we have just been discussing. The hon. Gentleman is clearly right—much progress much be made towards achieving conditions that the United Nations and ourselves believe are reasonable for a referendum and for human rights. There has been a little progress on that in Malawi, but we want to see much more. The hon. Gentleman is right to identify those matters and put pressure on the Malawi Government to come to their senses.

British-American Relations

10. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet President Clinton to discuss British-American relations.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is looking forward to meeting President Clinton in Washington on 24 February.

Mr. Burns: When my right hon. Friend meets President Clinton will he reiterate to him the importance of the special relationship between the United States and Britain? Will he make it plain to the new President that many people, not only in the United States, but in this country, have high hopes for his personal success and that of his presidency? It is crucial that we have free trade, job creation and economic recovery, which are of paramount importance to both countries.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The first contacts with the new team have gone well. There has been no interruption in our discussions with the United States Administration on former Yugoslavia, Iraq, the Arab-Israel position and the urgent need for the general agreement on tariffs and trade to fulfil the aims outlined by my hon. Friend. The new President carries a huge burden and I think that everyone with goodwill and good sense will wish him well.

Dr. Godman: Is it likely that the President of the United States will be warned against sending a peace mediator to Northern Ireland? Will he be told that that may cause more harm than good? Are not the days of the American interventionist role in western and northern Europe coming to an end?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think it likely that the new United States Administration will propose a mediator as regards Northern Ireland, but we are doing our utmost, as indeed are the Government in Dublin, to acquaint the new American Administration with what is happening in Northern Ireland and in particular with the efforts of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make progress on the constitutional side.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister also encourage the American Administration to get the European Community to play a greater role in the middle eastern peace process and to provide more wisdom, judgment, experience and balance, as well as reminding them of the need to avoid obvious mistakes?

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure that that exact pitch would work very well in Washington. One of the good things that have happened is that the new Administration have declared that the peace process started by Jim Baker should continue and should be a priority. That is why Secretary Warren Christopher is going to the area next week. I look forward to meeting him immediately after that. If we in Europe can help, we should do so. We can encourage and apply pressures, as we have discussed in the House already this afternoon. I do not think that we should seek to complicate the task or take the place of the United States so long as they give the peace process priority.

Dr. John Cunningham: May I warmly welcome the Government's new determination to develop a warm relationship with the Clinton Administration, having previously worked to prevent President Clinton's victory in the election? May I stress that we share the view that it is very important for us in terms of trade? We do not want to descend into a trade war with the United States of America. We want to see final approval of the GATT agreement and we want to see the United States of America playing a positive role in support of the peace process in the former Yugoslavia. All those are important matters on which Britain and the United States of America share interests. I wish the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister well in their discussions with President Clinton and his team.

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that the Prime Minister will be obliged. Thank you.

Poland

11. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his polish counterpart to discuss economic development in Poland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs takes every opportunity to discuss economic and political developments with the Polish Foreign Minister. He last did so at the CSCE meeting in December last year.

Mrs. Gorman: Has my right hon. and learned Friend had a chance to discuss with the Polish economic administration the findings set out in an excellent article in *The Economist* which point out that while the public sector of the economy is stagnating, the private sector is going ahead by leaps and bounds, because the Government are fragmented, the administration is weak, taxes are therefore difficult to collect and bureaucracy is almost non-existent? As a result, the private sector is now employing 60 per

cent. of the work force and accounting for half of the gross national product. Does not my right hon. and learned Friend think that we could learn a thing or two from the Poles?

Mr. Hogg: I am glad to say that through our policy of the know-how fund, the Poles have learnt a thing or two from us, particularly the virtues of privatisation.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Minister explain why there is a disparity between Poland, Hungary and the two states that formerly constituted Czechoslovakia in terms of guarantees for credit for the medium and long term? Why are we discriminating against Poland and why do we have a mealy-mouthed approach to supporting and sustaining a fragile democracy and economy?

Mr. Hogg: One of their problems when negotiating the budget within the Parliament is to secure sufficient agreement to ensure that the deficit does not exceed 5 per cent.

Bophuthatswana

12. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has recently received about Bophuthatswana; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most recent representation was from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should have an even-handed policy towards all responsible leaders in southern Africa? Will he accept that President Lucas Mangope has led his country in southern Africa for 15 years, a country which is multi-racial and has had democratic elections a number of times since it established its independence? When President Lucas Mangope visits the United Kingdom, will my hon. Friend arrange for a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister to meet him?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government do not recognise Bophuthatswana. Therefore, it would not be right for a Foreign Office Minister to meet Mr. Mangope—although, as my hon. Friend knows, there have been contacts at an official level. The future constitutional arrangements for South Africa must be a matter for the South African people to decide, in accordance with their constitutional negotiations. I am glad that the Bophuthatswana Government participated in CODESA 2 and I hope that they will participate in future Convention for a Democratic South Africa negotiations.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister recognise that his hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) backed the wrong parties in Angola? Now, because of that sort of backing, the butcher Savimbi is running wild in Angola. The hon. Gentleman also backed the wrong horse in Namibia. Therefore, will the Minister disregard his hon. Friend's representations and instead listen to the people of South Africa, who want a unified, democratic South Africa as quickly as possible? What are the Government doing to help to achieve that?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It does not really help if the House tries to decide the constitutional arrangements for South Africa. It is for the people of South Africa to decide through CODESA when it reconvenes.

Balkans

13. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the prospects for peace in the Balkans.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are our EC partners have made clear our unequivocal support for the work of the international conference for the former Yugoslavia. Its success would be a significant step towards securing stability throughout the Balkans. We are also working to prevent the conflict spilling over into Kosovo or Macedonia and to provide humanitarian relief to those caught up in the fighting.

Mr. Arnold: Is not it precisely because both Kosovo and Macedonia have all the characteristics of a tinder box that the Owen-Vance peace process must be successful and, above all, complied with by the warring parties? Should not we and other countries do our damnest to put pressure on those parties to comply?

Mr. Hogg: To use my hon. Friend's phrase, we are doing our damnest. However, he is right to draw attention to the special problem of the minorities in the former Yugoslavia. We have rightly focused on the question of Bosnia, but we must also pay special regard to the issues of minorities in Serbia, including Kosovo, and also in Croatia. Their rights must be secured as part of any overall settlement.

Mr. Winnick: Could Ministers be a little stronger about what steps will be taken by the international community to bring to justice those who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, are undoubtedly involved in terrible crimes? People who have read the articles by Robert Fisk in *The Independent* have been horrified by the systematic torture and rape of Muslim women. Those responsible should face an international tribunal, and that should not be years away.

Mr. Hogg: It is an extraordinarily difficult and important point, because there is no doubt that the most ghastly crimes have been committed in the former Yugoslavia. We assert, and will continue to assert, that those who commit such crimes, either directly or indirectly, should be held personally accountable. However, there is another problem, which the hon. Gentleman will wish to bear in mind. If the authority—the responsibility—for those crimes goes as high as the hon. Gentleman and I expect, we must ask ourselves what is the priority: is it to bring people to trial or is it to make peace? That is the sort of tension with which we must deal.

Japan

14. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet his Japanese opposite number to discuss bilateral relations.

Mr. Hurd: I hope to visit Japan in early April and I am in touch with the Japanese Government about that. I welcome the opportunity that that will give me to discuss

with the Japanese Foreign Minister our relations with Japan and the whole range of international issues affecting our two countries. We shall also meet at the economic summit in Tokyo in July.

Mr. Batiste: My right hon. Friend's visit will be most timely, as about 200 Japanese companies are now manufacturing in the United Kingdom, directly providing 50,000 jobs, contributing extensively to our balance of trade and reinforcing our manufacturing base. Will my right hon. Friend reassure the Japanese that this Government—unlike the Opposition—remain committed to the policies that have, over the past 10 years, made the United Kingdom the most popular and sensible location for high-quality inward investment in the European Community?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is entirely right. We have 41 per cent. of Japanese investment in the European Community—partly because we fought hard and successfully to secure free circulation within the single market of products manufactured in the United Kingdom by companies owned in Japan. Japanese companies also bring to this country important research and development. More than 30 of the Japanese firms that my hon. Friend mentioned have research and development units here.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Foreign Secretary admit that the real reason that Japanese companies come to Britain and have factories here is because, as with Nissan in Sunderland, they can pick up £300 million of taxpayers' money to set up a factory with no-strike agreements, with only 10 per cent. of the work force being trade union members? They pinched the jobs of other car workers in other parts of Britain. The truth is that the Japanese Government have taken the British Government for a ride, because our balance of trade deficit with Japan is about three times higher than the value of goods that we send to Japan, yet Japan was the nation which was reckoned to have lost the war—and Germany is running a close second.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right in this —Japanese firms, and those whom they employ in this country, are benefiting from the reforms and changes that this Government brought to British industry. That is part of the reason why Britain is attractive to Japan, and a large part of the reason for rejecting the nostrum of the social chapter.

Israel

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the President of Israel when he visits Britain in February to discuss relations between the United Kingdom and Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will call on President Herzog during his visit.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that peace and mutual understanding in the middle east would be improved if long-standing hostages such as Ron Arad were released? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that he has been kept incommunicado by Arab captors as a prisoner of war for seven years, against all the rules of the Geneva convention? Will representations be made to secure his immediate freedom?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a real point. If Ron Arad is still alive—we thought some two years ago that he was, but we have no up-to-date information—it is extremely important that he be released with all possible speed. The same proposition applies to detainees in south Lebanon. One must acknowledge that the business of holding people without due process of law is intolerable and should stop.

Rev. Martin Smyth: When the Secretary of State meets President Herzog will he make clear to him that, as President Herzog was born in Belfast and reared in Dublin, there is tremendous empathy between our nation and Israel? While we are concerned about detentions in Israel and in the Lebanon, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the standards of justice of Israel's Supreme court are held in high esteem throughout the world?

Mr. Hogg: As to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, President Herzog is held in the highest esteem in this country, and also in great affection. As to the Supreme court—yes, its reputation is high, but we must acknowledge also that Israel's policies within the occupied territories need to be rigorously criticised because they frequently constitute gross breaches of human rights. I took the opportunity to say that in Geneva yesterday to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

East Timor

16. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will visit Indonesia to make representations about human rights violations in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: No. the Indonesian authorities are well aware of our views on the human rights situation in East Timor. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the subject when he met the Indonesian Foreign Minister in Manila in October, as did I—and as I also did when I visited Indonesia in October. As appropriate, we will take suitable opportunities to do so again in future.

Mr. Jones: Indonesia is not a country at the centre of the world stage and world interest. Does the Minister agree, however, that human rights violations carried out in Indonesia are as important as those carried out in countries that attract more international interest? Does he agree that such violations are more severe in Indonesia than in many other areas? In East Timor, the Government have killed an even larger proportion of the population than were killed by Pol Pot in Cambodia. When will the Government be prepared to act against Indonesia? When will they stop selling goods to the country and stop dealing with its Government?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman is right: Indonesia is an important country. It is an important member of ASEAN—the Association of South-East Asian Nations —and is now chairman of the non-aligned movement.

We and our European partners continue to be concerned about the human rights situation in Indonesia

and East Timor and we have made our views known to the Indonesians on numerous occasions. We remain profoundly concerned about reports of large numbers of deaths over the years, but we believe that some of the figures have been exaggerated. We believe that constructive dialogue is the most effective way of influencing attitudes and encouraging improvement; we do not think that cutting off trade, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, would help the people whom he presumably wishes to help.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that, far from being unimportant, Indonesia is the fourth largest country in the world and the world's biggest Muslim nation? Is he aware that after the deaths in East Timor —which clearly inspired the question—the Indonesian regime set up a commission of inquiry, as a result of which some army officers were disciplined and others removed from the armed services? Should not regimes such as Indonesia's, which is trying to improve its human rights record, receive due praise for the steps that it has taken, rather than being denigrated by ignorant Opposition Members?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Indonesian authorities behaved in an unprecedented manner after the Dili atrocities in bringing those responsible to trial. My hon. Friend is also right in saying that continuing bilateral relations with what is, after all, a very important country, and continuing to provide that country with trade and aid, is the most likely way of bringing about an improvement in human rights, as we all wish to do.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I say that I am quite surprised that the Minister, for whom I have some regard, is prepared to be such a snivelling apologist for the Indonesian regime? Where is the morality in British foreign policy nowadays? Is it not outrageous that the British Government should be prepared to supply arms to the Indonesian regime, in view of the human rights abuses in East Timor? Will the Minister make representations to Helmut Kohl, who, I understand, is at this moment preparing to sell large amounts of the old East German navy to the regime?

Mr. Goodlad: As I have said, we and our European partners are deeply concerned about human rights in East Timor and have pulled no punches in making our views known. The expression employed by the hon. Gentleman is entirely inappropriate in this context. No one has been firmer than we have.

As for the hon. Gentleman's question about defence sales, all sovereign states enjoy the right to defend themselves, under article 51 of the United Nations charter. Applications to export British defence equipment are carefully scrutinised. We do not allow the export of arms or equipment likely to be used primarily for repressive purposes against civilian populations. In the case of Indonesia, this criterion extends to the possible use against the civil population of East Timor. We do not believe that an embargo on defence sales to Indonesia would be an appropriate or effective way of influencing the Indonesians to engage in better behaviour in the field of human rights.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Irrespective of the regional importance of Indonesia, will my right hon. Friend confirm that originally—after colonial rule—Indonesia occupied East Timor by force and that throughout the past 15 years its record on human rights, regardless of Dili, has been quite deplorable? Will my right hon. Friend do all he can, through the United Nations and the European Communities, to ensure that the voice of East Timor is heard—either directly or, as has been offered, indirectly through the Vatican—in negotiations towards a constitutional solution to this very difficult problem?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite right. Unlike a very large number of other countries, this country did not recognise Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. We continue to believe that the question of East Timor's status and future is best addressed through the auspices of the United Nation's Secretary-General and through contacts between Portugal and Indonesia, and we continue to encourage those concerned to pursue the dialogue in which they are engaging.

Apple Juice (Safety)

3.30 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East) (*by private notice*): To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the safety of apple juice currently on sale in Great Britain.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the most comprehensive food surveillance programme in the world. It has been operating for 20 years, and 12 working parties constantly monitor the food supply in a co-ordinated national programme, overseen by the steering group on chemical aspects of food safety, for many hundreds of different contaminants. All the results of the Ministry's surveillance work are routinely published, together with the commentary on any health implications that may have come to light. In all, 34 detailed reports have been placed in the public domain. The report of which this particular survey forms a part is already in the course of being produced. It will be published next month.

Patulin is a naturally occurring toxicant that has been with us since the creation. It is produced by moulds. Apples have always been prone to this particular mould. Therefore, our surveillance programme has of course examined apple juice on several occasions in the past to determine patulin levels. On the last occasion, in June 1992, four samples contained higher levels than were expected on the basis of the previous surveillance. The results were considered by the scientific and medical specialists in the Ministry and the Department of Health, who considered that the levels did not pose an immediate hazard to health but that they should be referred to the Government's independent expert committees and then published in the usual way.

The results were referred to the Committee on Toxicity, the independent expert committee whose membership comprises some of the leading toxicologists in the land. The Government look to these top independent scientists for toxicological advice. The committee did not consider that the patulin results showed a need for any products to be withdrawn from sale, but recommended as a matter of prudence that steps should be taken to reduce the levels to the lowest technologically achievable.

In the light of that entirely independent and expert advice, the Ministry's chief food scientist called in representatives of the industry to explore the options for achieving that. He stressed the need for improved quality control measures to be taken to ensure the lowest possible levels, and various action levels were explored and considered in great detail.

The matter was then put to the independent Food Advisory Committee at its next two meetings. The published agendas of the committee make it clear that this matter was under consideration. The committee recommended that patulin levels should not exceed an action level of 50 parts per billion and that the position should be reviewed in the light of further data.

Following advice from the Food Advisory Committee, I called in the industry in December and explained the advice that we had received. The industry had already started to react to the earlier findings of the Committee on Toxicity. The Ministry's follow-up sampling planned for this spring is deliberately timed so as to look at apple juice made from apples made from last season's crop that have been in store for the maximum period—that is, we are studying the worst case possible.

Whenever the Government have proper, scientifically substantiated evidence that the public is at risk, immediate action is taken, as in the case of dioxins in milk, lead in animal feedingstuffs and milk and the closure of shellfish beds during contamination by algal toxins. This is not the case with patulin, which on the best toxicological advice available to the Government did not constitute an immediate hazard to health. Nevertheless, our prudent action is designed to minimise a natural problem that has been with us since Adam ate the apple and thus made a career decision.

We should not forget that apple juice is a useful source of vitamin C, and no good purpose whatever is served by creating quite unnecessary public alarm and confusion.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that he has not justified the Government's failure to act last year? I tell Conservative Members who seem to think that this is a laughing matter that the fact that a substance occurs naturally does not mean that it is not toxic or dangerous to human health. The Minister has not denied that patulin can cause cancer and other life-threatening conditions. He has not denied that the tests conducted on behalf of the Ministry last year showed that, in some apple juices, levels were above the safety standards laid down by the World Health Organisation and the Ministry. Does he not realise that, when the test results were known, the Government should immediately have made them public and taken steps to remove all toxic apple juice from the shelves?

Is the Minister trying to discredit the Government's own safety standards in this area? Where is the open government policy now? Does not this show the need for a freedom of information Act and for an independent food standards agency? How can we be sure that the Minister is not showing the same negligence about other food safety standards? Is it not clear from the Minister's failure last year to take apple juice off the shelves and to make the information public that Britain's food is not safe in his hands?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman cannot be taken seriously. It is not often that one hears such an injudicious blend of malice, ignorance and prejudice. We have acted throughout according to the best scientific advice available in the land. Food safety standards in this country are the highest in the world, and the hon. Gentleman does no service to the consumer or to the food industry by such ridiculous and idiotic scaremongering.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Leicester): Will my hon. Friend assure the young woman who telephoned my constituency office this morning and who is expecting a baby shortly that she need have no fears for the baby or herself?

Mr. Soames: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am happy to give the absolute assurance that that is the case.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister must not be too defensive about apple juice, but

should, like me, be a great advocate of the apple, and of apple juice and tell the House that he will drink it often in the future, even if he has not done so in the past.

There is one important issue. As I understand it, the report of what was a perfectly routine survey was concluded in June and the drinks manufacturers was first told of it in July. Will the Minister consider revising the process so that in future, if such a report might cause concern if it were made known informally, as has happened in this case, it would be best at that time to give the public the facts about what was found together with the reason why they should not be concerned?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he approaches the issue. It is true that after each incident of this type it is perfectly proper for the Government to consider what has happened in the past and what steps they should take if necessary to restore and improve public confidence in such testing. We shall certainly consider carefully the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, I am a very big drinker of apple juice.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Does my hon. Gentleman agree that the Opposition are indulging in scurrilous scaremongering based on gross exaggeration? There are not thousands but millions of people outside the House who will have been greatly reassured by what my hon. Friend has said not only in the Chamber but on Radio 4 this morning, when he explained carefully exactly what patulin is and the effects that it could have if taken in enormous doses. It is a very difficult row to hoe to decide between over-regulation and the appropriate regulation in which his Department should indulge. Over-regulation seems to be something that the Labour party craves——

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps I could guide the House: hon. Members should put questions to the Minister, not make statements. If the hon. Gentleman will put a question to the Minister, I shall hear it.

Mr. Marland: Will my hon. Friend accept the congratulations of his colleagues on getting the balance exactly right?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but the people to whom his congratulations should be directed are the scientists who so skilfully and carefully carry out surveillance across the food chain 365 days a year, which gives us such a high standard of integrity in our food industry. As for regulation, my hon. Friend raises an important issue. No regulation should take place if it is not directly proportionate to the risk involved.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister will be aware that the House does not usually associate him with the feminist cause, but he will no doubt be recognised as having made a contribution to it as he appeared to state that patulin rather than Eve was responsible for the figleaf. Will he assure the House that no contaminated apple juice has been sold in this country in the past few months, because he will recognise that his hon. Friends are far more interested in champagne than in a healthy drink so frequently consumed by my colleagues?

Mr. Soames: In that regard, the hon. Gentleman is an example to us all. I can give him the absolute assurance that he seeks. Since the report of the Committee on Toxicity and the Food Advisory Committee, all batches of apple juice sold have been tested to the limits laid down. Naturally, any batches that exceed those limits are not put into circulation.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Until my hon. Friend spoke today I had no idea that the apple in the garden of Eden was a windfall. Will he confirm that to get anywhere near the dangerous level someone would have to drink 140 litres of apple juice a day? Will my hon. Friend do his best for the fruit processors in my constituency and recommend that people drink one litre a day, which would still leave them 139 litres a day away from any conceivable danger?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend makes a good point in his own style. He would suffer an excess of more than patulin if he drank that amount of apple juice. Plainly, as in all such cases, the limits depend on very large doses being administered over a long period. That is why the steps that we took—the steps that we always take in connection with such food incidents—represent a reaction entirely in proportion to the risk, and are always in the interests of the consumer and of public health.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Minister not consider that we could have avoided much sensationalism if he had managed to lumber before us six months ago and tell us what was going on? Will he also consider the fact that in Scotland, as I know he is well aware, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department is not responsible for food safety? Does he not consider that, if the rest of the United Kingdom copied that example, it might help to reassure the public that the people responsible for food safety were not also responsible for promoting the interest of agriculture?

Mr. Soames: I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman that I have a close and harmonious working relationship with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who is responsible for the food industry in Scotland. On all such matters we consult and operate in a manner which could be considered a model of co-operation across Whitehall.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my hon. Friend accept that I drink apple juice every day of my life, and I do not consider myself toxic—although I may be quite dangerous at times? Is he aware that one of the people stirring up the controversy is a Dr. Tim Lang, the former director of the London Food Commission—a front organisation for the Labour party, funded by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to the tune of £1 million—who has now resurfaced in an organisation called Parents for Safe Food? And——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is abusing the time allowed—*[Interruption.]* Order. If the hon. Lady has a direct question, of course we must hear her. She has something quite valuable to say—most of the time.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend investigate my allegations?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is not only a credit to the apple but an adornment to society. I am happy to assure her that we are mindful at all times of the need to balance the paramount requirement of public health and the

[Mr. Soames]

consumer interest—those are, of course, very important —with the need to have due regard to the manoeuvrings of those whose real interest is to rot the food industry.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As an hon. Member who has something valuable to say all the time, may I express a sense of puzzlement? Is not patulin a carcinogen? How comes it that the World Health Organisation, which consists of careful people and extremely cautious scientists, has said that the level of patulin is above the limit? If the Minister attacks my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), the same attack must be brought home to the WHO, must it not?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the WHO has fixed an advised level of patulin at 50 parts per billion. It is also true that patulin, if taken in very great quantities, can be a carcinogen. The point is that the best advice from the best toxicological scientists in this country was that we should have acted exactly as we did—and we do not do anything unless the advice is both scientific and substantiated.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I congratulate my hon. Friend on listening to scientific advisers rather than the chattering classes on this matter. Is it not the case that a man even of the infinite capacity of my hon. Friend could not drink sufficient apple juice to do himself any damage? As long as the scaremongering—the political fun and games—goes on, the jobs of people in the apple industry who work in apple picking, in caring for the trees, in apple packing and in processing in constituencies such as mine in Kent will be at risk.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point. It is true that a food scare can reduce confidence in a product and can, therefore, have an entirely unnecessary knock-on into the jobs of people who work in an excellent business. My hon. Friend is also right to say that the amount of apple juice that would have to be drunk for any harm to come to anyone is so huge that it is impossible to quantify. Nevertheless, we believe that the steps that we have taken are right and prudent, and that they will command the support of the consumer.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Is the Minister aware that my constituents have not reacted to this morning's announcement with the mirth expressed by him and by his hon. Friends? In the main, the constituents who have expressed their concern to me are mothers of small children. One such constituent is a woman who is pregnant. They are concerned about the amount that might be damaging, not to someone of the size and girth of the Minister, but to a small child. They are also concerned that they were not allowed to make the decision themselves, because the Government did not release the information, about whether they should or should not administer to their children what is, as the Minister said, a valuable source of vitamin C. The Minister denied them the right to make that decision themselves.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady is going a little over the top. There is no merriment among Conservative Members. We believe that this is a serious and important matter. The full weight of the Government's scientific advisers and toxicological advisers has been brought to bear on it. All the papers will be published and all the information will be made available. It is pointless to react in a way that is quite disproportionate to the risk. What matters is that people have, despite the best efforts of the hon. Lady and her amusing constituents, trust and belief in the integrity of the food chain in this country.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will the Minister join me in condemning the Opposition out of hand for daring to frighten these poor women, who are now terrified and who say that they are afraid to give their children apple juice? Does he agree that it shows the depths to which the Opposition have sunk that they scare these poor women? Next time he is in my constituency —I hope that that will be soon—will he join me in drinking several pints of Inch's cider, which will give him a wonderful result?

Mr. Soames: I look forward to that day with great pleasure. I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that the scares put around by Labour Members are fatuous. The integrity of the food chain is a matter to which we attach the greatest importance. We shall allow nothing to happen which could upset that position.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move on. I have an announcement to make before we do so.

Hon. Members may have seen that there has been a little hold-up in the ballot for notices of motions. The ballot will therefore remain open until after the ten-minute rule Bill so that hon. Members are not inconvenienced, provided that the Chair is not inconvenienced by the rush of hon. Members around the Table.

Water Resources (Amendment)

3.54 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law applicable to pollution offences and anti-pollution works and operations under the Water Resources Act 1991 in so far as they relate to abandoned mines; and for connected purposes.

I seek leave to introduce the Bill at this time because it is highly relevant—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. A number of rather loud conversations are going on. The hon. Gentleman is having some difficulty in making himself heard.

Mr. Wardell: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker.

I seek leave to introduce the Bill at this time because it is highly relevant to the plans for the coal industry. The discharge of waters from working mines into rivers is controlled through consents issued by the National Rivers Authority under section 89 of the Water Resources Act 1991. That section allows the NRA to protect rivers and streams from pollution by the imposition of conditions relating to the quality and quantity of the discharge and the proper monitoring of the water that is pumped out of the mine. Moreover, under section 161(1) of the Act, the NRA can carry out remedial or preventive works and reclaim the costs from the polluter.

When mining ends, however, there is a completely different picture. As the mine is abandoned, the pumps are stopped, and as the ground water seeks its pre-industrial revolution level, the tunnels and shafts fill with water. Whereas in a working mine any water is pumped out before prolonged contact with minerals or heavy metals, as the workings of abandoned mines fill, the water becomes contaminated by minerals. Where the contaminated water breaks through to the surface, it pollutes.

Usually, the pollution is highly visible because it is in the form of a red-stained sediment from dissolved iron salts. Such water is highly acidic. The sediment coats the bed of water courses and literally suffocates all life which might support fish. It ruins the spawning gravels for breeding fish and leaves only some species of algae to grow into thick blankets of unpleasant-looking cover. That affects the overall ecosystem of flora and fauna—in particular, bird species. Sometimes, the water is also contaminated by traces of cadmium, zinc and other heavy metals, and such invisible pollution has far more serious implications for the food chain.

Notwithstanding the position that I have described, as soon as a mine is abandoned and the pump switched off, pollution controls over discharges are removed. Under the Water Resources Act 1991, abandoned mines are specifically exempt from regulation. Under the Act, a mine operator such as British Coal may "permit" water to enter water courses by switching off the pumps, but it is deemed that British Coal does not "cause" the outflow. Presumably, mother nature is to blame. That means that, under the law as it stands at present, the operator of a coal mine or any other mine can walk away from his enterprise; there is nothing that anyone can do about it.

In January 1992, we saw the catastrophe that follows from the inadequacies of the present situation when the operators of the Wheal Jane tin mine in Cornwall went bankrupt. Few people will forget seeing on television the 10 million gallons of brick-red water that had surged into the River Carnon, seeping downstream to foul the Restronguet creek, the Carrick roads and Falmouth bay and threatening the Helford estuary.

Subsequently, at Devoran bridge, cadmium levels were measured at 600 parts per billion, which should be set against the five parts per billion standard set in the dangerous substances directive. Similar results were obtained for other heavy metals. The NRA, the county and district councils and the Government have had to fund a massive clean-up programme which is still under way. There are 88 private mines operating in south Wales at present. There is a need to ensure that the environment is protected if and when those mines cease to operate. If the Government plan to sell off coal mines, it must be realised that, when a company decides that a privately owned mine has completed its profitable life, that company walks away from the mine with no further responsibility for what happens when it floods.

It is inconceivable that the Government should proceed with the sale of any mine without defining who is responsible for abandoned mine waters.

One solution would be for an agency, funded by a levy on extracted coal, to assume long-term responsibility for clearing pollution from abandoned mine waters. The Water Resources Act 1991 would be amended so that the agency would no longer be exempt from normal pollution controls. Section 161(4) of the Act would be amended so that, when the agency did not deal with the pollution to the satisfaction of the National Rivers Authority the authority would have the power to carry out the work and reclaim the costs from the agency. In that way, the NRA and the Government could meet the statutory duties imposed on them by the EC in relation to water quality standards. At present, that duty is not being met.

Of more immediate concern to local authorities, the NRA and conservationists is the result of the Government's decision to close 31 pits—or is it 20 or 10 pits? Who knows? It must be realised that, regardless of the number of pits which are closed, such closures will not mean simply that many more rivers will be polluted.

Many mines have not been totally abandoned when mining has stopped. Because of the safety requirements of nearby newer mines, pumping may have continued in old workings. Since the Oakdale colliery was abandoned in 1990, the River Sirhowy has been polluted by discharges for 1·5 km so far. When Oakdale closed, there was no longer any reason to continue pumping at Celynen north colliery, which closed on 31 March 1985. The subsequent break-out of water from that colliery has led to visual pollution of 2 km of the River Ebbw—threatening the environmental gains for a river which has been steadily improved at considerable cost since 1968.

British Coal has spent more than £1 million a year pumping disused pits in County Durham to protect the working coastal pits. If those pits close, the pollution potential will be enormous. Similarly, Derbyshire has many old mine workings which are pumped to protect newer pits, especially in the linked Nottinghamshire coalfield. Derbyshire county council is concerned about the pollution in its area that will result if the Nottinghamshire pits close.

Throughout the British coalfields, mining in the past was carried out with no appreciation of environmental consequences. We have been encumbered with depress-

[Mr. Wardell]

ingly ugly spoil tips and derelict buildings. In Wales, so far we have at least 29,000 recorded abandoned shafts, drifts and adits.

In Yorkshire, discharges from abandoned mines are causing serious pollution to 40 km of river. In England, a total of about 250 km of rivers are affected by abandoned mine waters. That is likely considerably to underestimate the problem.

In south Wales, the Welsh Office is supporting research initiated by the Wales NRA to identify affected streams where pollution is unrecorded. But we know that more than 30 miles of streams and rivers, amounting to 4·5 per cent. of our classified rivers, are contaminated by waters from abandoned mines.

Members of the Welsh Select Committee visited sites early last year, including some in my constituency. They saw the effects of pollution on the river Cathan at Garnswllt, the 1 km of the River Morlais between the closed Brynlliw colliery and the river Clyne which is polluted for its entire length as it runs through the Clyne country park and down to the sea. The River Pelena, also in west Glamorgan, is known as the yellow river.

Those eyesores can be tackled only through Government funds for land reclamation schemes. I hope that before colliery closures or sell-outs take place, adequate effective legislation is established so that these problems are not added to.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gareth Wardell, Dr. Kim Howells, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Denzil Davies, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Tom Clarke and Mr. Ken Eastham.

Water Resources (Amendment)

Mr. Gareth Wardell accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law applicable to pollution offences and anti-pollution works and operations under the Water Resources Act 1991 in so far as they relate to abandoned mines; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February, and to be printed. [Bill No. 131.]

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 26 FEBRUARY 1993

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Tom Cox
Mr. Harold Elletson
Mr. Bernard Jenkin

Orders of the Day

Housing and Urban Development Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

[Dame Janet Fookes *in the Chair.*]

New clause 14

Objects and Functions of the Agency

'1.—(1) The Agency established under section 139 below shall have the objects and functions specified in this section and in the rest of Part III.

(2) The main objects of the Agency shall be—

(a) to further the economic development of England or any part of England;

(b) to promote industrial efficiency and international competitiveness;

(c) to prepare, promote, assist and undertake measures for the economic and social development of England;

(d) to provide, maintain or safeguard employment in any part of England;

(e) to promote a special programme for the creation of employment opportunities in areas affected by the closure of collieries; and

(f) to further the improvement of the environment in England (having regard to existing amenity) and by, inter alia, securing the regeneration of land.

(3) With regard to the functions specified in (2), the objects of the Agency shall relate to the regeneration of land—

(a) which is land of one or more of the descriptions mentioned in subsection (4); and

(b) which the Agency (after consultation with local authorities and acting in accordance with directions, given by the Secretary of State under section 143) determines to be suitable for regeneration under this Part, after having undertaken an environmental assessment of the likely significant effects of the activities.

(4) The descriptions of land referred to in subsections 3(a) are—

(a) land which is vacant or unused;

(b) land which is situated in an urban area which is under-used or ineffectively used;

(c) land which is contaminated, derelict or unsightly; and

(d) land which is likely to become derelict or unsightly by reason of actual or apprehended collapse of the surface as the result of carrying out of relevant operations which have ceased to be carried out:

and in this subsection "relevant operations" has the same meaning as in section 1 of the Derelict Land Act 1982.

(5) The objects of the Agency are to be achieved in particular by the following means, namely—

(a) by developing or encouraging the development of new or existing industry and commerce;

(b) by providing or assisting in the provision of finance to persons carrying on or intending to carry on industrial or commercial undertakings;

(c) by assisting in the establishment or growth of community enterprises or co-operative enterprises;

(d) by promoting or assisting the establishment, growth, modernisation or development of industry or any undertaking in an industry;

(e) by providing or adapting sites or reconstructing premises for any industrial or commercial undertakings or assisting any other person to do any of these things and providing and assisting in the provision of related facilities;

(f) by managing or assisting in the management of sites and premises for industrial undertakings;

(g) by bringing derelict land into use or improving its appearance;
(h) by creating a safe and attractive environment; and
(i) by facilitating the provision of housing and social and recreational facilities.'.—*[Mr. Henderson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.6 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I understand that it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 107, in clause 140, page 142, leave out from beginning of line 37 to end of line 29 on page 143.

No. 130, in page 142, line 44 at end insert—

'; and
(c) with due regard to the environment in which the land is situated; and
(d) principally for the benefit of the people resident in the local authority area in which the land is situated.'.

Mr. Henderson: New clause 14 is about how best the problem of urban dereliction can be tackled in our country. The Government would say that a property-led urban regeneration agency was the most appropriate way of tackling the problem of urban dereliction. The Opposition would argue that such an agency would be inadequate and that the weight of evidence for the weakness of similar past attempts such as the urban development corporations is available for all to see. We would also argue that a full development agency along the lines of the Welsh Development Agency and Scottish Enterprise is necessary if a real attempt is to be made to tackle the problem of urban dereliction in Britain.

I am pleased to say that there was agreement in Committee that there was a problem of urban dereliction which could lead to under-utilisation of potential economic resources, both human and physical, with the inevitable result that unemployment is created. It is a problem which places physical and aesthetic blight on many urban areas. It is a problem which throws up huge social problems such as bad housing, family stress, poor health, poor educational achievement, teenage violence and a drug culture. It is a problem which in many communities in Britain creates a sense of hopelessness. Generations of unemployed people and whole communities feel alienated from the rest of society. It is a problem not only of people but of people and their communities.

There was also agreement in Committee that the problem of urban dereliction would not go away of its own accord and that the state must intervene if a real attempt is to be made to tackle the problems. There was a recognition that market forces would not deal with the problem of urban dereliction and would inevitably tend to create development in prosperous areas. It was recognised that the cost of urban renewal was too expensive to attract a market solution. There are extra costs, such as the cost of clearing sites and providing infrastructure such as roads, railways and new factories. There may be a lack of trained staff to work in a new employment area.

Indeed, there may be difficulty in attracting trained staff into areas afflicted by urban dereliction. A culture of community needs to be established so that staff who come to work in an area which needs to be developed have the facilities which they would expect in other communities such as shopping and recreational facilities. Market forces will not create such facilities. Also, developers will always be attracted to the easy short-term option—the pull of an attractive location which will give them a quick return. State intervention is necessary if developers are to be attracted into areas of severe urban dereliction. That is as far as agreement went when the subject was discussed in Committee and there was no agreement on how the problems could best be tackled.

The Minister said in Committee that a multi-agency approach was necessary, and I do not disagree. He must, however, think of the nature of that approach because there are plenty of examples of multi-agency approaches in the recent past. Urban development councils, task forces, derelict land grant, urban aid, city challenge, training and enterprise councils and a host of other initiatives have been taken. As he visits different parts of the country, the Minister's own eyes must tell him that the problem has not been resolved. He is welcome to come to Tyneside to find out what is happening there. The multi-agency approach has not made any real dent on urban dereliction.

Is not the Government's failure one of economic analysis? One of the Government's advisers, professor Robson of Manchester university, recently spoke about urban problems to the Institute of British Geographers' conference, saying:

"It is not enough to rely on benefits trickling down from large developments—such as London Docklands. When too many inhabitants of a city are without money, work, homes, and worst of all without hope, cities as entities must inevitably flounder."

Before he sat on the Front Bench the Minister was known to be keen to put his thoughts down in writing from time to time. He prepared a book called, "Popular Capitalism", which obviously endeared him to his master—or rather mistress—of the time, as he was quickly promoted to the Front Bench after its publication. In the book he said:

"Far from being divisive or doing people down, popular capitalism has got something to offer all of the people. Many pilgrims are now wending their way to Docklands and are mastering the street names of the new city. Perhaps one day Heron Quay, Mudchute, Canary Wharf will be names as well known worldwide as Trafalgar Square, Marble Arch and Charing Cross."

So, who are the pilgrims? Credit Suisse, Ogilvy and Mather—an advertising company—the *Daily Telegraph*, and the remains of the developers Olympia and York. That constitutes only 15 per cent. of Canary Wharf, however, because the rest of it is lying empty—so they are lonely pilgrims.

The Minister's officials were not prepared to be pilgrims. They were offered the chance to jump on Howard's Mayflower at Westminster and troop down the Thames to the Isle of Dogs, but as soon as the opportunity was made available it became known as the great mutiny on the Thames because his employees were not prepared to go. Instead of being known as Heron Quay or Canary Wharf, it will be known as the lost city of Wapping, and in many senses it deserves to be, because the project was ill conceived.

Why will the Government not listen to the evidence that a development-type agency is necessary? That view has been expressed to the Government by a wide range of sources. The agency should co-ordinate infrastructure development, the activities of the important Departments of Transport, Environment, and Trade and Industry. It

[Mr. Henderson]

should link up any training schemes that might be made available and act to encourage inward investment. It should co-ordinate grants and aid and, importantly, promote the area.

4.15 pm

Not only the Labour party is saying that, but the Government's own consultants. I have a document which has already been presented to the Minister by Linklaters and Paines. It argues forcibly that a property-based agency on its own will be completely inadequate. It strongly argues for a development agency to co-ordinate the various factors that I mentioned.

The builders involved in many of the development schemes have also used the same argument. I do not wish to take up too much of the time of the House by reeling off endless quotes, but it is useful to quote Costain, which states:

"The Consultation Paper"

on which the Bill is based

"gives no indication of how the primary aim of the Agency, 'to enable vacant and derelict land in urban areas to be brought into use', will be integrated with the people related activities which are so necessary. Scotland, with its network of Enterprise Companies, and Wales, with its Development Agency, have a more holistic answer to the challenge and we recommend that this opportunity be used to provide a similar response to England's regeneration needs."

Nigel Smith, another of the Government's advisers, wrote in a recent article in the *Local Government Chronicle:*

"The WDA has been able to exploit the synergy between its property and inward investment functions—offering a one stop shop—to great effect. Regionally based outfits in England cannot hold a candle to the Welsh."

If the Minister is not convinced by the evidence of the consultants and the developers, perhaps he will listen to the views of Lord Walker, who will be appointed chairman of the agency should Parliament approve it.

Autobiographies have become fashionable for ex-Ministers and Lord Walker in his argues:

"We calculated that by creating new businesses, helping existing companies grow and attracting inward investment from Britain and overseas, we could bring down unemployment to the lowest figure in England"—

in relation to Wales.

"I quickly realised that my best instrument for achieving all this was the Welsh Development Agency. It was flexible, could help with the property side, offer grants in line with the EEC rules. I gave it more money to expand the job."

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): How is it that the hon. Gentleman argues for wider powers, opportunities and responsibilities for an unelected organisation—the URA—while the leader of the Labour party said that much more must be done by elected politicians in government and local authorities? There seems to be an inconsistency between his amendment and what the leader of his party was saying a few days ago.

Mr. Henderson: There is absolutely no distinction between what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the leader of the Labour party, was saying and what I have said. My right hon. and learned Friend the leader of the Labour party would support me in saying that the agency charged with regenerating urban Britain must be given the proper powers to do the job. My right hon. and learned Friend made the point, as I would, that the agency should be democratically accountable to Parliament, certainly on an annual basis when setting out budgets and reports.

The agency should also be accountable to the regions of the country where it operates. The democratic structure on which the agency could be regionally based should be examined. There should be local monitoring committees so that where the agency is working in local streets or communities, the residents can have a direct say in what it is doing. There is absolutely no distinction between the views of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East and myself or my other hon. Friends.

Even were the property-led agency to have some impact upon our cities, does the Minister believe that it could have any impact on rebuilding communities in our coalfields? There is clearly a need not only to rebuild the whole economies of those areas but to bring in the infrastructure, to develop the training and to do all the other things which are necessary to give a community hope for jobs, vitality and a chance of being successful. I hope the Minister is not suggesting that there should be a Grimethorpe wharf. I cannot imagine that that would do much to help rebuild that community.

In relation to the regeneration of land, is it not also essential to do that in partnership with local authorities? The Government have not given sufficient emphasis to that. Partnership is necessary so that planning is co-ordinated and things like housing need are taken into account. Where there is a chance of revitalising many inner-city areas, much of the investment should be in housing. If inner city areas are to have vitality and hope for the future, people must live there. If there are no houses which people can afford, they will not be able to live in the inner cities.

The third argument in favour of a partnership with local authorities is that expenditure programmes must be closely co-ordinated; otherwise, any good work undertaken by any agency could be undermined because of the authority's lack of resources.

If I had had more time, I would have liked to give more evidence to the House of other authorities who have argued the same case. It is important that the House understands that the argument about building a partnership with local authorities is not party political. It is put forward by practitioners who have experience of development schemes. Organisations like the Building Employers Confederation have argued the case firmly. The royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which is far from being Labour-controlled, has also put in a submission to the Minister about the need for development schemes to involve local authorities.

If the Minister cares to read the press releases of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), he will see in the press release of 16 November 1992 that

"Mr. Howard stressed in his keynote speech that there were no quick fixes and that the success of urban regeneration required partnership, the key to his major capital partnership initiative. He said: 'There is no doubt in my mind there are opportunities in the inner cities. Local authorities have a key role to ensure that these opportunities are seized.'"

I hope that the Government are prepared to learn from the lesson that they must have witnessed with their own eyes, namely, the disasters in areas like docklands; they should also learn from the experience of the 1980s when there were too many confusing schemes and too many unco-ordinated and disjointed schemes, and when all the

schemes had too few resources, with the result that none of the schemes made any great impact on regenerating urban areas.

The Minister should learn from the experience of his colleagues in Scotland and Wales who are sitting not far from him. Development agencies in Scotland and Wales, working closely and in partnership with local authorities, have achieved more than the panoply of schemes which have been available intermittently in parts of England. The Minister should listen to the experience of consultants, planners, architects, surveyors, builders and developers.

They are all saying the same thing: that a property-led agency will not work and that an agency with much firmer powers must be able to take on the real task of regenerating not only the economy but the social fabric of many of the inner cities. That rebuilding has to be done in partnership with local authorities. That is also the experience of local authorities and of the local people who have been involved.

New clause 14 gives the House a new opportunity for urban regeneration. It provides an opportunity to create legislation which can have a real impact on a terrible problem which afflicts many parts of the country. I hope that the Government will accept the amendment as proposed in new clause 14.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I strongly support the new clause. If we want to promote economic development through the 1990s and into the 21st century, we need to take a long-term view and to ensure that it is carefully co-ordinated and planned. We need a well-developed strategic approach. Most importantly, we must consider the human resources in a particular area. The vast majority of the 306 responses to the Government's consultative exercise on the proposed urban regeneration agency raised the points to which I have just referred. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said, those responses were not party-based; they came from across the whole spectrum of political parties.

The Minister made it clear in Committee that he envisaged the urban regeneration agency as having a narrow brief—a step towards

"bringing derelict land back into use."

He then said:

"the task of encouraging wholesale regeneration . . . is very large. That is why we need a series of other policies in other Departments, other bodies, and local authorities."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 12 January 1993; c. 806.]

The special measures expenditure, the urban block element of DOE expenditure, is small—a ratio of 1:12. It is a small carrot intended to encourage a donkey along the road of increased economic activity. Our point is that, if the donkey is walking down the wrong road—if unemployment and poverty are increasing, benefits are being cut and housing is becoming more and more derelict—that small carrot will not be sufficient to encourage the donkey down the right road of economic development in any of our cities. I hope that the Minister will make representations to his Cabinet colleagues to change the direction of wholesale economic policy to make economic development in inner-city areas effective. If he does not do that, the policy will not be effective.

The second point of concern about special measures—the £200 million carrot—is that there is every likelihood that the money will not go where it is most needed. A parliamentary answer to me on 27 January referring to the distribution of urban block expenditure this year clearly showed that £318 million of the £1 billion block had gone to London and the south-east. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North commented on docklands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) produced figures only two days ago showing that, overall, there has been a dramatic shift in public resources to east Anglia, London and the south-east. At the same time as the Government are talking about the problems of reclaiming derelict land and property in those areas which have suffered industrial decline, in the northern region there has been a 4 per cent. cut in public resources.

Through new clauses 14 and 108, we are attempting to ensure that expenditure is effective, but it will not be effective unless there is a well-developed, democratically controlled regional structure to define the strategic approach and to attract funds. As I said both on Second Reading and in Committee—on neither occasion did the Government satisfactorily pick up the points—there is nothing in the Bill relating to the increasingly important role of the European Community in special measures funds for economic development. Research over the past five years has shown that the European countries and regions which were most effective in their use of European economic development and social fund moneys were those with a strong regional democratic structure. That important element is totally missing from the Bill.

4.30 pm

This distribution of funds is also important. It is not possible for a regeneration agency which is blinded by land and property and politics alone, and which does not identify the plight of the people living there, to create a distribution system based on need. My hon. Friend mentioned what happened in the docklands in the 1980s. The special inner-city measures introduced by a Conservative Government during the mid-1980s were a sick joke. They were spoken of as relating to poverty and to inner cities, but there followed the most lucrative profits for property developers as property prices sharply increased. The Government have learnt nothing and they are making the same mistake again. They are offering a new initiative based simply on land and property, which will have no effect on the reality of life for people living in the cities.

Simultaneous with the launching of the agency is the rundown and destruction of the urban programme, which has clear criteria for meeting training demands and the needs of black communities. We have seen the rundown also of the safer cities initiative, which was crucial in upgrading inner-city policing and reducing crime, and of Home Office-funded schemes which made a major impact on training and education among black and other ethnic minority communities. All that is happening at a time when official statistics released yesterday show that unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds is 18 per cent. while among black and other ethnic minority communities it is as high as 38 per cent. Yet still the Government are shifting from a people-based approach to one narrowly based on land and property. That missed opportunity is unforgivable.

The agency's style and constitution lacks everything that we want. It is yet another example of government by quango. The board's membership will be tightly drawn

and nominated by the Minister—its chairman has already been nominated. It will follow the pattern set by many other quangos with memberships nominated by Ministers —training and enterprise councils, development corporations, health trusts, and so on. I recommend Keith Shaw's study of the north-eastern area, "Regional studies No. 2 —1990: In search of the non-elected state". A serious democratic deficit is now involved in the control of the major elements of public funding in a variety of areas. Accountability is lacking, because power and money have been shifted away from locally accountable authorities. I find that extremely worrying.

We discussed the regeneration agency's corporate plan in Committee. We also had an interesting discussion this morning in the Select Committee on the Environment about the merits of publishing the draft corporate plan for the Housing Corporation, for which the National Federation of Housing Associations has pressed very strongly. We want the plan to be open to public scrutiny, consultation and discussion. The Minister said a good deal in Committee about the need for consultation on the agency's plans and proposals, but nothing in the Bill even suggests that the agency has a duty to prepare and present a corporate plan; such a plan is not even mentioned.

The Minister said in one of his replies that the agency would

"be required to produce for the Secretary of State a corporate plan and detailed budget management documents, which he will study and approve".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 14 January 1993; c. 843.]

That, however, is no answer to the question of open government. There is no point in simply publishing an annual report which is retrospective and then saying, "You can have all the consultation you want," because the consultation would be about something that had already happened. I ask the Minister to agree—in the spirit of open government—to require the agency to publish its draft corporate plan, so that discussion and consultation can take place before the Minister makes his funding decisions.

I hope that I shall catch the eye of whoever is in the Chair later today so that I can refer to the important question of the removal of planning control from local authorities in designated areas. That is relevant to new clause 21.

With the right economic policy, the agency has the potential to take on board economic development under democratic control, along the lines suggested in new clause 14. It could encompass all aspects of economic development, concentrate its drive and motivation on the human resources which exist in our cities and urban areas and help to promote the economy of those areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I support the new clause, but I wish to concentrate on amendment No. 130, which is tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones).

I must declare an obvious interest: I represent a development corporation constituency, and have done throughout my time in the House. As a result, I have some experience of what it is like to represent, and to live and work in, an area whose regeneration authority is appointed by Ministers. I have had the opportunity to reflect on the nature of an authority whose members have come and gone while elected members have remained—and, above all, whose specific objectives have never been defined.

Section 136 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 defines the object of an urban development corporation as

"to secure the regeneration of its area."

It does not say how, when or, more important, for whom. It does not say in whose interests an area is to be regenerated. It is regeneration for regeneration's sake. Often the attitude of those who live and work, and those who have lived and worked, in the Surrey docks area along the south side of the Thames, in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, and by London bridge—and, equally, those in the Isle of Dogs, Wapping, Tower Hamlets and Newham—has been, "Yes, there is regeneration, but it is not regeneration for us."

In many cases, indeed, it has appeared to be regeneration against "us". Schemes were announced, put to the planning committee of the development corporation —a body not elected by anyone—and approved. Some of these schemes then took effect, even though they were contrary to the views expressed by local communities, their representatives and often the local councils.

Like the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), I make the point that we should not be under the illusion that any type of appointed agency is a substitute for a democratically accountable body. This is no replacement for democratic regional government in England, no replacement for fairly elected local authorities making decisions for their areas, and no replacement for a tier of local government in London, as in the rest of England, at parish or community level, which could look at very small development and planning matters. I know that the Minister is aware of and at least partially sympathetic to the last of these points. I hope that, when he has completed the work that he is doing, he will agree that we in London, like people in the rest of the country, are entitled to parish or community councils.

We shall certainly not secure democratic accountability through the proposed agency. That being so, I make a plea for some things which, even if we do not like the structure and the format, can at least determine the nature of the agency. First, we need a partnership between the agency and its works, on the one hand, and those who are democratically elected and their plans, on the other. That point has been made already, so I shall not elaborate on it. Secondly, we need proper consultation—a point made well by the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and for Sheffield, Hillsborough, who said that it was not good enough to have a few quango employees producing a glossy brochure and saying, "This is the corporate plan —take it," but no consultation with people on the ground, who might just have some good ideas.

One of the frustrations of Members for Docklands constituencies—this has been put to the Minister's predecessors—is that they have often heard of plans and initiatives only after the press has been told about them. That is no way to proceed. This is not self-interest and arrogance; it is simply that, in a democracy, elected representatives, whether at local government level or at parliamentary level, are entitled to timely information about what is going on.

Within the confines of the structure that the Government want the agency to have, its membership should take some account of the interests and concerns of those who are democratically elected. Indeed, it would be no bad thing if the majority of the agency's membership

could be arrived at after consultation with representatives of the local authorities—in particular, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and, potentially, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils, the Association of London Authorities, and the London boroughs. It would certainly be a good idea if those who do this job were to reflect democratic trends, as well as bringing skills and expertise to it.

Mr. Redwood: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there are 34 local authority members on the boards in urban development corporations around the country? There are many good examples of how people work in partnership. I welcome the fact that, in several towns, cities and other areas, there is now excellent collaboration. Indeed, in the case of Hartland and Plymouth, the local authorities want urban development corporations; they have been pressing us to set them up and get on with the job.

4.45 pm

Mr. Hughes: To be completely honest, I have to say that I did not know that the number was 34. I accept that development co-operatives have some local authority members. Indeed, such members have always been sought. In the case of the Docklands corporation, a local authority member has been sought from each of the three borough councils. The problem is, they never constitute a majority on the development corporation: democratic accountability is fine, but the inability ever to be a majority gives rise to the danger of tokenism.

Some local authorities see the benefit of an agency and of money coming in. The Minister must understand the point that I am making, as in the not too distant past he worked in and sought to represent urban areas, although the electors of Peckham were not terribly supportive of that proposition when he presented himself to them. At any rate, he will remember how important it is to secure partnership and agreement wherever possible.

Secondly, much regeneration has yet to take place. Last year a friend of mine—a Zimbabwean nun who works for Oxfam—visited Britain. Having been to many parts of urban England, she commented on the extent to which land is under-used. She regarded that as a scandal. In Zimbabwe, good land is such a valuable commodity—yet here she saw much good land in this country which was not being used. My friend made the point very tellingly. It can be beneficial to be made aware of the perspective of someone from outside our own culture.

I do not dissent from the proposition that there has been some very laggardly development, but there is no point in development if we get it wrong and if it does not meet people's needs. In this regard, I hope that the Minister is sympathetic to our amendment and that, if he is unable to accept it, he will undertake to consider it with a view to negotiating something which could be the subject of an amendment in another place.

I wish to make a serious point in relation to the two halves of a very simple amendment: first, any development should take place with due regard to the environment; secondly, it should be principally for the benefit of residents of the area. Like my constituents and many others in urban Britain, I am aware that some of the benefits of urban life have corresponding disbenefits. One thinks for example, of noise, pollution, high crime rates and a generally lower quality of life. In urban Britain, the chances of having one's vehicle or house broken into are considerably higher, and people have to tolerate traffic noise through the night as well as through the day. It is therefore very important that the environment in which regeneration takes place should leave people with a better quality of life.

I will give two examples relating to the experience of those of us from south London. We believe that we are about to have something which, in the short term, will be much more useful than a regeneration agency. This is a matter about which the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) shares my concern. I refer to the announcement about the Jubilee line extension, which has been mentioned so often in the House that someone from another planet might think that we were struck in a timewarp—or the groove of a record. We have been promised that development, and we are waiting for it to come out of the tunnel—but we have been waiting so long that we have almost forgotten which way to look.

The extension will do much good for docklands south and north of the river, but we must have regeneration which takes account of the best means of removing the spoil of four years' work from where people live. There is no point in suffering four years of hell if it can be avoided. That is not a matter with which I want the Minister to deal specifically, but I mention it as an example. Regeneration must take account of the already noisy, cramped and difficult urban environment, and therefore must be planned so as to minimise disturbance and maximise benefit. For example, spoil should be transported by river rather than by road, and lorry journeys should be made as short as possible. Such practical measures can be taken to deal with problems which affect people immensely.

The second example is topical. It directly affects riverside Members in central London, and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and I are equally concerned about it. We have just learnt that some promoters wish to introduce a floating helipad which would move among 22 sites between Chelsea bridge and the pool of London. In the past 10 years, there have been six battles—all of them successful—to stop helicopters from landing and taking off from riverside sites at Blackfriars, Cannon Street, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. On Monday, there was a trial flight from one roof of Sea Containers house by Blackfriars bridge before an inquiry in April.

Regeneration cannot be environmentally sound if its consequence is to permit helicopter flights, which people regard as a blessed nuisance, without their being subject to any planning authority. The Minister appears almost amazed that that is not subject to the planning requirements. We want not loopholes but proper processes of consultation and decision.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman—he is my hon. Friend on this issue—for giving way. This proposal will circumvent every planning law. It seems nonsense that we are discussing a Bill on housing and urban development while at the same time this proposal is being allowed to proceed. I am sorry that the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has not been selected, because we must find a means of subjecting the proposal to the normal planning procedures so that people who live and work along the river are consulted before their lives are runied.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady makes a good point. There is a convergence of views in the community. People who live in inner cities, regardless of their political views, often have the same views. We are saying that we do not want short cuts which circumvent the proper procedures. The majority view is not held uniquely by people living in council tower blocks; it is also shared by people who have bought expensive riverside flats on a long lease. Whatever our reservations and qualifications about the agency, our plea is that short cuts which have an environmental disbenefit must not be allowed.

My next point relates to paragraph (d) of amendment No. 130, which uses the words

"principally for the benefit of"

local residents. I do not mean that development must be only for the benefit of people who live in the area, but if a person's home is chosen for regeneration by an agency which nobody has elected, it is reasonable to expect the agency to act first in the interests of the people trapped by the decision and most affected by it.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North argued that one of the agency's purposes must be to maximise employment, and that point is made in one of the objects of the agency. My constituency has one of the 10 highest unemployment rates in Britain, so one of my key tasks is to maximise work opportunities for people who do not have work but who want to use their skills. Objectives must be specific and of benefit to residents.

Suitable housing must be developed. It is no good building luxury riverside flats which are out of the range of 95 per cent. of the population when there is not enough accommodation to house people such as the three who came to my door this morning before I left home saying that they wanted housing. Enough schools must be built to cater for the extra people who move into an area when it is regenerated. Such co-ordinated arrangements are necessary for the community.

The transport system must be able to meet the needs of a regenerated area. It is no good the M25 and the docklands light railway being found to be inadequate because they were planned wrongly. I am not saying that we should widen the M25—I believe that goods should be transported by other means—but a railway should be able to cater for the number of people who use it. Let us have some sympathy and priority for people who live in areas which are chosen for regeneration. Such areas are not just lines on the map; they contain real people whose families have often lived there for generations, and they have a right to have their interests put first.

I agree also that one of the prime functions of the agency should be to help in the coalfield communities of Britain. As the docks of south London have shown, when an industry is removed it removes a substantial employer and generator of primary or secondary work. Whatever the outcome of the review, and however many pits are saved, we have a duty to ensure that the coalfield communities are supported and encouraged and that those areas become as prosperous to live in as anywhere else.

I hope that the Minister will be sympathetic to the new clause and to my amendment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): The proposed urban development agency must be judged against a number of things, especially rising unemployment. Unemployment in Coventry is about 11·5 per cent., and a fair proportion of those unemployed are young people. They obviously take much interest in anything that the Government suggest to tackle the problem.

My problem with the Bill is that, on the one hand, the Government set up an urban development agency but on the other the Government go into the abstract and become a little vague about what I call the subsidiary resources and the agencies that should go with it. As some of my hon. Friends said earlier, urban aid projects such as the safer cities programme, section 11 and education projects are under threat from the Government. People in urban areas, especially black people, rely on those agencies for training, advice and business experience to enable them to set up businesses. The Government say that their objective is to tackle regeneration and create jobs, yet they are removing that objective in the way that I outlined.

The other yardstick is whether the agency will help to revive Britain's manufacturing base. People in great manufacturing cities such as Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton will take an interest in seeing whether these agencies can re-establish our industrial base. For far too long, Britain's industrial base has been eroded, especially during the 1980s, or the boom years as we now like to call them, when the service industries flourished and everyone thought that we were on the road to utopia, only to discover six or seven years later that we were not.

We must remember that many urban development agencies could be successful, providing they have the co-operation of local authorities and local industrialists. There have been several debates about Europe recently. Europe has forms of—dare I say it—regional government. Agencies can work hand in hand with regional government to allow for what I would call strategic planning on a major scale in any given region. In that respect, there is a vacuum in this country, and that is where the problems will lie in trying to ensure that the regeneration agency is successful.

5 pm

We should remember that we do not have a structure in this country to meet the European criteria in terms of attracting grants to some of our more depressed areas. Ministers often go to Europe to haggle with and to persuade our partners to provide money for our deprived regions. That problem must be dealt with if urban development agencies are to have a measure of success. The Minister might find that he will have to establish more locally based agencies because there must be a mechanism or vehicle to make people in localities within regions feel that they are part of the decision-making process of that region.

There must certainly be something more locally based in cities such as Birmingham and Coventry. If not, the agencies will not necessarily receive the co-operation of local residents who might experience difficulties with, for example, planning permissions, an issue that we shall discuss later.

The Minister said that there had been a great deal of co-operation with local authorities. I have no reason to doubt that, but based on my experience in the west midlands, stronger representation will be needed on any boards. Without that, the boards will become quangos which could ride roughshod over people, local authorities, industry and industrialists. The result might be that the

objectives of land regeneration and job creation are not achieved. In any event, the Minister must take on board those issues.

One of the big problems is that any regeneration must take place against the Chancellor's autumn statement and the Chief Secretary's statement yesterday. Many aspects of spending are to be reviewed, which will cause considerable problems because the agency will be trying to fulfil its function with diminishing resources, and that is what it is all about. The Government are trying to operate a policy which has no more than a 50:50 chance of success.

All in all, there seems to be little hope for inner-city areas, especially in terms of urban aid, safer cities and financial help. We have already told the Minister that there are serious disturbances in those areas. People have tried to analyse them, and I have no more answers than anyone else, but they know that many young people, of black and European origin, have no hope because they do not have a job. Many have never had jobs but will be looking to the Government to provide jobs and training. Some people in the major cities will be considering the proposals in that light.

We hoped, and we still hope, that the Minister will have second thoughts about urban aid and section 11 areas for which he has responsibility. We hope that he will talk to his colleagues about safer cities projects because if they are not maintained alongside urban development projects, I and a number of colleagues will be apprehensive about what is likely to happen this summer. I say that not as a threat but out of extreme concern. I have spoken to people in the inner cities who have experienced burglaries and violence.

We hope that the Minister will consider the new clause and, where possible, give a little. I repeat that Coventry has a number of sites and projects that we would like him to consider if and when the legislation is approved.

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): I support new clause 14. Like many of my hon. Friends, I am worried about the narrowness of the Bill in attempting to achieve urban regeneration. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham), I am specially concerned about urban aid funding being run down in the next few years. We need to consider a number of strategies to achieve urban regeneration: industrial investment, improvement of houses, access to employment, and social and recreational facilities.

Those strategies are necessary to the regeneration of communities. We often talk about urban regeneration but we mean the regeneration of communities. "Community" is a very over-used word. I sometimes think that people believe that communities are suddenly born. They are not; people have to work to create a community and to continue to work to hold it together. Urban aid funding has been very important, especially in many inner cities, in enabling that to happen and in allowing communities to work together in the face of obstacles.

Urban aid funding has been used in a variety of ways. It has mostly been used in areas of rising unemployment, poor social housing and rising crime. It has been used for the benefit of the community. A number of projects are currently being funded by urban aid. I could give an enormous list, but I shall mention just a few. The list includes play schemes for the under-fives for whom nursery education is not available; support and advice to carers, people living at home looking after relatives; community action schemes which help communities to feel that they are achieving something and help to get rid of the feeling of powerlessness, and youth centres and centres for the elderly. Such projects have often given back to communities that feel decimated and demoralised the hope and possibility of achieving something.

That feeling should not be under-estimated, because the most serious problem is the demoralisation of inner-city communities. That demoralisation leads to a fragmentation and the result is, unfortunately, ever-rising crime.

The Minister is making a fundamental mistake in using urban aid money to finance the urban regeneration agency. The urban aid money is for a different purpose.

I do not know whether the Minister expects local authorities to be able to pick up the tab, which is what happened in the past when urban aid money ran out. But in the past they could raise the finance, and now they cannot. Throughout the country, especially in the inner cities, local authorities face the capping of their budgets. The name of the game these days is cutting services. The only choice that local authorities have is which services to cut—and they have to make such choices in the face of an enormous amount of legislation based on the assumption that the community is there to care and to provide the network. Both the Children Act 1989 and the National Health and Community Care Act 1990, especially the latter, make assumptions about the caring community networks being there to look after the elderly.

As the Minister knows, raising finance has been made even more difficult for local authorities in the aftermath of the poll tax disaster. I estimate that in Stockport, my local authority area, £10 million which could have been spent on services has been lost through debt charges on borrowing, uncollected poll tax, administration and all the associated costs. The problem continues, because the deficit is still there. Local authorities will not be able to pick up the tab. They will not be able to provide statutory services to fill the gap. Inevitably, the projects will disappear, and that will be a further blow to the communities. I urge the Minister to think again.

Most such projects are funded through the voluntary sector, on which the community, the statutory sector and, indeed, the Government are relying more and more heavily to provide services such as sitting schemes, transport, luncheon clubs, respite care for handicapped children, and so on. However, "voluntary" does not mean free and for nothing. Voluntary agencies need support for administrative costs and for training workers. The voluntary sector will be especially hard hit by the withdrawal of urban aid funding.

In Committee the Minister answered our questions about the narrowness of the Bill by saying that housing problems and the problems involved in generating social networks would be dealt with elsewhere, through other policies. However, since the mandatory grants scheme was introduced in Stockport in 1990, fewer houses have been improved with grants and through envelope schemes. To rely on the grants system to deal with problems such as improving housing as part of urban regeneration involves a gross assumption. That simply is not happening.

How can one talk about urban regeneration without considering employment, especially among young people? Unemployment increases poverty in the community, and the cycle of economic decline continues. As more people become unemployed, there is less buying power and less

[Ms. Ann Coffey]

demand, so industries go out of business as a result. We need to attract industry, and to do so we must have a skilled work force.

5.15 pm

The training and enterprise councils have the major responsibility for skilling the community, especially young people, but I am worried about whether that is happening to a high enough level. We still seem to be thinking in terms of quantity rather than quality. I was most concerned that, in the High Peak TEC area, fewer young people were given engineering placements this year than last year. That seems to be a sign that the attempt to give young people badly needed manufacturing and engineering skills is gradually being given up. I do not know how we can attract new industrial investment if we have no skilled labour force.

All those matters must be tackled—employment, industrial strategy, and improving the social network and the housing infrastructure. If that does not happen there will be no genuine urban regeneration. It cannot be done simply by local authorities. The Minister is right to say that more strategic planning is needed. The pity of it is that the north-west, especially Greater Manchester, already had a strategic planning level—the Greater Manchester council, which the Government abolished. I am glad that they have gradually come round to the idea that a strategic planning level is needed to make things happen.

Of course, planning on that scale has to go beyond local authorities, but I still argue that it can be achieved through the democratic system. At present, through the planning laws, the Secretary of State has the last word. Any developer refused permission by the local council can appeal to the Secretary of State, and the council's decision can be overturned. That opportunity is open to the developer, but not to the objector. The objector cannot go to the Secretary of State. The planning laws have been considerably centralised since 1987, which has limited local authorities' ability to make planning decisions. There is a great deal of central control over planning issues.

There are several reasons why the system should be democratic. It is worrying that the Government are exerting tighter and tigher control over the allocation of resources, yet are handing over the responsibility for spending and managing those resources to unelected representatives appointed by a system which is by no means clear to everybody. What does the term "community representative" mean? Who is to judge who is a community representative?

The only way to judge who represents the community is through an electoral system, whereby one can see by the votes cast who is a community representative and who is not. The system of government by unelected representatives is pervading our whole society, which is a matter for enormous concern. When things go wrong, to whom do people complain? How do they know how decisions are taken, and how do they influence them and change things? Without a system of elected representation, none of that is possible.

Instead of the idea of elected representatives we now seem to have the notion of consultation. Over the past few days I have heard the phrase "right to consultation" again and again. What does it mean? Consultation means nothing unless the person being consulted is really able to influence what happens. Unless elected representatives have the power to influence, and to make things happen, consultation and the phrase "right to consultation", mean nothing.

When the Minister sums up I hope that he will consider carefully the narrowness of the Bill and how, given that narrowness, it can achieve urban regeneration. Secondly, I hope that he will deal with the issue of democratic representation, and all the agencies that will spend money and make decisions which have enormous consequences for neighbourhoods.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I was in two minds whether to speak because of the timetable, but my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has told me that he has already written five minutes of praise about my speech, so I had better make it.

I am also a bit embarrassed. As the Minister knows, I was not a great admirer of the Bill on Second Reading or in Committee. However, I rise under instruction—*[Interruption.]* It is not what hon. Members think. I am under instruction from my colleagues and friends in the fine city of Leeds. One of the first things I found out during my first week here, which I have not been able to practise, is that if one does not ask, one does not get owt. I am under instructions that before this terrible measure has completed its passage through the House, I must launch the interest of the city of Leeds in housing Lord Walker and his many staff. That plea is an additional reason why I support the fine new clause. Lord Walker will need more staff if the new clause is included in the Bill, so more office space will be needed.

Mr. Redwood: It would help the case of Leeds no end if the hon. Gentleman said that he did not support the new clause. I cannot guarantee that I could deliver the Leeds office in that case, but it might sway Lord Walker.

Mr. Mudie: As Oscar Wilde said, the only way to rid oneself of temptation is to give in to it. However, I shall not. Sorry, Leeds, I shall not be bribed—at least not in front of the cameras.

It will be sufficient for me to explain what a fine city Leeds is. The civil servants will not have to fear wending their way tubeless to docklands or even to Marsham street. Like their 2,000 colleagues in the Department of Social Security, they would be in the centre of Leeds. There is still space on the same site and within 10 minutes, they would be in open countryside.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): It is called Sheffield.

Mr. Mudie: I was about to deal with that city south of the great city of Leeds. If the civil servants had the time, they could always nip down to peer at the quaint city of Sheffield. I hope that the Minister will give my suggestion due consideration.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: I cannot let pass the implication that people will travel down the motorway to Sheffield just to have a look at the shopping facilities, especially as they might end up in Meadowhall rather than in central Sheffield. The importance of the excellent city of Sheffield is its tradition in training under the Manpower Services Commission, as it used to be called. We have said throughout the passage of the Bill that the various

elements should work closely together. For that reason, the city of Sheffield would be an ideal location for the urban regeneration agency.

If the city of Leeds thinks that it can get up in the debate and make a single-handed bid for the headquarters of the new agency without every other city that is represented here having a go, it must think again. We are really discussing the issue of the agency and not making bids for the crumbs of its headquarters.

Mr. Soley: What about Hammersmith?

Mr. Mudie: What about Hammersmith? I think that I had better put the matter away, which will be a relief to everyone. I rest my case. I am sure that the Minister will confirm that the record shows that Leeds, as usual, was first with a site and with a good description of the facilities available.

When I was a youngster, I had a hero called Nye Bevan. I remember reading one of his books in which he gave a warning about this place to which I did not then pay sufficient heed. He warned about how the procedures and methods of operating here tend to civilise and to blunt anger. My experience has taught me that that happens most of the time. That is a disadvantage in a debate such as this. Someone outside watching the debate and hearing the technical phrases about grants, about the urban regeneration agency and about the urban programme might forget what we are talking about. We are talking about the inner cities programme of the Department of the Environment.

It is worth while to take a minute to go over the basis on which the inner cities programme is framed. The Government have a programme relationship with 57 of our cities which shows that there is no dispute about the problems in those cities. Life can be very hard in the inner cities, and on occasions it defeats people. I live in an inner city and I do not suggest for a second that all inner cities have problems. However, I was a councillor in Leeds for 20 years and it has been my experience that there are many city communities in which people have nasty, brutish lives and get a very bad deal out of society.

The unemployment level for inner cities is often double or treble the level elsewhere. One of the Sunday papers published a chart of how wealthy each city was. Leeds was 98th, which was not bad. When revenue support grant is distributed, Leeds is treated as an affluent city because it contains within its boundaries places such as Wetherby, Otly, Roundhay and Moortown. Such areas help to balance and to mask the realities of life in other parts of the city. Unemployment levels in the inner cities are twice or three times those in the rest of the city. Figures released in the past two weeks show that there is three times the normal level of unemployment among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in my inner city.

There is invariably a major lack of investment in housing in inner cities which means that there are serious housing problems such as bad roofs, no heating, old sink units, old baths and badly fitting, draughty window frames. All that contributes to an unhealthy housing stock which has effects on the occupants and, above all, on the children. There are effects on education, on health and on future employment. When a young child gets bronchitis because of the lack of heating at home, he requires time off school. That time off school will endanger his academic record and thus his future employment record.

Communities normally have their own primary schools and perhaps their own middle and high schools. The education that the children receive there is not the equal of the education given to children in other parts of the city. I do not for a minute criticise the teachers who work very hard. If 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the children — *[Interruption.]* I am discussing the inner cities programme. I point out to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the Clerk advises you to challenge me, that the people who live in the inner cities are a vital part of them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I make the decisions and I consulted the Clerk. The hon. Gentleman was straying rather wide of the functions of the agency, and I should be grateful if he would return to them.

5.30 pm

Mr. Mudie: I shall return to the new clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which extends the aims and objectives of the agency to cover social, economic and environmental matters. I have been dealing with some of the social problems that the inner cities programme is designed to help. The question that we must ask is whether the Bill adds to or improves on existing inner-city initiatives. Does it meet any of our objectives or deal with any of the problems affecting inner cities?

As I said at the outset, although we can discuss such matters in the abstract, it is as well to spend a couple of minutes considering what people's lives are like in our inner cities. Education provision is poor and health is bad. Health records show that someone living in an inner city is likely to die earlier and suffer from more illnesses. The children of an inner-city dweller are likely to be unhealthier than other children. Crime and vandalism are part of inner-city life. In some places people cannot get insurance; their car—if they have a car—is daily and nightly at risk. Elderly people are, and feel themselves to be, at risk.

That is the reality. If the Minister does not agree, I challenge him to say so. I have done no more than to describe my experience of life in my city and in other inner cities. Those are the problems with which the inner-city programme is supposed to deal.

I repeat the question that I asked on Second Reading and in Committee: will the Bill bring relief to the people of the inner cities who are suffering from the problems that I described? I do not think that it will. I think that the proposal was put on the table when land was short and the idea of adding derelict land to the programme seemed very attractive. In 1993, that is no longer the case. The tower cranes have disappeared from the inner cities. A developer coming to a city will find prime development sites available for building. The measure may have been relevant in 1987-88, at the height of the property boom, but it is irrelevant now.

I have a second criticism of the measure. An examination of the range of inner-city initiatives reveals a trend towards property, buildings and land which is well worth considering. City grant, derelict land grant, the development corporations, and city action teams—only shortage of time prevents me from reading in full the official descriptions from the 1992 Department of the Environment annual report of what the organisations do —as well as city challenge consist predominantly of land and property initiatives.

[Mr. Mudie]

A third disturbing factor that has arisen since Second Reading is of grave concern in the inner cities, and my hon. Friends the Members for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) have referred to it. The withdrawal of any new schemes from the urban programme and the stopping of any new schemes for section 11 projects gives us a clear indication that, in the Department, the move is towards property and land.

My good Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) referred to the fact that the Government's policy seems to be based on the theory that, if one gets land and puts buildings on it, they will somehow fill up with jobs and some of the prosperity will trickle down. I can only say that, if the trickle-down effect worked, it would surely have been in evidence in 1987-88, at the height of the Lawson boom. In fact, in the inner cities, life was as wretched, unemployment was as high and health and education were as bad.

The new clause would broaden the aims of the initiative and permit the Minister to operate in accordance with the admirable example of the Scottish Development Agency, not only in providing land but in concerning himself with the firms that occupy it. It is interesting to compare two things that have happened in the past week, one of them in Scotland and one in England. In the case of the Hoover factory in Scotland, the SDA became involved. Amazingly, it fought off a French attack on jobs, with the result that the factory in Scotland is staying while one in France is closing. Compare that with what happened in England, where the Prime Minister's response to the plight of Leyland DAF was that it was a matter for the receiver.

The new clause would also permit the Minister to take another look at the social aspect of the inner-city programme, which is in danger of disappearing altogether; if that happens, it will bring tragedy to the inner cities.

Mr. Redwood: We have had a wide-ranging debate on the general objectives of the agency. The hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) at least wanted the urban regeneration agency to come to Leeds. He would be even better advised to help the council to identify land that would be a suitable case for treatment for the URA. Many city councils are doing just that—clear evidence that there is a need for the agency and that many local authorities wish to work with it.

I have always stressed that the arrangements should be based on partnership and have always predicted that there will be quite enough willing volunteers with ideas and schemes to enable Lord Walker, who will find himself much wanted around the country, to get off to a good start and with the money, skills and enthusiasm that the URA will bring to the vital task of city regeneration.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Leeds, East does not think that there is enough SSA and grant in Leeds, in comparison with Labour boroughs in London, for example. I assure him that the same formula applies to London as to Leeds and that it takes into account the very factors of need that he identified in his speech or other factors that are substitutes for those. Of course, the grant must be awarded in part in relation to the need that is defined.

It was a pleasure to her two Labour Members—the hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson)—expressing pride in their respective cities, and to see the introduction of a little competition in the Labour party over the question of to where the URA might move and live.

The issue of bad education will not fall primarily to the URA, and I am surprised that some Opposition Members think that the URA should have widened powers to involve itself in the education process. That is what the hon. Member for Leeds, East seemed to imply. It is true that there are schools in the inner cities whose results are poor and whose children's ambitions are not set high enough. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has introduced a number of proposals to lift the standards of performance in schools throughout the inner cities—a vital part of the regeneration strategy.

Mr. Mudie: We discussed this matter in Committee. In the past, the Minister's Department, through the regeneration programme, has paid for computers which have been used extensively to help primary school children with reading and maths. The Minister's Department has done sterling work in building, outfitting and even staffing child-care facilities which have allowed working mothers to get training that they would not have received if they had not had those facilities through the excellent urban programme. That is why I want the urban programme to continue.

Mr. Redwood: The money which is granted through the general grant and SSA settlement for local authorities gives much more money per pupil in the hard-pressed, inner-city areas than elsewhere. We wish to see those local education authorities rise to the challenge and deliver the standards we think they can achieve to raise the performance in schools. I do not believe that children in the inner cities are less able than children elsewhere. If more money is given, as it is, why can the results not be better?

If individual local authorities wish to bid for additional moneys which have certain educational benefits, there is the city challenge process to which some have responded. Some local authorities have seen the importance of an education strategy within the general regeneration strategy.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: In view of the Minister's insistence that local authorities are interested in raising the standards of education training in the inner cities, why have the Government announced the winding down of section 11 moneys granted by the Home Office? The vast proportion of those moneys goes to teachers who are specifically targeted at some of the most deprived people, the black and ethnic majority, which is especially necessary to put that positive action into education and training.

Mr. Redwood: We have substantially expanded the amount of money going to city challenge and the urban programme combined next year, and a number of initiatives are being launched. We have also increased the grant available to local authorities.

The hon. Member for Hillsborough made a number of points in her speech. I agree with her that economic policy geared to recovery is the most vital thing for inner-city renewal and regeneration. That is why I welcome the 6 per cent. interest rates and the signs that economic recovery will now occur and start to lift the economy out of recession. I hope that the hon. Lady also welcomes that as the most important thing to promote recovery.

The hon. Lady complained that £318 million out of the urban budget of £1 billion goes to the south-east, especially to London. It is quite true that money goes to Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Southwark. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) would be the first to say how important that is. If there were more Labour London Members in the House, they would be standing up for their part of the country in the way that some northern Members have done already.

Mrs. Helen Jackson *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: I will not give way because I have to make progress.

There is a lot of need in those areas of London. I make no apology for the fact that we are trying to do something about the issues in London, just as we are trying to tackle them in Leeds and other northern cities, including Sheffield, from where the hon. Lady comes.

Two Labour Members made the point that they do not think that we have the right structure of government in the United Kingdom to get grants and subsidies from the European Community. How wrong that is. It is not the system of government. The fact is that we have no objective 1 region on the mainland of Britain because no area was poor enough when the system was drawn up to qualify for that status. That status gets the lion's share of the money on the good socialist principle that the money should be given to the poorest. Of course, that means primarily the areas to the south of the Community, not areas on the mainland of Britain.

At present, the United Kingdom Government are listening to representations on whether it is possible to lobby successfully for any change in the map, but it will have to be based on sensible criteria. It will still be the case that regional policy in the Community will help the southern member states more than the United Kingdom because, clearly, they are poorer.

5.45 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Does the Minister agree that one of the main vehicles for attracting grant to Britain is the Midlands economic forum, which has replaced the West Midlands county council? That forum is one of the few vehicles in the United Kingdom which can define the needs for the area in terms of grant and is one of the mechanisms to ensure that the Government operate within a European system to award the grants.

Mr. Redwood: We have a first-class system of ensuring that we get the grants for which we are eligible. The Government's prime objective is to get a just return from our contributions to the Community for the reasons which everyone understands.

I cannot agree with Opposition Members who say that the Docklands development corporation is a sick joke and has done nothing of value. I suggest that they tell that to those people who are proud of their new homes and pleased with the major housing that has been developed in partnership through the Docklands development corporation. Opposition Members should tell that to the many hundreds of people who have new jobs and the people who have a better built and recreational environment because of what the Docklands development corporation has achieved.

I stand by the remarks I made, which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) tried to ridicule, when I said that Canary wharf would be a famous name in London. Events of the past few months and years have made Canary wharf even more famous. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that and welcome the day—which will come—when everyone will see that Canary wharf is a development full of tenants, generating jobs and a symbol of the new prosperity of that area.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister recall that, in his book on popular capitalism, he said that the Government would be able to get their money back after 10 years of investment in the Canary wharf project? Rather than the Government getting their money back, does he not accept that the developers are asking for more money to save the project?

Mr. Redwood: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman waits to see what happens next. A good time horizon was set out in the book. I hope that he will agree with the objective that, if the Government can get some of their money and subsidy back, they should aim to do so. I see the hon. Gentleman agreeing with that point.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: I must make progress because there are other important debates to come to which we wish to listen.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey got to the nub of the issue. He said that there is a great deal of vacant land in the cities and that it needs tackling. That is why he should support our version of the urban regeneration agency which is before the House tonight. We agree with the hon. Gentleman and we will do something about it by concentrating those resources.

The hon. Gentleman raised an important point about planning permissions for heliports. I have been told that a heliport may need planning permission, depending on whether it is a development or not. That is an issue into which those who are concerned must look. They would certainly need a Port of London Authority licence which will require negotiation and satisfaction of the authority about the circumstances. The Secretary of State for Transport has reserve powers on noise control. There are a number of issues which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will explore with his local communities.

I should like to reassure the hon. Gentleman about his suggestion that any development by the urban regeneration agency should be considered in an environmental context. Of course, it should and it will because of the way in which housing and urban development and planning legislation are structured.

In Committee and elsewhere, we have made it clear that the normal circumstance is one in which the urban regeneration agency will need planning permission from the local authority. Whatever happens, it will have to be in the context of the unitary development plan or the structure and local plan in the area involved. I assume that all the relevant environmental issues will have been thought through in the local and national proposals and consultations which are undergone for the normal planning process.

In Committee, I also made it clear that, if the development control powers are to pass to the URA, there will be three important guarantees: first, the House must permit those powers to the URA; secondly, those powers will still be within the framework of the UDP or the local

[Mr. Redwood]

or structure plan; and, thirdly, the URA will proceed by the same means as a local authority would proceed. In most normal cases there will be the usual opportunity for consultation and granting of opinion from the local community.

Mrs. Helen Jackson *rose——*

Mr. Redwood: I must press on, because we have to proceed to the next business; otherwise, the hon. Lady knows that I would be happy to give way.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said that property-led strategies are not enough on their own. I entirely agree, and that is why we have city challenge and big programmes through local authorities with the grants which we offer them and the powers which they have been granted by Parliament, and it is why we have a number of other initiatives in education, tackling crime, training and housing. Of course, there needs to be more than a property-led strategy, but to tackle the 150,000 identified derelict and vacant acres needs vision, money and skill. That is what the urban regeneration agency will bring.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North favours much wider powers for this unelected body. That sits uneasily with the new stress in Labour policy on giving powers to elected Governments and local authorities. We believe in a URA with a focused remit and accountable to the House. The other policies should be implemented through general Government strategy or by local authority powers.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister deal with the other point of my amendment—that the principal duty of the URA should be to the residents of the area affected?

Mr. Redwood: As I envisage the URA working by agreement with the local authority, I assume that the local authority will put proposals to the URA which reflect local opinon; so that point is taken care of. It is also taken care of in the planning process in the way that I have described.

While I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North is at least concentrating on inner-city issues, unlike his boss who seems to concentrate on the monarchy and telling us that he travels first class, the hon. Gentleman is wide of the mark in his new clause, and I urge the House to reject it.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): It is a pleasure to follow the Minister. I well recall the first time I saw a picture of him with his boyish grin lounging next to a lamp post outside the Palace of Westminster. It was in an article in *The Sunday Times* in May 1988, in which it was predicted that by the end of the decade he would be the leader of his party. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says that it was not. The lamp post went on to be used several times by the stray dogs of Westminster and the hon. Gentleman went on to become Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities.

This has been a good debate. We have had several excellent speeches from former leaders of local authorities. I commend the speeches made by hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), who was a councillor for 11 years and chair of economic development for eight years on Sheffield council. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) is a former leader of Coventry city council and was a councillor for 20 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) was a councillor for eight years and for four years leader of the Labour group on Stockport council. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) was a councillor for 20 years and leader of Leeds city council for 10 years: he will forgive me if I do not spend five minutes praising him—in view of the time, he will have to make do with a few seconds.

All my hon. Friends presented the face of inner-city life in Britain today. They put to the House their views on the Government's inner-city policy in the past few years. As we vote on the new clause, it is worth reminding ourselves of the Government's commitment to our inner-city areas:

"We take pride in our cities",

the Conservative party told us in its election manifesto, which was rather oddly entitled, "The Best Future for Britain". On page 38 the Conservative manifesto said:

"Right across Britain they have been given a new lease of life and areas that had been run down have been transformed."

Let us examine that extraordinary claim in the light of the Government's present proposals.

The urban regeneration agency, the objectives of which we seek to amend in the new clause, has a long and interesting history. It was not the brainchild of the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities but that of the Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), now President of the Board of Trade. On 16 February 1992, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported that he was urging the Prime Minister to accept

"a powerful body to spearhead . . . regeneration . . . an English development agency that would lead the drive to revive the inner cities".

The Prime Minister obviously disagreed. It was explained in the report that his Cabinet colleagues were putting up stiff opposition because they suspected that the right hon. Member for Henley intended to use the URA as a stalking horse for a more interventionist industrial policy after the election. If only that had been true.

The Guardian reported on 23 April 1992 that Lord Walker, who has been appointed to head the agency, intended to use it

"to develop a second Whitehall base for Michael Heseltine's brand of industrial intervention . . . Although Mr. Walker will officially be reporting to Michael Howard . . . it is expected that he will keep open his private lines of communication with Mr. Heseltine."

That, I presume, explains why every second clause of the Bill says that the URA cannot act without the permission of the Secretary of State. Under the proposals in the Bill, Lord Walker will surely have to ask the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities or the Secretary of State if he may blow his nose.

It is clear that the Minister did not want the President's baby and, having been forced to carry it, has virtually strangled it at birth. New clause 14 is intended to breathe a little life into the agency and to give that life some purpose other than as a facilitator for property developers.

We believe that the statutory objects and functions of the agency should include creating and preserving jobs. That is a task made even more necessary and difficult as the Government proceed with the destruction of 34,000 inner-city jobs through the abolition of the social programme, which was mentioned by so many of my hon.

Friends. Ministers must face the fact that one does not breathe life back into our inner cities merely by reclaiming land and persuading someone to build on it. Much mention has been made of Canary Wharf, which surely must have taught them that lesson.

Some £4 out of every £10 of the Government's urban block expenditure went to docklands in 1991. The £1·1 billion of public money spent on docklands created 13,500 jobs. By comparison, the urban programme has created and preserved 230,000 jobs since 1985 and currently supports 33,000 jobs at a cost of less than £240 million a year. The Opposition care about inner-city policy because we care about the people who live there. We ask ourselves what the agency will do for them.

Sustainable regeneration will not come about by developing land and waiting for the effects to trickle down to the wretched inhabitants. Sustainable regeneration will come about by creating jobs in the inner cities and by providing the training and the educational and social projects which will enable the inhabitants to fill those jobs and to live decent lives in those areas. Those are exactly the type of projects that the Government are destroying with the destruction of the urban programme. Ministers do not understand that. Indeed, that is why they will oppose the new clause.

Mr. Redwood: How will there be new jobs if there will not be property reconstruction? Do not areas need factories, shops and other new buildings to bring new jobs in?

Mr. Vaz: We do not need any lectures from this Government and this Minister about the provision of jobs when so many jobs have been destroyed by what the Government have done. We have always said that we wanted sustainable jobs which will last for a long time, not the short fixes that the Minister and his policies have ensured have occurred in the inner cities.

On 3 November 1992, the Secretary of State said:

"Let me assure the House that I intend the agency to work hand in hand with local authorities."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 163.]

Where is the duty to consult? He will recall the farce of consultation on the urban programme: a private secretary in the Under-Secretary of State's office wrote to local authority leaders informing them that the programme was to be ended. The voluntary sector, which received some £50 million from the urban programme, did not even get a letter. The Minister will also recall that local authorities and others were encouraged over several months to prepare their bids for the urban programme—bids which cost millions of pounds which the Government still have not managed to refund.

Where is the money for the inner cities? The answer is clear: it has been squandered on the poll tax. Let us never forget that the poll tax was the Secretary of State's invention. The squandering of that money has left nothing for our inner cities. That shows either contempt for the people of our inner cities or breathtaking incompetence; I invite my hon. Friends to decide which more aptly describes the attitude of Ministers. That is why the new clause includes a statutory duty to consult local authorities. The Secretary of State has demonstrated that he is unfit to be left with that responsibility.

6 pm

The Minister, for all his talk of partnership with local authorities, is like a battle-hardened veteran who cannot forget that he used to be at war. He wants the agency to override local authorities' planning powers. A sign of how much he is stuck in the past is that even those organisations which used to support him now see no virtue in going ahead without partnership with the local authorities, or in a central Government quango overriding local democracy. The Conservative party claims to be the party of democracy, but the Bill contains no commitment that the Urban Regeneration Agency's board will include representatives of democratically elected local authorities.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) for drawing my attention to the book written by the Minister. It is interesting to read the first words on page 1 in chapter 1, headed:

"Democracy breaks out: the long road to freedom".

Perhaps the Minister can remember them and quote them with me. He wrote:

"Around the world there are important stirrings for freedom"—

freedom for everyone except local authorities, which are democratically elected by local people.

Last week I went to Manchester to see the excellent urban programme work carried out by the Labour council there. Councils such as Sheffield, Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Nottingham and Newcastle have used their limited powers to assist urban regeneration. What support have they received from the Secretary of State? He has become the Hughie Green of inner-city policy—turning it into a game of "Opportunity Knocks", handing out peanuts with one hand, while with the other the Government have robbed local authorities of £60 billion since 1979. According to the Government's figures, they plan to cut urban block expenditure by almost 30 per cent. in the next three years; the only numbers rising as fast as the crime and unemployment figures in our inner cities are the number of inner-city programmes with silly names and less resources.

We need a policy for people, not for buildings. We tabled the new clause because we passionately believe that as we move towards the millenium our inner cities deserve much better than the contempt that they have received from this uncaring Government.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 259, Noes 307.

Division No. 148] **[6.2 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bermingham, Gerald
Adams, Mrs Irene	Berry, Dr. Roger
Ainger, Nick	Betts, Clive
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Blair, Tony
Allen, Graham	Blunkett, David
Alton, David	Boyce, Jimmy
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Boyes, Roland
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Bradley, Keith
Austin-Walker, John	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Barnes, Harry	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Barron, Kevin	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Battle, John	Burden, Richard
Bayley, Hugh	Byers, Stephen
Beckett, Margaret	Caborn, Richard
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Benton, Joe	Cann, Jamie

Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 160

ADJUSTMENT OF AREAS

6.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 133, in page 157, line 10, at end insert
'with effect from 1st July 1994.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider also the following amendments: No. 134, in page 157, line 14, at end insert
'and shall satisfy himself that the local authority in question has sufficient additional resources to continue where the level of their provision at least at the level preceding the making of such an order.'.

No. 135, in page 157, leave out lines 20 to 22 and insert—

'(a) shall not be exercisable unless a draft of such an order has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Hughes: The amendments form a natural group and relate to the limited subject of the adjustment of areas of urban development corporations. They seek to amend the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the substantive Act by which urban development corporations were established. At present, the Government can set up, by order, an urban development corporation and, by order, that corporation can cease to exist. In the Bill the Government seek to give themselves the power to alter the boundaries of an urban development corporation once it has been set up. The shorthand phrase for that process is de-designation.

The Minister of State knows that the three subjects on which my hon. Friends and I have tabled amendments are ones that I discussed with him when he last visited Southwark and Bermondsey, and the London Docklands development corporation area to the east of Tower bridge,

[Mr. Hughes]

some weeks ago. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will support at least the general thrust of the amendments. I hope that I can persuade him to be positive about them, even if he takes them away and changes the wording.

Amendment No. 133 tries to ensure some sort of control over the time scale between the enactment of the Bill—I imagine, later this year—and any partial de-designation of urban development corporation areas. There have been various rumours over the years, and the current rumour is that the Government may well want to de-designate an area when they have finished their regeneration work while leaving the rest of the urban development corporation to continue with certain powers. I understand that argument and do not object to it in principle.

The amendment seeks to provide a natural time for the first such de-designation. I immediately concede that I think that, technically, the slightly better wording would have been

"with effect from no earlier than 1st July 1994"

instead of

"with effect from 1st July 1994."

Nearly every year in May—certainly next year—there are local government elections. Therefore, the logical time to change the status of an area currently within an urban development corporation would be to coincide with a suitable date when the local administration could plan to take it over.

To take the scenario that I know best, were there to be a local election in the London borough of Southwark in 1994—as there is scheduled for the first Thursday of May—it would be sensible for the Government, if they want to de-designate an area at a date after the Bill is enacted, to take the following action. They should de-designate only after leaving a decent interval after enactment so that the authority has plenty of notice. In addition, they should do so at a date that is relevant to the local authority cycle—the election cycle runs from May to May.

That process would allow the Government to tell Southwark, Tower Hamlets or Newham that they want to take a part of the district out of the UDC and hand it back to the authority from 1 July or thereafter. That would mean that, during the election campaign, what had been done and would be done in the area would constitute a natural local election issue.

The future of de-designated development corporation sites is an issue concerning the local electorate. Among other things, they could vote on the alternative programmes for the area when it returns to local authority control. Whether it is 1 July or later is a matter of detail.

I am not arguing that it should be as soon after the local elections as 1 July in London or anywhere else. I am arguing only two things: that there should be a decent interval after the Bill becomes law, and that it should be after a date which allows for local consideration and democratic participation. Ultimately it is right that the areas should go back to local authority control.

Amendment No. 134 again concerns a matter about which there has been consultation with Government and about which the Minister and his colleagues have been addressed not just by me but by various local authorities. It involves a simple, though important issue for the local authorities and communities affected—the funding before and after an area leaves an urban development corporation. I will not stand by the beauty of the drafting. Indeed, there is a typographical error in the second line: the word "where" should be "with".

Again I will take the example which I know best, Surrey docks within the London Docklands development corporation. Certain funding comes from the taxpayer to the corporation through Government and is used for everything from road building and environmental improvements to the reclamation of land. Some money is used to fund nurseries or community projects. The local authority should not be financially disadvantaged when that area is handed back.

Any funding which an urban development corporation had provided should be transferred to the local authority, otherwise there will be the unsatisfactory position in which an area is returned to council control but the council is given no dowry, as it were, with it. If there is no alteration in the standard spending assessment or in the funding from central Government, a council with additional responsibilities will be disadvantaged, and the community will also be disadvantaged. Projects which had been started and continued on the basis of certain funding would be at risk.

The amendment is about the security of funding programmes during the transition. The Government are alert to the problem. In an area like mine, in the top 10 in the country with unemployment at 20 per cent., there is huge environmental disadvantage. I do not think the Minister was attacking me earlier. Clearly there have been benefits from having an urban regeneration agency in place. Some areas have been improved substantially environmentally and new houses have been provided. We do not want to end up with an infrastructure which we cannot sustain and which becomes grim. We do not want parks which we cannot look after or an environment which deteriorates rapidly and takes us back to where we were. That would not be in the interests of anybody.

As a PS to the debate, may I remind the Minister that when he was in Southwark he visited one of the better-off parts of the urban development area—around Butler's wharf. In such an area the community might rise to providing its own funding, but in other areas that would not be possible because, for example, many people are on income support.

Amendment No. 135 is straightforward. When urban development corporations are set up, they are debated in the House. Even when small areas of land are acquired compulsorily, there is an automatic debate either in the House or in Committee. The amendment would ensure that the House had an automatic opportunity to debate in full session, even though it would probably be after 10 pm, any proposal by Government to use the power in the clause to de-designate partially.

I hope that the draftsmen and women who advise the Government will not find it difficult to agree that that would be a reasonable procedure. I hope that there is no constitutional bar. Again, it is not a London issue because there are many development corporations. The House should have the opportunity to debate any communities which might be the subject of a change of status before a decision is made.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise these matters. I hope that all the amendments will receive a positive welcome.

Mr. Redwood: The intention of clause 160, which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wishes to amend, is to encourage de-designation where the work is complete or more or less complete, and where the local authority can come to an agreement with the urban development corporation for the transfer of that part area back to local authority control. I know that the hon. Gentleman welcomes that general measure which my right hon. and learned Friend and I included after hearing the views of local authorities adjacent to UDC areas. Some are keen to negotiate such transfers.

On the amendments, I am reluctant to put in a time limit. The effect of amendment No. 133 would be that we could not partially de-designate prior to 1 July 1994. It is conceivable that a local authority and a UDC could reach an earlier agreement. If they did, I would be happy for de-designation to go ahead. I would not wish to get in the way of local wishes. If there had not been willing agreement, it is unlikely that we would get to the partial de-designation before 1 July 1994 under the powers approved by both Houses in due course. De-designation would arise only if there was agreement, which deals with the hon. Gentleman's worry about the local democratic effect.

On the question of resources, there has to be negotiation between the local authority and the urban development corporation concerned. Over the last nine months of my discussions with them, I have been asking all UDCs to think at each point, when planning or developing a new proposal, about the long-term liabilities and about whether those can pass to the private sector or whether they would willingly pass to the local authority.

One advantage of partnership and local authority membership of UDC boards is that the issues can be discussed at an early stage and a local authority can indicate whether it would be happy in due course to take over a park or a recreational facility, or whether it thinks that the revenue and maintenance cost would be too large, which would lead, I trust, to a modification of the scheme.

As to the powers, I think that the negative resolution proposal in the Bill gives sufficient parliamentary accountability. This is different from setting up a new body which is taking away powers or duties from a local authority and giving them to a UDC. That procedure clearly needs the techniques which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. This is about restoring local democratic accountability for an area which has been handled temporarily by a UDC, so I do not think that it needs an affirmative resolution.

Of course, Parliament is sovereign and can, if it wishes, discuss these matters or express its view should there be contention or difficulty. In most cases—indeed, I hope in every case—it will be done by agreement. I trust that local authorities will make sensible proposals to return the areas to local democratic control once the regeneration work has been wholly or largely completed.

I urge the House to reject the amendments, but I will take note of the spirit of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am aware of the need to proceed, where possible, by agreement with the local community.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Briefly, and with the leave of the House, may I say that I am grateful to the Minister for being generally positive and for some of the encouraging things which he said about the need for agreement on timing and resource allocation. Although I think that I could work out an amendment that he would find difficult to resist on the arguments that he has put, I will note his comments and seek advice. There will be an opportunity later in the passage of the Bill to seek to move amendments which he may find acceptable.

In the light of that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 20

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 77, in page 238, line 37, at end insert—

'Land Compensation Act 1973 (c. 26)

. After section 12 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (tenants entitled to enfranchisement or extension under Leasehold Reform Act 1967) there shall be inserted the following section—

"Tenants participating in collective enfranchisement, or entitled to individual lease extension, under Part I of Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

12A.—(1) A tenancy to which subsection (2) or (3) below applies ("a qualifying tenancy") shall be treated as an owner's interest as defined in section 2(4) above whether or not the unexpired term on the date of service of the notice of claim is of the length there specified.

(2) This subsection applies to a tenancy if the tenant, on the relevant date—

(a) is in respect of the tenancy a qualifying tenant for the purposes of Chapter I of Part I of the 1993 Act (collective enfranchisement); and

(b) by virtue of the tenancy, either—

(i) is a participating tenant in relation to a claim to exercise the right to collective enfranchisement under that Chapter; or

(ii) is one of the participating tenants on whose behalf the acquisition by the nominee purchaser has been made in pursuance of such a claim.

(3) This subsection applies to a tenancy if the tenant, on the relevant date and in respect of the tenancy, is a qualifying tenant for the purposes of Chapter II of Part I of the 1993 Act (individual right to acquire new lease) who—

(a) has on or before that date given notice under section 38 of that Act (notice by qualifying tenant of claim to exercise right); and

(b) has not acquired a new lease before that date.

(4) If no claim is made in respect of a qualifying tenancy before the claimant has ceased to be entitled to it in consequence of a lease being granted to him by the nominee purchaser or, as the case may be, under Chapter II of Part I of the 1993 Act, the claimant may make a claim in respect of the qualifying tenancy as if he were still entitled to it.

(5) No claim shall be made by virtue of subsection (4) above after the claimant has ceased to be entitled to the lease referred to in that subsection, but such a claim may be made before the first claim day if it is made before the claimant has disposed of that lease and after he has made a contract for disposing of it.

(6) Compensation shall not be payable before the first claim day on any claim made by virtue of subsection (5) above.

(7) Any notice of a claim made by virtue of this section shall contain, in addition to the matters mentioned in section 3 above, a statement that it is made in respect of a qualifying tenancy as defined in this section and, if made by virtue of subsection (4) or (5) above, sufficient particulars to show that it falls within that subsection.

(8) In relation to a claim made by virtue of subsection (4) above, section 4(4)(a) above shall have effect as if the reference to the date of service of notice of the claim were a reference to the relevant date.

(9) In this section—

(a) "the 1993 Act" means the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993; and

(b) "participating tenant", "nominee purchaser" and "the acquisition by the nominee purchaser" shall be construed in accordance with sections 12, 13 and 34(2) of that Act respectively.".'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Schedule 21

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 78, in page 242, line 37, at end insert—

'1980 c. 51.	The Housing Act 1980.	In section 141, "3,". In Schedule 21, paragraph 3.'.

No. 97, in page 243, line 46, column 3, leave out '177(3)' and insert

'177, in subsection (2)(b) the words "or the Corporation" and in subsection (3)'.

No. 98, in page 243, line 49, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 180, the words "the Corporation" and "Corporation".

No. 79, in page 244, line 21, at end insert—

'1985 c. 71.	The Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985.	In section 6(3), "12,". In Schedule 2, paragraph 12.'.

No. 112, in page 244, line 24, column 3, at beginning insert—

'In section 17, in subsection (1), the words "and exercised by".'.

No. 99 in page 244, line 36, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 79(2)(b), the words "in accordance with section 84 below".'—*[Sir George Young.]*

Clause 169

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 96, in page 160, line 40, leave out '123' and insert '120 to'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

New clause 4

JURISDICTION OF SHERIFF IN SCOTLAND

' . In section 299 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, at the end of subsection 1(B), there shall be added—

"(1A) In particular in any such proceedings for the recovery of damages or compensation where it can be shown that the public sector authority has been derelict in its duty to issue a notice of defect to a prospective purchaser of a defective house, the sheriff shall have the express power to issue a decree applying the remedies available under section 278 of this Act.".'.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.30 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am aware that this is an important strategic debate about housing and urban planning. I am also conscious of the fact that Third Reading is yet to come and that hon. Members want to reach that stage as soon as possible. However, I wish to take a few minutes of the time of the House to deal with what I believe to be an unfortunate matter in my constituency with which only Parliament can deal.

I could detain the House for some time discussing the background to the circumstances which have provoked me to table my new clause, but I will deal briefly with the matter as I know that the Minister is aware of it and has taken an interest in it. I pay tribute to his officials for the help that they have given me and for their understanding of the complexities of the matter. I hope that the Minister will continue to take an interest and that he will be as sympathetic as possible.

The new clause would give explicit and additional powers to the sheriff in the Scottish courts in adjudicating matters which come under the original Housing Defects Act 1984, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Those Acts deal with former council houses which are deemed to be statutorily defective. The new clause is necessary because of a sequence of events which have occurred through a combination of bad luck and a simple omission by a local authority.

The results have been dire in the way in which they have affected the future of 20 families living in Whitson-Fairhurst-type properties in Hawick in my constituency. It is no exaggeration to say that the lives of those people, as well as their homes, have been blighted by what has happened. All the families are previous local authority tenants; all of them exercised their right to buy, as they were entitled to do, under the 1981 legislation; all live in houses which are superficially desirable—well kept, well decorated and well tended—but those houses are now known to be statutorily defective.

Under the original 1984 Act, tenants seeking to buy their homes had a statutory right to be told that the effective market value of their homes was nil. I do not want to apportion blame, but for whatever reason the families concerned were not told about their statutory right and in good faith they took out mortgages on houses which are not saleable in today's market. Because of that act of omission, and because the truth about their properties has only just come to light, they have missed the deadline for the statutory protection which would have been afforded to them under the 1984 Act. Because they have no alternative, they are now forced to fall back on common law and the provisions of the 1987 Act in taking their case to the courts.

The architects of the 1987 Act specifically and properly included a clause giving the sheriff the right to adjudicate on any disputes involving defective houses. However, neither the architects of the Act nor the Ministers who took it through the House could have foreseen the effect of such a simple but damning omission on the families involved. The problem for the lawyers and, indeed, for the sheriff when he adjudicates on any such case, is how to quantify the loss that those families have sustained. I am a former provincial lawyer, so I understand only too well that it is an impossible calculation. No scales of justice are available to the sheriff, the lawyers or anyone else to help to make a fair and clear judgment about the extent of the loss sustained by those families.

On the one hand, having considered precisely that problem, Parliament made it clear that nothing less than 95 per cent. of the unaffected market value would be sufficient recompense for people in that position. On the other hand, the sheriff will be adjudicating on an action for

damages under common law and he will not have access to the 1984 Act, as amended by the 1987 Act. He does not have any easy way of deciding the level of compensation that should be offered to those families. I understand that my new clause may be technically defective, but the intention behind it is to give the sheriff the additional option of providing the same remedy as would have been available if those families had had the protection of the 1984 Act. The new clause is carefully crafted and controlled to ensure that there is a limit on the amount of compensation.

The problem has been distressing for the families involved, but I again acknowledge the departmental officials who have helped me to pick my way through the problem. The local authority and the insurers advising it have all been doing their level best to find a remedy. The solicitors acting for the families have also been doing their best, taking account of Lanark council's opinion, to obtain an effective remedy. Everyone has done everything possible under existing law to provide an effective remedy, but no one outside the realms of central Government has the power to do so. There needs to be some form of Government intervention to provide that remedy.

The new clause is the only way that I could think of to provide a means of avoiding the problem of retrospection. It would make a power available to the sheriff in future. The families are currently considering whether to accept an offer from the insurance company which is advising the council. That offer is not ungenerous, so far as it goes, but if the additional power provided by the new clause were on the statute book by the summer—the timetable envisaged for the Bill—any court proceedings initiated by the families in the autumn, for example, would have a better prospect than they have at present.

Obviously, learned counsel would have to advise the agents individually, but if the Government could look favourably at least on the spirit of the amendment, that would give fresh hope to a group of honest citizens who through no fault of their own have been through a financially and emotionally trying experience and who not unreasonably look to Parliament for some effective redress.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I will not reply at length to the hon. Gentleman, but I have listened carefully to his remarks and he presented a persuasive case. It is my intention, if this is at all possible, to bring forward a Government amendment in another place if necessary. Given that undertaking, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel able to withdraw his new clause.

We shall consider issues involving dates, and all the implications, and we intend to bring forward a suitable amendment in another place if necessary. It is my belief that that will be necessary. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution; we shall do our best.

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

6.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Our general election manifesto made clear our commitment to Britain's housing and to the reinvigoration of our inner cities. The Bill contains far-reaching measures to achieve that. It takes forward no fewer than 10 specific manifesto commitments which will increase the opportunity for our citizens to own and to control the houses in which they live, which secure a better deal for council tenants, and which will help to transform our cities and to restore the civic pride that too often has been strangled by years of municipal socialism.

In 1980 we introduced the right to buy. Labour's eventual conversion to the right to buy was as inevitable and predictable as its initial outright opposition. Labour could not stand in the way of more than 1 million council tenants who eagerly seized the opportunity to own their own homes.

The rents-to-mortgage scheme introduced by the Bill will give tenants a new route into home ownership. Labour described those proposals as irrelevant. It does not care about council tenants who want to buy but who cannot afford to do so outright. We do care. We will re-launch the drive to home ownership and we will make sure that tenants are well aware of their new rights. Many will think that now is the time to take advantage of low prices, low interest rates, and generous discounts. The only question is when Labour will see the benefit this time. Will it do so before the next election, or will it wait until it loses that election and then continue its salami tactics of adopting our policies bit by bit?

Will Labour Members say of this Bill, as they said of so many others, "Aren't you lucky that you didn't vote for us last time? Think of all those mistaken policies—the error of which we now concede—that we would have thrust upon the people of this country if they had been foolish enough to vote for us at the election."

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): What is the Government's view of the 70,000 council leaseholders who exercised their right to buy but who now find that they have a massive repair lease, which means that some receive bills as high as £58,000 each? As a result, many of those tenants are in danger of losing their homes. What will the Government do about that? Many believe that those tenants were not well informed by the Government when they exercised their right to buy.

Mr. Howard: I well understand why the hon. Gentleman is keen to divert attention from the Bill's provisions and his party's abysmal record. He knows perfectly well the answer to his question—that we are engaged in discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders to see what steps can be taken to alleviate the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I strongly urge him to desist from his diversionary tactics and to return—painful though this may be for him—to the subject matter of the Bill.

Our manifesto promised to revolutionise the management of council housing. The Bill does precisely that. It gives tenants the right to manage—a right undreamed of by Labour. On Sunday, the Leader of the Opposition said that his party should adopt a

[Mr. Howard]

"new politics that puts people first, that rejects dogma and embraces political common sense solutions".

Alas, the right hon. and learned Gentleman forgot to tell his hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench, and in particular the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), that bureaucracy was outmoded and dogma was to be rejected. The hon. Member for Leeds, West still wants to keep the ineffectual veto that we are replacing with a right to real involvement in the management process from start to finish. He still puts the interests of local authorities, however inefficient they are, before the interests of tenants.

Mr. Soley: Will the Secretary of State answer a question that other Ministers have consistently refused to answer? I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not good at answering questions, but perhaps he will try. If a council is providing a good service and the tenants are happy with that service, why should they have to pay to be transferred when they do not want that? At the same time, a private sector tenant may have a landlord who has been harassing him imprisoned but the tenant still has no right to transfer. When will the Secretary of State take tenants' rights seriously?

Mr. Howard: There is a simple answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. If the council's management is as good as the hon. Gentleman suggested, it would win the contract. That is the essence of competitive tendering—a concept which remains wholly alien to Labour, despite recent attempts to pretend to embrace it.

Part I of the Bill was considered at length yesterday. I believe that there is widespread acceptance of the principle of leasehold reform, even among those who expressed doubts about some of the detailed provisions of the Bill. Our proposals are directed clearly at people who have long leases at a low rent and who are generally regarded as owners of their premises. They will not have an adverse impact on the renting market, which we want to prosper. I can certainly reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame Jill Knight) on that point.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to make it absolutely clear that it is not the Government's intention to move into the rest of the rented market? I refer particularly to his statement that the object is that all tenants should

"own and . . . control the houses in which they live".

Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it amply clear that he is not talking about the private rented sector?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me this opportunity to clarify that aspect and to give the reassurance that she seeks. As we made plain during the passage of this legislation, there is a clear distinction between the private rented sector to which my hon. Friend referred, which we are determined to encourage, and those who live in the specific categories of houses and flats to which the legislation will apply. I accept my hon. Friend's point and give her the reassurance that she seeks.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I draw to the attention of the Secretary of State a situation affecting 19 of my constituents whose ground landlord is the Church in Wales, and whose houses have been made unsaleable by the Church's demands and its attempt to enfranchise them at a cost of £17,000 in respect of houses valued at between £100,000 and £150,000. The leases are due to revert in 2003. According to the Church's advisers, that means that £17,000 must be paid for a lease. Leaseholders cannot sell a house on that basis; nor can they enfranchise themselves, because who has £17,000 to spend? Two years ago, £1,400 was being asked; what are people to do now that the price has shot up to £17,000?

Mr. Howard: I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman's question. He should be well aware that, ultimately, such matters are decided by leasehold tribunals. If his constituents ae not satisfied with the terms offered by their freeholder, they should take the case to a tribunal.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I must make progress.

I was dealing with the points made by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I think that I had already mentioned their anxieties about the terms on which enfranchisement will take place. Their chief fear was that leaseholders might somehow acquire their homes at a discount. I entirely accept that that would be wrong, and I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that it will not happen.

The marriage value—which is the element of compensation at issue—is the extra value released when the freehold and leasehold interests are brought together in a single pair of hands. In the absence of enfranchisement, there is no marriage value, so the freeholder will have lost nothing if the leaseholders retain an element of that value when enfranchisement goes ahead. There is no discount; there is merely a sharing of the extra value. The precise share for each party will depend on the circumstances in each case. Often 50:50 will be appropriate, but in some cases the landlord should get more. For example, if the lease has very little of its term left to run, the landlord should probably get nearly all the marriage value.

The Bill allows for that. It will replicate the open market. In the case of flats, we have added the safeguard that the landlord must always receive at least half the marriage value, but if he can convince the leasehold valuation tribunal that in the market he would receive more, the tribunal must give him more.

The Bill addresses important problems, and it does so by proceeding with clear manifesto commitments. I know that Conservative Members who have some misgivings about the leasehold reform provisions have weighed that point carefully. Opposition Members, however, are in a state of total confusion. Do they oppose leasehold reform? Do they oppose a vigorous drive to develop derelict land, led by a new agency working with local authorities and the private sector? Do they oppose giving council tenants the right to turn their rents into mortgages?

We have been told by the hon. Member for Leeds, West that compulsory competitive tendering for housing management is unacceptable—a view echoed by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). Last night, as a result of mighty effort, the hon. Member for Leeds, West managed to persuade 55 of his hon. Friends to vote with him on a wrecking amendment. It was, however, extremely inconsiderate of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who is Labour's full-time spokesman on the monarchy, not to tip off his hon. Friend before giving his recent interview to *Tribune*. He must know that *Tribune* is

not just any old magazine but the approved vehicle for sneaking out major policy U-turns—in this instance, on compulsory competitive tendering.

The hon. Member for Blackburn is in favour of compulsory competitive tendering—or so he told us in the pages of *Tribune*—while the hon. Member for Leeds, West is against it. In which direction are his hon. Friends to turn? Are they to follow the hon. Member for Blackburn, or the hon. Member for Leeds, West? Should they come, or should they go? Should they vote yes, or should they vote no? We await their decision with interest.

I cannot conclude without referring to the distinguished contribution made by Liberal Democrats to the debate on housing. After attending five Standing Committee sittings, their housing spokesman, the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), told the magazine *Inside Housing* that the Committee was "a bag of worms", and that he had no intention of returning to it. Of course, we could not expect the hon. Gentleman to be present this evening. True to his word, the hon. Gentleman missed the next 20 sittings. Hon. Members can imagine the intense expectation when he arrived in the Chamber yesterday. The House hung on his every word—or it would have done if he had said anything; lapsing into Trappist mode, he sat through the debate but remained silent throughout. It would be impossible to identify a more eloquent comment on his party's ability to contribute a single thought to our deliberations on these important matters.

The Bill will play an important part in regenerating our cities. It will give council tenants the opportunity to buy a stake in the homes in which they live; it will allow hundreds of thousands of private leaseholders the opportunity to gain control over the management of their homes; and it will bring about a much-needed improvement in the management of public housing by introducing the spur of competition. All those important reforms are contained in the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

6.56 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to the House, for my inability to be present for speeches about important amendments and new clauses.

I went to Nottingham this morning. I caught a train that was due to arrive at St. Pancras at 3.15; it arrived at 5.50 pm. [HON. MEMBERS: "Privatise."] I had anticipated that ritual chant from Conservative Members. In fact, the delay was caused by the under-investment with which we have charged the Government, and by the semi-privatisation that they have already carried out. Following a total train failure caused by clapped-out equipment, the passengers were forced to suffer the indignity of knowing that, just up the line, locomotives were ready to take the train back to Wellingborough station. Because of the so-called business railway, however, none was available, so we sat there for two and a half hours.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) said:

"It is a matter of considerable regret to me that the Bill is modelled on a Labour precedent, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 . . . A number of us find it difficult to accept that a Conservative Government are retabling a socialist measure which has been described by Professor Wade QC"—

an acknowledged administrative lawyer—

"as a form of 'expropriation'"

which

"can scarcely be said to have been for public purposes".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 834-35.]

The hon. Gentleman has been wrong in the past, and I am afraid that he was wrong yesterday. Would that this were the measure that we would have tabled if we had won the general election in April—a measure that would have given almost all flat leaseholders the right to enfranchise. We would have ensured that the test on non-residential floor space was raised, and, in particular, we would have rescinded the low rent test.

Yesterday, a Labour amendment and new clause were moved which would have led to the abandonment of the low rent test. That followed debate in Committee. Although, like the Secretary of State, I was not a member of the Committee, my hon. Friends were led to believe that the Minister for Housing and Planning understood the powerful arguments against the iniquity of the test—arguments for a view shared by a number of Conservative Members.

It is my belief that the Minister of State—once one of the great left-wingers of the Conservative party, who, I realise, cannot answer for this—understands and agrees with the case we make but that he was overruled by others, no doubt including the Secretary of State, under pressure from the Duke of Westminster tendency of the Conservative party. We should like to know what were and are the arguments against our amendment on the low rent test. Certainly they were not advanced in debate last night, nor were they put forward in Committee. There is no case for a low rent test—particularly the one in this Bill, which enables unscrupulous landlords so to set their ground rents as to escape the Bill's provisions and deny tenants the right to enfranchise.

Last night, the Minister for Housing and Planning asked me what our attitude on Third Reading would be. I told him that if he were to accept the argument for the amendment and the new clause in respect of the low rent test, we should support the Third Reading. That remains our position. But, in the event, we shall not be supporting the Third Reading. Our position in this regard is entirely consistent, not least because the Government have refused to give full rights of enfranchisement to all holders of long leases.

Mr. Howard: I should like to ensure that I have understood the hon. Gentleman's position. Will he confirm that, because not quite all the people whom he would like to see given the right to enfranchisement will achieve that right under the Bill, he wants the right to be given to no one?

Mr. Straw: That is a ludicrous parody. There are other reasons for our opposition. We need means of expressing our very serious opposition, on behalf of disfranchised leaseholders, to the provisions of the Bill. We can do so by voting against the Third Reading, as we voted against the Second Reading in the hope that changes would be made in Committee.

I should like to turn to the extraordinary position that the Government have got themselves into in respect of compulsory competitive tendering for housing management. The Secretary of State referred to my *Tribune* interview. The entire interview was tape-recorded by the editor. The direct quotations of my words are correct. The statement—in reported form—that compulsory competitive tendering and the council tax would be retained is erroneous. I did not say that, nor would I, as how and

[Mr. Straw]

when policy is settled are matters for the Labour party as a whole. Those are not things for me to proclaim in an interview for *Tribune*. An apology from the editor will appear in this week's issue of the paper. In the interview I also made it clear that we are opposed to compulsory competitive tendering for housing management.

Mr. Howard: Why has it taken the hon. Gentleman a week to decide whether the *Tribune* report was correct?

Mr. Straw: What I have just said to the House was said to journalists last Friday, when the interview appeared.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No. We are due to vote very soon.

The Secretary of State made much of the apparent management rights that he is ready to give tenants. He described as ineffective a veto giving tenants the right to decide who should manage their estates, despite the fact that such a veto was written into the 1985 Act by many of his hon. Friends, albeit with our support. What emerged, particularly in the answer that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), was that his real concern was that the veto, far from being ineffective, would be all too effective. It will give tenants the right to decide, before the matter goes to competitive tendering, who should be their managers.

It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say, as he sought a moment ago to say, that the tender price will determine who should manage an estate. The tenants want an absolute right to decide before the matter goes to tender. We are not arguing that the council should have that right; we are arguing that the tenants should have it.

On the question of urban regeneration, our concern is that there should be a much wider base and a much more democratic agency, as we proposed in new clause 14. It is a matter for great regret that the Government rejected that proposal. The need for regeneration of urban areas is overwhelming, and the Government's half-baked policies are not good enough. After all, they virtually wound up the urban programme, and the Secretary of State is currently shuffling to abandon the third phase of city challenge. On this matter, I should be very happy to take an intervention from him. Yesterday, in reply to a question from me, he talked about a possible third phase. We should all be pleased to hear a categorical assurance that there will be a similarly sized third phase of city challenge.

Mr. Howard: We have more than once made it clear that we have not abandoned city challenge and that we shall take a decision about a third round at the appropriate time.

As the hon. Gentleman invited me to intervene, I should like to press him a little further about what he said a few moments ago concerning his attitude to compulsory competitive tendering and to the council tax. He said that all his words reported in quotation marks by *Tribune* were accurate. Well, what he said—reported in quotation marks—about compulsory competitive tendering was that he had seen the case for it in respect of the provision of basic services such as refuse collection. What he said—reported in quotation marks—about the council tax was that he could see that the underlying principle was okay.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions, even from Secretaries of State, should be short.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State failed to read beyond the remark that the underlying principle was okay. The property tax U-turn was not done by the Opposition. We have argued for years for a property tax. On the other hand, the Secretary of State went round the country for five years evangelising on the merits of the poll tax. He it was who said that the poll tax was the fairest and most equal of all taxes and who, in speech after speech, damned the idea of a property tax based on capital values. I am delighted that he has at last been converted to the idea of a property tax. What I want to know is whether he believed it then and whether he believes it now. Is his conversion a genuinely Pauline one?

The Secretary of State spoke of manifesto pledges made by the Government just 10 months ago. He did not say that, since April 1992, 450,000 building workers have gone on the dole, that 150,000 people are in long-term mortgage arrears and face the ever-growing threat of repossession, that 65,000 homeless families are in temporary accommodation, that we still have the scandalous spectacle of people sleeping rough on the streets, and that house building in the private and public sectors is at the lowest level for a decade.

We shall vote against the Bill because it takes away tenants' rights, because it does not provide an effective programme for urban regeneration, because it fails fully to enfranchise leaseholders and, above all, because it fails to do anything about the underlying housing crisis, of which the Government are the architect.

7.10 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Come on!

Mr. Jopling: If the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) can each take 10 minutes on Third Reading, I do not see why time should not be available to Back Benchers.

I do not think that I can remember a Bill being introduced by my party that made me feel more ashamed. This is a poor Bill. I have opposed it throughout, and although my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made some welcome adjustments to its provisions on leasehold reform, I am very disappointed that he has not been able to go further.

I cannot accept that a landlord should be made to sell a property to a leaseholder against his will. The Bill does not fairly compensate him for when a leaseholder exercises his option of enfranchisement. Unless the Secretary of State can give clearer guidance to the valuation tribunals, it is likely that they will gravitate towards the 50:50 split of the marriage value, using the flawed argument that my right hon. and learned Friend has advanced about a willing buyer and willing seller. That will not achieve fairness. The willing seller and willing buyer basis is flawed when a transaction is a forced one between two private citizens.

I hope that before the Bill is enacted the Secretary of State will be able to improve those terms and that the resulting average price that is paid will ultimately be nearer 100 per cent. of the marriage value. I have been given an example of a flat with a freehold vacant possession value

of £750,000. If a landlord sells a long lease of 70 years at, say, a value of £630,000 and at a rent of £500 a year, he will forgo £120,000 of that value. I have been advised, using the criterion that the tribunals use, that after the first year of the lease the loss to the freeholder would be just under £56,000 and that the overnight windfall gain to the leaseholder would be the same. I do not see that that is a fair and proper basis on which to proceed, which is why I am astonished that the party to which I belong has introduced such legislation.

I was in the House when the 1967 Bill was enacted. I know very well that if the Labour party had introduced legislation such as this Bill, there would have been fury and furore from this party and it would have been opposed root and branch. For that reason, if the Government want the Bill, they will have to get it without my assistance.

7.14 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I shall be as brief as the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), but I shall not take the same view. I hope that the Secretary of State, having complained yesterday about the Trappist tendencies of my colleagues, will not complain if I now say something: he cannot have it both ways.

The most controversial aspect of the Bill relates to the point that was made by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. The attitude that he and other Conservative Members take, though understandable in logic, is less understandable in politics, as they did not take a similar view of tenants' rights when we were debating the right to buy from local authorities. Local authorities suffered as much as private landlords might if the Bill is enacted.

The inconsistency is remarkable—not that consistency would be a prize awarded to either Front Bench, for reasons that are evident after tonight's speeches. The Secretary of State knows the position that my colleagues and I adopted, so the advice that I shall soon give my colleagues is predictable. On Second Reading, we supported the Government, making it clear that we supported some parts of the Bill.

We support the proposals for enfranchisement, although we regret that the Government did not amend them to get rid of the low-rent test. We support attention being given to urban regeneration, but we do not like the mechanism adopted because of its undemocratic nature. We support the idea of more tenants' management but oppose the lack of tenants' having the final say over compulsory competitive tendering. We do not believe that that compulsion should be at the behest of the Government; it should be the decision of those affected.

One must therefore make a choice between passing a Bill with many provisions that one does not like or blocking it in the hope that the Government will improve it when it returns. The choice for us is clear: we will seek to block the Bill by opposing Third Reading. We hope that, if it is defeated, the Government will learn the lessons of the arguments put in the House and outside and will become much more accountable and democratic, not only in their housing policy, but in their policy for urban regeneration.

7.17 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): If it had been put to me at an election meeting that, within months of that election, the party that I support would introduce a Bill that legislated between two private individuals who had had a perfectly good and legitimate contract to force one against his will to sell to another, and then not at a fair price, I would—and I can speak for my hon. Friends on this—have hotly denied it. Yet that is what the Bill does in various ways.

We discussed yesterday in great detail the subjects of compensation and residence. Is it right that the Bill should apply to foreigners, companies and people who are well able to look after themselves? Is it right that legislation should break up the heritage estates of our great capital city?

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is deluding himself if he believes that the principle of the Bill will not affect the minds of investors who are seeking to erect or create property to let. They will say that the Conservative Government, in spite of what they claim, are unreliable and will enfranchise tenants. That is a terrible mistake. The decline of the rented sector has been one of the worst problems in the housing market and is very much the fault of the Opposition, whose belief in security of tenure has taken out of the market the capacity for the less well paid to have a decent home.

I support what our manifesto said, but the Bill is the wrong way to achieve it. I shall certainly not support it.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:-

The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 262.

Division No. 148] **[7.20 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan

Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George

Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Social Security

7.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

That the draft Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 3rd December, be approved.

Mr. Lilley: The orders implement the decisions that I announced following the autumn statement at the end of the public expenditure round. I shall discuss how they affect different groups of beneficiaries, but it is just possible that the House will wish me to expand a little upon the implications for social security of the long-term review announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on Monday. With your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall do so after dealing with the orders themselves.

I am pretty certain that the long-term review will have two things in common with the public spending round: it will be accompanied by sustained, reckless and unfounded scaremongering by the Opposition, and the outcome will show that scaremongering to be wholly baseless. In October, for example, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) put out a statement saying that the Government were planning to cut benefits for

"the poorest, weakest and frailest who have been targeted to pay the price of the Government's policy".

We are used to hearing that sort of thing from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—but he was joined by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who should know better. The hon. Member for Garscadden accused the Government of planning a campaign of "social vandalism", "singling out those on benefits", breaking our pledges and so on.

Needless to say, both hon. Gentlemen were wrong. In fact we kept our pledges to families and to the elderly, maintained support for people hit by recession and focused additional support on the most needy. Today we are implementing those decisions.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Secretary of State is keen to accuse the Opposition of scaremongering, but is he not aware that on Sunday almost every newspaper—including those that usually support the Government—stated, presumably as a result of leaks, that the Government intended to means-test the state pension? It was not suggested that that would happen during this Parliament, but that was supposed to be the long-term objective. Will the Secretary of State now give a guarantee that in no circumstances and at no stage, in the short or the long term, will the state pension be means-tested?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman has a dispute with his own Front-Bench spokesmen. It is the Leader of the Opposition who has set up a review to consider means-testing all universal benefits.

Mr. Winnick: Answer my question, yes or no.

Mr. Lilley: In the section of my speech dealing with the long-term review, I shall deal with the precise point that the hon. Gentleman raises.

We are fulfilling our manifesto pledges to uprate pensions and child benefit in line with inflation. We are uprating all other major benefits fully in line with inflation and are confirming decisions to channel £1 billion extra to those on income-related benefits. In a tough spending round, it was possible to find the resources to maintain and improve benefits only by the most rigorous scrutiny of costs.

Above all, it was essential to staunch the flow of money to those whom Parliament did not intend to receive it. In the autumn, I set a target of £500 million for fraud identified and stopped by the Benefits Agency alone. I am delighted to say that we are well set to exceed that this year.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The form of words that the Secretary of State used might have given someone listening less than carefully the impression that the right hon. Gentleman would have liked to do better, but that, of course, he did well in the stringent financial conditions. Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the Government's position? Is it not true that, as a matter of policy, they would not want the basic pension, for example, ever to rise in real terms?

Mr. Lilley: It is a fact that the Labour party is committed to linking pensions to earnings. We are committed to linking the basic pension to prices. That is clear—and it has important implications. It means, for example, that, as I have said, we can channel additional resources to those in greatest need. The Labour party would not be able to do that. That is why a Labour Government would be compelled to means-test the pension if they were uprating it in line with earnings and wished to channel any resources away from the better-off to the most needy. That is a dispute that the hon. Member for Garscadden must have with his Back Benchers.

I am delighted to say not only that we are set to exceed our target for Benefits Agency fraud for this year, but that for next year I shall set the agency and local councils a combined target, covering all benefits, of nearly £1 billion worth of fraud identified and stopped. If we abandoned the battle against fraud, as Opposition Members often urge, we should not have that £1 billion—and without that I could not have increased benefits for those on income support.

The hon. Member for Garscadden may tell Selina Scott, as he did the other night:

"we are united on the need to tackle fraud".

Who would not tell Miss Scott what she wanted to hear? But the fact is that the Opposition have opposed and derided every step that we have taken to bear down on fraud. They opposed our measures to curb the payment of benefits to people not actively seeking work, be they new

age travellers or others. They opposed our measures to prevent bogus asylum-seekers from ripping off the system with multiple applications. They ridiculed the target that I set at Brighton, which we are now set to exceed. That is why the public are convinced that Labour is the friend of the freeloader. It is not I who said that, but the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, in his characteristically courteous manner. How will the uprating scheme benefit women in receipt of invalidity benefit? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that a few days ago the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice issued an opinion to his colleagues that the British Government had discriminated against women by cutting off invalidity benefit at the age of 60, which was in contravention of an equality directive passed, I believe, as long ago as 1979? When does the Secretary of State expect the European Court of Justice to issue a judgment based on the Advocate General's opinion?

Mr. Lilley: We are uprating invalidity benefit, so the hypothetical constituent to whom the hon. Gentleman refers will benefit.

It is the final ruling of the European Court, not the opinion of the Advocate General, which matters. We abide by such rulings, although I am reluctant to consider it sensible to set policy by having it decided by unelected judges rather than by this elected House.

Dr. Godman: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: I would rather make progress. However, the hon. Gentleman is always so polite that I shall give way.

Dr. Godman: I always try to be polite; the Secretary of State is always polite in his dealings with me.

The Secretary of State made an important observation. He said that it is not the Advocate General's opinion but the ruling of the 13 judges which is important. He also said that he always abides by such judgments. If the judges rule against the Government, will the 470-odd constituents to whom I referred receive not only the invalidity benefit, but the back payment of that benefit?

Mr. Lilley: I do not want to give a hypothetical response to a hypothetical ruling of the court which we have not yet seen. The hon. Gentleman may come back to me at a future date on the issue.

The main feature of the debate is the uprating of all the main benefits in full. People said that we would not or could not do it. When I announced last November that we were doing so, the hon. Member for Garscadden promptly started looking for shortcomings in the basis of the uprating. He alleged that by indexing on the basis of price rises over the previous 12 months, I was

"leaving pensioners' living standards vulnerable to rising inflation in the coming year"—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 1018.]

The hon. Member for Garscadden was wrong again. Far from rising, inflation has been falling. The retail prices index showed a 3·6 per cent. rise in the 12 months to September and that is the amount by which all benefits will be uprated. The RPI now shows a rise of just 2·6 per cent. A change to using forecast inflation would probably have disadvantaged everyone on social security.

It was rather unwise for the hon. Member for Garscadden to make that suggestion because it merely reminds the House that in 1976, Labour changed to the forecasting method. It was a blatant ruse to cut benefits and it resulted in an uprating 6 per cent. less than would have been the case under the method used now. The poor were truly vulnerable under Labour because inflation reached 27 per cent.—10 times the current rate—slashing the value of benefits between upratings and wiping out savings.

In his response to the uprating statement, the hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that an index excluding housing costs would be better for pensioners. The pensioners' prices index excludes most housing costs, but if that index had been used since 1979 instead of the RPI, the pension would now be worth £6·65 a week less than the current rate. We are not in the business of playing around with indices. Our way is straightforward: to attack inflation and to protect honestly the real spending power of benefits.

It may be helpful if I now explain how the benefit uprating helps different groups of people: the elderly, families, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, carers and those in residential care. The Government have shown that we honour our pledges. Our pensions policy has three main strands. The first is to maintain the real value of the basic retirement pension, so we are increasing the basic pension next April from £54·15 to £56·10 for a single person and by £3·10 a week to £89·90 for a couple.

The second strand is to focus extra help on those who most need it, so we have raised the pensioners' premium in income support by £2 for a single person and by £3 a week for a couple. Together with the ending of any requirement to pay any council tax, that channels £500 million extra to the neediest pensioners.

The third strand is to encourage people to make additional pension provision in line with their earnings. The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1992 protects members of occupational pension schemes by uprating guaranteed minimum pensions by 3 per cent.

The success of our policies to encourage more choice in pensions can be seen by the number of people who have chosen to contract out of the state system. Since the pension reforms of the 1980s, 5 million people have become personal pension holders. Some 500,000 additional people have joined occupational schemes and the number of schemes has increased by 31,000.

Once again, for families we have honoured our manifesto pledge by fully uprating child benefit. It will rise to £10 a week for the first child and to £8·10 for other children in the family. Family credit has been uprated in full. It now goes to more people with family responsibilities than ever before. Some 450,000 families are being helped to maintain themselves in work by an average payment of £42 a week. Almost 300,000 will gain from improved arrangements for non-dependent reductions in housing benefit and in income support housing costs. The three lower rates of non-dependent deductions will remain the same. Those with higher incomes will be expected to contribute £21 a week, which is not an unreasonable amount, as it represents less than one sixth of their income.

I have been especially mindful of those hit by the recession in my scrutiny of benefit levels, so I have uprated unemployment benefit fully in line with prices. The Chancellor does not include expenditure on benefits for the unemployed within the overall control total for public

[Mr. Lilley]

spending. It is right morally and economically to accommodate the extra help for the unemployed during the recession.

We are spending £2 billion on programmes for the unemployed, including youth training. That is two and a half times as much as was spent on training under the previous Labour Government.

The House has already heard that I propose to uprate invalidity benefits fully in line with inflation for people unable to work because of sickness.

Dr. Godman: In the west of Scotland, a number of men are in receipt of invalidity benefit because they are suffering from asbestosis or from related ailments. In pursuit of their legitimate claims against their employers for placing them in such dangerous circumstances, they had to submit themselves to an independent medical by a specialist. They had to pay for that examination. I appeal to the Secretary of State to examine most sympathetically the problem that the men face in having to find the money. It is an added burden for those men and I should be extremely grateful to the Secretary of State if he would find a way in which to remove that burden from these men, all of whom are terminally ill.

Mr. Lilley: I shall look at the hon. Gentleman's point. I suspect from the way in which he puts it that he is referring to industrial injuries benefit rather than to invalidity benefit. Either way, I shall look into the matter and contact him afterwards.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I have argued for a while that people who are following a course of study with the intention of making themselves more employable or people who have chosen for a while to leave the labour market to do worthwhile voluntary work should be able to negotiate with their social security or unemployment benefit office the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily from the labour market while they are engaged in socially worthwhile activities. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend will take that suggestion seriously into consideration in these hard times.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has mentioned the point to me behind the Speaker's Chair. We shall consider it seriously.

On benefits for the sick and for the disabled, I intend to increase fully in line with inflation sickness benefit for short-term sickness and the lower rate of statutory sick pay, but I do not propose to increase the higher rate which goes to employees earning £195 or more a week. Most employees who qualify for the higher rate have their statutory sick pay topped up by occupational sick pay schemes. It would therefore be an inappropriate use of taxpayers' resources to increase that rate.

For people with disabilities, we shall in particular continue the support provided by the two new benefits introduced last year—disability working allowance and disability living allowance. This will be the first uprating of the new benefits. Since the introduction of disability living allowance in April last year, 370,000 awards have been made, including more than 200,000 to less severely disabled people who have gained from the new benefit. That increases to nearly 2 million the number of people receiving help with the extra costs of disability.

I also plan to increase the amount that carers may earn before their benefit entitlement is affected. Those carers entitled to the carer premium in income support, housing benefit or council tax benefit who currently qualify for a lower earnings disregard will be able to earn up to £15 a week without losing any of their income-related benefit.

Most of the income support limits for those in residential and nursing homes will be increased by £10 a week—that is more than inflation in most cases. I have also decided to increase the grant to hospices. I shall be making an extra grant of £1 million in 1993-94, and that is in addition to the £1 million for each of the public expenditure survey years announced in 1991.

I promised that I would address the issue of the long-term review of spending announced on Monday by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. In the annual public expenditure round, the focus is essentially short term. We review spending plans for the next year and two subsequent years, yet in the Department of Social Security in particular, most of our spending—who gets it and how much—is laid down in statute. Because of the time that it takes to legislate, implement and protect existing beneficiaries, the main impact of any change is likely to fall beyond the PES period. Consequently, the annual public expenditure round provides insufficient incentive to get to grips with longer-term trends. The social security budget is rather like a giant super-tanker: it takes some time to respond to the movement of the rudder. That is why it is sensible and essential from time to time to undertake a long-term review as we are doing at present.

Let me make one thing crystal clear. We have no intention of reneging on our manifesto pledges. Our manifesto was quite explicit. We believe that the basic pension must remain the foundation for retirement and we will protect its value against price rises. We are likewise committed to child benefit, which will continue to be paid to all families—normally to the mother—and uprated in line with prices.

By contrast, the Opposition are jettisoning—like cargo from a sinking ship—the pledges that they offered the electorate. Every time the hon. Member for Garscadden appears on television, he abandons a pledge—a pledge before breakfast, a pledge before lunch and a pledge before dinner, if I may coin a phrase.

The aim of our review is not just to control expenditure. It is to ensure that spending is geared to the needs of the 1990s and the 21st century and not to the patterns of the past. We intend to improve as well as save. So let us be quite clear: excessive expenditure on social security can be doubly damaging because when the state takes too much money from one person to give to another, it reduces the first person's incentive to work and undermines the second person's incentive to support himself. It is a double whammy of disincentive and dependency.

Let us face it:

"one of the tragedies of the present system is that it does encourage dependency. I only have to look around my constituency to see people who have become dependent, not because they want to but because of the way the system operates—because of the poverty trap. Can we break out of that? I am certainly not afraid to say that there are duites as well as rights for those on benefit."

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Before the Secretary of State continues with this rather familiar passage from his conference speech, let me ask him this: does he recognise that the reason why so many people

depend on social security benefit is that they are unemployed through no fault of their own and that the public expenditure problem that the Government face arises largely because of the amount of benefit paid to the unemployed and the loss of tax revenue from those same people?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman may find the phrases that I have just uttered familiar. I may say that they were not from my conference speech but were the words used by the hon. Member for Garscadden to describe the dependency syndrome that he sees in his constituency. So we all agree that there is an irresistible case for a thorough long-term review of social security. The Government are quite clear as to the principles that should animate that review. I have spelt them out to the House before but I repeat that the keys are to focus improvements in benefits on those in greatest need and to harness private provision wherever possible.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way a second time.

He referred to the state pensions, and we understand the position regarding this Parliament. So that those in their 40s and 50s, whether in employment or out of employment, may know the situation, will he now state it unambiguously? Is he telling the House and the country that, as far as the Government are concerned—leaving aside anything that may or may not have been said by the Opposition—the state pension itself will remain without any form of means testing whatever?

Mr. Lilley: We have made it absolutely clear what our pledges are and that we have no plans to means-test. I cannot tell what would happen in a future Parliament if the Labour party were ever elected. It seems to be working out plans for precisely that—but, fortunately, it does not seem to be very good at winning elections.

We have made it clear what our principle are. We want to give people wider choice, stronger incentives and more control over their own money. The Opposition reject that route, because they know what they are against but they have not a clue what they are for. That is why the Leader of the Labour party set up a commission—a total cop-out. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has always opposed the practice of putting Government services out to contract but now he is contracting out the Opposition's entire policy. It is the first time in history that a party has had to ask outsiders what its principles are.

In his much-heralded speech on Sunday, the Leader of the Opposition did not mention social security once so we should not expect too much from Labour's commission on social justice. I have been looking at the list of the people whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman has placed on the commission. There are two conspicuous absences, the first of which is the Labour spokesman on social security, the hon. Member for Garscadden, who, as a result, is left floundering in interviews, unable to state what his policies are and unable to influence what they will be. Even more remarkable is the absence of the Chairman of the Select Committe, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), whom I welcome to our proceedings. The hon. Gentleman is living proof that it is possible to be a member of the Labour party and a creative thinker, but he is also proof that it is not worth the risk—one will not be put on a commission, one will not be put on the Front Bench and one will be excluded from its counsels.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Secretary of State has stated that, in this Parliament, the review will not touch the two benefits in respect of which the biggest savings could be made if it were decided to make a change in the overall level of social security expenditure. He will therefore be dealing with more minor benefits, which are nevertheless important to those claimants who may be affected. The right hon. Gentleman said that we all know the principles by which the Government operate. Will he undertake that, as far as possible, the review will be undertaken in public and that, as happened with the Fowler review, the background papers will be published so that affected claimants and their representatives at least know what is going on and can perhaps influence the Government's decisions in advance of their conclusions?

Mr. Lilley: The review is likely to be rather wider in scope initially so I do not think that we shall adopt that approach, although we shall of course be responsive to any suggestions that come from the Select Committee, from hon. Members or from people outside the House.

Mr. Frank Field: But unless we know what the Secretary of State is planning, it will be terribly difficult for outsiders to contribute.

Mr. Lilley: We are planning a long-term review. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said, we hope to be able to feed back some of our findings to inform the short-term public expenditure round, but the rest will take longer. The review is likely to inform the whole process of the transformation of the social security system as time goes by rather than being a one-off decision.

Let me return to the subject of the commission on social justice, on which the hon. Member for Birkenhead sadly does not sit, and consider who does serve on it. Apart from the statutory business man, it consists of one BBC producer, one professional trade unionist, one economist, one charity director—*[Interruption.]* I seem to have a fan who reads all my speeches in advance. The list also includes a charity director, a chair, a baby expert, who I take it is the high chair, a provost, Neil Kinnock's press secretary and seven professors. I suspect that their idea of poverty is a shortage of port at high table.

Characteristically, the leader of the Labour party has set them off in the wrong direction. At the last general election, he tried to persuade the electorate to accept higher national insurance. Now he is considering cutting the benefits of those who contribute most. Of course, he is opposed to private provision. Can there be a more irrational combination: take the lid off contributions, means-test benefits and discourage private provision? That is the Labour party's recipe. I am glad that it is learning it by heart. I hope that it will soon get its lessons right.

The orders which we are debating today demonstrate the Government's commitment to the needy. They prove that we keep our pledges, and they demolish the Labour party's scaremongering. The same will be true of our long-term review. I commend the orders to the House.

8.1 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I recognise that it is important to get a high return on capital. The Secretary of State must recognise that there are not many young Conservatives in the House at present, and the

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speech which was suitable for a gathering of Young Conservatives, and the humour that went with it, is not necessarily suitable for this debate.

I understand and accept that the Secretary of State takes great pride in the uprating which he has announced and which we are legislating for today. It is almost as though he surprised himself—and perhaps he did. If he surprised himself, that would explain the black propaganda that he and his team spread before the announcement.

I have had exchanges with the Secretary of State on the point before, and I do not intend to go over the evidence. There was plentiful evidence in the press and quotations and reports of what the Secretary of State had been saying to groups of his own Back Benchers about the tough nature of the poublic expenditure round and its impact on social security. Of course, it did not come to pass. I am at least grateful for that, and I made that clear, undoubtedly to his disappointment, from the beginning of the statement.

It has not stopped the Secretary of State from polishing a passage which has appeared, to my knowledge, in at least three speeches about the disappointment which ran across the Labour Benches when the 3·6 per cent. was announced. The passage is somewhat tired and predictable. We are almost invited by the Secretary of State to imagine that singlehandedly and bravely, as a sort of Horatius figure, he thwarted the Treasury's wish to do wicked things to social security. That is not a likely story, and the relief which greeted the 3·6 per cent. figure perhaps tells him a fair degree about his reputation and record.

The Secretary of State is in the habit of gloating. He got that reputation during his address to the Young Conservatives, small bits of which have been recycled today. I did not admire the speech, so I especially deplore its reappearance, even in a greatly truncated form. Quite a little theme is being developed. For example, at the beginning we had a rather risqué joke about the sexual mores of Young Conservatives which I thought was quite courageous and perhaps a matter for interested speculation.

We got another Gilbert and Sullivan pastiche, as we always do. We also got another mark of the right hon. Gentleman. I say in passing that we got some rather unpleasant personal jibes about some of my colleagues, although I escaped on this occasion.

What was interesting, and what I especially enjoyed in the speech, was the ringing defence of the Government's European stance. It was especially satisfying to hear that sounding out loud and clear. If that is the sort of support which the Prime Minister gets at the Cabinet table, I am not surprised that he looks distinctly nervous on occasions.

I shall make my final reference to the speech, and it is perhaps a more serious point. The Secretary of State does not do himself much good when he misrepresents the position and opinions of others in the political spectrum. For example, the suggestion which was implied—it was qualified only in a minor way—that the Labour party hates families and wishes to make fathers redundant and mothers dependent is an unpleasant distortion of our position.

Mr. Lilley: I certainly did not say that about the Labour party; I said the left. Indeed, I would commend to the hon. Gentleman an interesting pamphlet published by the Institute of Economic Affairs by two Labour party members about families without fathers. I should think that it would be of great interest to the whole House and would have a broad measure of interest but not necessarily total agreement. It is not an issue on which the Labour party is to be condemned, only the left.

Mr. Dewar: That is what I meant about qualifications that amount almost to sophistry. In the context of the speech and the way in which it developed, there is undoubtedly the impression that the Secretary of State intended to give in his remarks. I will not pursue the matter, but he should be more careful in the future. Occasionally, he takes certain pleasure in misrepresenting the position. There is enough genuinely between us without that sort of distortion.

I accept that the 3·6 per cent. covers the inflation figure for the 12 months to September. No one has quarrelled with that. We have made it clear that it is welcome, so far as it goes. We are entitled to say that it is a standstill award: it represents no progress and solves no problems. There are still a lot of queries, questions, difficulties and disasters in the social security world and none of them is tackled by this measure or the figure.

I do not think that the House would want me to go through the difficulties in great detail. The Secretary of State will recognise that there is still great concern, for example, about the disability living allowance in terms of the administrative process. I have been told that we have reached a steady state, but the mailbags of my colleagues deny that daily. There is still an enormous number of people who have been waiting an inordinate time for results.

The Secretary of State will be aware of the distress about the developments in the independent living fund and the sudden decision to close that fund on 25 November. I mention that in conjunction with the disability living allowance because, as Ministers will know, many people wanted to apply for the independent living fund. To qualify, they would have had to get a disability living allowance. They put in an application early in the year, perhaps in March or April, and by the time the gate came down on 25 November they still had not received a response to their application from the DLA.

It is doubly chawing for people to get the news that their applications have been successful and qualified for the independent living fund only to discover that they cannot apply because of the ruling that the door shut on 25 November. It will be interesting to see the Government's response to that problem.

Difficulties still attend the social fund. We have had a great deal of talk from Ministers about the need to work on the basis of loans to maintain the flow of cash for the social fund. The Labour party's point of attack is the real difficulties which arise from the cash limiting which can be arbitrary and affect the chances of success, to some extent at least conditioned by the area in which people live and the point in the financial year in which they apply.

There are many difficulties and troubles. Although the Secretary of State is entitled to take what credit he can from the settlement, modest though it is, he must recognise

that the worries still exist and are very much part of the daily life of those who must live with the system and, to some extent, rely on it.

The 3·6 per cent. will not cure those problems. I have no doubt that many hon. Members are uncomfortably aware, from constituency experience, of the fact that there are people on income support at present. No one thinks that income support is a generous provision to cover the cost of living. In fact, many people receive less than the income support entitlement because of the enormous number of deductions which are being made from income support levels.

The figures I saw—undoubtedly the Secretary of State will be familiar with them—show that, in England, about 495,000 recipients of income support are repaying social fund loans. Another 262,000 are paying poll tax arrears. No doubt a distinction can be drawn between those making social fund repayments and those paying poll tax arrears and one could say that it was the fault of the second group that they had less money because they should have paid the poll tax. But the fact remains that families are struggling on a level that none of us comtemplated or expected.

I gather that in Scotland—I am being unashamedly parochial in using that statistical base—20 per cent. of recipients of income support are subject to deductions for social fund repayments. That is a staggering figure, to which soon will be added those subject to the new arrangements, for example, for deducting £2·20 for child maintenance under the child support unit. So there are major problems which the House should not forget when we consider the narrower point of the uprating.

The Secretary of State quoted me—I do not know whether it was a compliment or an attack—on the subject of dependency. I am not ashamed of what I said. Of course I believe that some people have become dependent. The Secretary of State was right to mention the caveat that I included—that it was the fault of the system. People are dependent because of the position in which they find themselves. It is not a matter for moral judgment or the assumption of some moral failing.

If the Secretary of State and I agree that there is a problem of dependency, I must remind him that his Government have been in power for almost 15 years. I should have thought that by now they would have had time to turn the tanker or at least marginally to adjust its course to deal with that problem. I will not apologise for recognising that a problem exists—it would be a mistake to brush it under the carpet—but the Secretary of State should recognise that what we do about the problem is the matter for discussion and debate.

I am grateful to the Secretary of State for saying a word or two about the long-term review. I accept that it is perhaps difficult for him to give us a great deal of detail about the end product, but I hoped that he would go a little further than he did. For several reasons, I wish to press him on the matter. I make the preliminary point that there is a distinction between a long-term review—obviously, changes in benefits will have a phasing-in period and will be some way ahead—and the short-term financial problems of the Government. However, the two are to some extent interconnected.

There was a touch of panic about what was announced the other day. It is some evidence, for which perhaps we should be grateful, that Ministers are beginning to face up to the economic failure for which they are responsible. I shudder to think of the abuse that would have fallen on the heads of a Labour Government if they had run a public sector borrowing requirement of £45 billion, moving happily ahead to some £50 billion in the next year or 18 months. We would have been told that it was the height of fiscal irresponsibility and an example of the insanity of having a Labour Government.

I suspect that the realisation that in the coming financial year the Government will borrow £1,000 for every man, woman and child in Britain and will borrow about £1 billion per week to fund the shortfall in their income has triggered at least some of the Government's activity, which is being described as a long-term policy review. The Government are in an awful mess and there is no disguising that fact.

We gather—I should like to press the Secretary of State on this—that the Government's activity is not a search for immediate savings. It is not just a matter of finding a few million here and there. In the Chief Secretary's statement and the briefings that have been given to the press, he implied that the review would be a fundamental change in structure. That makes it a serious matter. One of the press reports, allegedly based on a Treasury briefing, said that the review would not be a cheeseparing exercise but would be fundamental in its impact.

We were told specifically by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that on the agenda is a search for areas of provision from which the Government can withdraw altogether. That is an interesting phrase. It must mean something. It must have been put in with specific thought because it appears in the introductory statement made to the House. When the Minister replies, we should be given some idea which areas are being considered. We do not want hard decisions but we want to know roughly from which areas the Government may seek to withdraw.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): If the hon. Gentleman presses Ministers on that point, will he say what the Leader of the Opposition was referring to in a recent interview in *The Times* when he said that the social justice commission would be free to propose all sorts of "subtractions" from social security benefits? Surely, if the hon. Gentleman expects the Government to explain what they mean by withdrawal, he should explain what the Labour party means by subtraction.

Mr. Dewar: I was challenging the Government to say a word or two. I do not think that the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) speaks for the Government.——

Thr Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Yet.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman should be pleased that people are already speaking for him. His cause is being advanced with all the persuasive powers for which the Under-Secretary is famous. I am not sure whether that bodes ill or well for his career, but I will leave him to make up his mind about that.

If the hon. Gentleman aspires to the Front Bench—I suspect that he is a man not without ambition—some of the pamphlets that he has written recently will make doubly interesting reading on the day that I hear of his appointment. But at the moment I am asking the questions. We have given a fair amount of information about the areas that we would examine. That is why the

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Secretary of State's attacks were unfair and inaccurate. We have not been totally silent. Let us hear something similar from the Minister.

I repeat that the phrase "areas of provision from which Government can withdraw altogether" will hang in the air. It will be analysed and will be the source of much speculation if the Government do not do something to help the problem of definition. Perhaps I could tempt the Minister by mentioning some of the matters which have been suggested not by Labour politicians but by journalists who say that they have received a hidden briefing from Government sources.

We have been told that unemployment benefit and invalidity benefit will in future be largely a matter of private insurance cover. Those who cannot afford private insurance cover will be left with some sort of safety net provision, but the Government will basically withdraw from unemployment and invalidity benefit. It will be left to the private insurance market and those who can afford the premiums to take steps to cover against misfortune at some later stage.

That is a specific suggestion. If that is all nonsense, if it is wide of the mark, if that is not the type of provision from which the Government intend to withdraw, the Minister will be able to make that clear. That would be of some help, at least in a negative sense, and would perhaps save many people scribing many columns on the basis that that is what is in the Secretary of State's mind.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Gentleman has always given way to me in these debates and I am grateful to him for his courtesy on this occasion. Will he tell me the difference, in principle at least, between the position which he asks my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to clarify and the principle set out by the Leader of the Opposition, who said of benefits:

"There may be a case for many of them remaining universal, but it's only right we should be prepared to re-examine everything. I have not ruled anything out of court".

What did he mean?

Mr. Dewar: He meant what he said. The hon. Gentleman will be surprised to know that I am grateful to him for raising that point because it allows me to come to the subject of pensions. I intended to read out that passage. My right hon. and learned Friend pledged that the social justice commission would be prepared to look at areas of difficulty and consider what was the right balance between universal and targeted benefits. His following passage made it clear that there were strong arguments for the universal principle, but that has been translated with remarkable ingenuity and a good deal of brass neck into an alleged Labour party mission to means-test everything.

I am struggling to find the right parliamentary language. It seems that the hon. Member is showing a great deal of sophistry in that respect, and he well knows it. There is no way that the words that the hon. Member—from a southern seat which I cannot remember all by myself—quoted can be construed to have the meaning that he seeks to place upon them for partisan but unjustified reasons.

The Secretary of State is being very careful and has said that there will still be a basic pension which will never be means-tested. Exactly what has he got in mind?

I have no doubt that the Secretary of State remembers the report by Andrew Grice on the front page of *The Sunday Times*, which stated:

"Plans under consideration include ending the automatic right to a state pension for people who can afford to make their own private provision for retirement. The state pension would become a safety net for those who could not do so."

That is Mr. Grice's interpretation and he may be quite wrong, but later in the article the following words—allegedly those of the Secretary of State—are printed in direct quotation marks:

"We need to look for ways in which the state pension could better targeted and private provision harnessed . . . We need to focus money on those who are in greatest need and open up greater opportunities for those who can provide for themselves."

It is easy to be misled by words. I do not object to such concepts in the right circumstances, but it is remarkable for the Secretary of State to use such words when he speciously accused us of being interested in means-testing the basic pension, and to say that there is no doubt about his position.

Mr. Lilley: Mr. Grice is a good journalist, but I did not give him an interview or say those words. Obviously, through some Chinese whispers, he got a mangled version. I did not utter those words and, when asked, he acknowledged that, he has no recording of me doing so.

Mr. Dewar: That is extremely interesting. In *The Sunday Times* it is a direct quote. It states:

"he told The Sunday Times."

I understood what the Minister is saying and I do not want to make too much of it as it is a matter for him and Mr. Grice, but I still want to know exactly what is contemplated.

I shall suggest what I think is contemplated. Perhaps there will be a safety net provision—called the basic retirement pension—but people will be invited to contract out of it and will be paid incentives to do so. I do not want to open a major debate and shall be brief, but I must state why that concerns me.

It would be dangerous if the better-off people in society were asked to contract out, not merely into an alternative to the state earnings-related pension scheme, but also out of basic pension provision and cover for illness and unemployment. A vast and important part of the population would be encouraged to see the welfare state as something for other people. Inevitably they would see it as an incubus from which they derived no benefit, and therefore as something unimportant to them. Once we achieve that, we will wreck something that is important and central to our values and our community.

Mr. Winnick: The Secretary of State seems to disagree with the prominent article in *The Sunday Times* last week and to deny what it says. Why did he not immediately issue a statement? That would have received a great deal of publicity and by Monday the papers could have made clear that the article was inaccurate. The Secretary of State's silence must be a sign that the article was basically correct.

Mr. Dewar: As my hon. Friend will understand, I cannot answer that. However, it is a fair question and the Minister may want to deal with it or to get his colleague to do so later.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). If we took at face value the

Minister's assurances that pensions and other major benefits such as child benefit will not be touched, we would be left with a puzzle. However, the Secretary of State may be thinking of an extension of the contracting-out principle of the sort that I described. Perhaps he will confirm or deny that.

I am not sure that such a system would be a good buy for the Treasury. As we know from the premiums for the private pension system, the Treasury has had to go without a substantial amount of national insurance contributions and has had to pay substantial sums because of the contracting-out payments and incentives over and above those, which have run to billions of pounds during the past five or six years. I suspect that the arithmetic may be a good deal less comfortable than the Secretary of State makes out.

Above all, my objections are social and philosophical. If one relegates the welfare state and the benefits system, which the Secretary of State is in charge of, to a safety net or fall-back provision, successful people who are assured of their position in society will think that the system has nothing to offer them. That would be a mistake and we would not be prepared to contemplate it.

The Secretary of State's attempts to represent himself as generous to pensioners do not hold water. He says that the retirement pension is so important to him, but he has confirmed that it is his policy to freeze it in real terms, which means that it will drop substantially as a percentage of average earnings.

Dr. Godman: I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend. Does he agree that the changes to certain elements of our welfare system proposed by the Secretary of State may not only constitute a mistake but be capable of being challenged in the European Court of Justice? The Government face certain challenges at the court on Department of Social Security matters. May I remind my hon. Friend that the European Court, in every sense of the word, is becoming an international supreme court for the 13 legal systems contained within the 12 member states.

Mr. Dewar: I agree, but I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Social Security is the best man to appeal to about the European Court of Justice. Judging by what he said in his Young Conservatives speech, I suspect that he is not particularly sympathetic. He may be more worried about the court of public opinion if he goes ahead with the schemes that I suspect that he has in mind.

Many other suggestions are swimming around. For example, the hon. Member for Havant has, among other things, recommended a retirement age of 67 for men and women. Government withdrawal from industrial injury benefits is on the agenda. It seems to me that the contracting-out principle—taking people out of the comprehensive welfare system—is writ large at the back of the Secretary of State's mind. I hope that he will be able to comment on that before we adjourn this evening.

We are obviously not going to vote against the uprating assessment. Although it is a standstill and a legal minimum, we have made it clear that it is welcome, as far as it goes. The Secretary of State mentioned some figures. A single person over 25 will get £44 in income support after housing costs, but someone between the ages of 18 and 24 will get £34·80, although many of their expenses wold be the same as if they were over 25. That difference is sometimes difficult to defend. The pension of £56·10 and even the married person's pension are not generous. I do not believe that the Government could be proud of those figures, and they will be greeted with muted enthusiasm by those people who have to struggle to make ends meet on incomes on which I should not like to live. I suspect that the Secretary of State would not like to live on them either.

8.29 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I very much welcome the uprating of all social security benefits by 3·6 per cent. in the orders before us today. Not only are we expecting an uprating of 3·6 per cent., but it comes when inflation has been reduced to 2·6 per cent., so people on benefit will enjoy an increase in the value of their benefits in April above the current rate of inflation. As inflation is low and falling, we can also be confident that the real value of benefits will be maintained during the year. One of the hidden costs of high inflation rates is the damage done to the value of social security benefits, so that by the 11th or 12th month of the year, benefits can be 15 or 20 per cent. lower in real terms than they were at the start of the year. Thank heavens the present low inflation means that that problem, which made it difficult for people on modest incomes to budget carefully, has largely disappeared.

Today's debate also covers the review of social security expenditure announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on Monday. This year's uprating puts some of the scare stories that we have heard into perspective. We have not only an extra £2·5 billion spending on social security due to inflation, but a further £1 billion spending on social security due to the increases in the real value of benefits to the poorest members of our society. There have been increases in the value of income support and extra help has been provided with the new council tax as there is no reduction in income support to take account of the disappearance of the old requirement to contribute to the community charge. That is good news for people on low incomes.

The Labour party is trying to make hay with the review announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, but it has its own review under way. It seems odd that the Labour party is allowed to have a review of social security while, according to the Labour party, the Government —who have the responsibility of taking important decisions on the long-term future of social security and do not merely indulge in political speculation—are not allowed to have a review. If the Labour party has a review, it makes it infinitely more important that the Government should have one.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)—who is sadly not in his place at present—is Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Security, on which I am honoured to serve. Speaking about the review, he urged his Labour colleagues:

"if we do not think very radically, we will drift into our fifth election defeat, and we will deserve that."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 84.]

The Conservative party should also think radically. Radical thinking has won us four election victories and will be the basis for our fifth.

I shall outline some of the ideas that I hope will be considered in the Government's review. One of the themes must undoubtedly be targeting. It is striking that we have a budget which now runs at more than £70,000 million a year, but which is not so well targeted at helping people on low incomes as it should be. The Government's figures on

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households on below average income show that 7 per cent. of recipients of income support live in households with incomes above the national average.

I hope that I may be allowed to refer to a pamphlet entitled, "The Age of Entitlement", published by the Social Market Foundation earlier this week. The author's name temporarily escapes me—*[Interruption.]* I am being asked to identify the author. The pamphlet happens to have been written by David Willetts, Member of Parliament.

The pamphlet contains figures from a parliamentary answer on pensioner incomes and shows that pensioners in the top two quintiles of pensioner incomes—the fourth and fifth quintiles—receive a higher income in absolute terms from social security benefit than pensioners in the bottom quintile. It seems difficult to defend a social security system under which pensioners at the top of the income range do better out of the state than pensioners in the poorest 20 per cent. That is why the improved targeting of social security benefits must be placed high on the agenda of any social security review.

It is important to make a distinction—one which is often overlooked. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) overlooked the fact that targeting does not necessarily mean means testing. Means testing is one way of targeting, but there are other ways. One of the insights contained in the original report of William Beveridge was that if one defines the category of benefit recipient carefully enough, one can produce a benefit that is well targeted on poverty without having to use means testing.

In preparing his report, Beveridge surveyed the social conditions of England at the time and identified the groups of people on low income—such as unemployed people and pensioners—and saw that benefits going to them would be well targeted on poverty. Patterns of income and social conditions in this country have changed, so it seems reasonable for the Government to investigate whether there are different categories of recipients who should receive benefits, and to ensure that the benefits are well targeted on them.

Let us consider the stages in the life cycle. It is clear that, by and large, poor families are one-earner families, which generally have young children. Nowadays, when children reach school age, most mothers go out to work. If we want to target a benefit on families on particularly low incomes, we should focus any increase in child benefit expenditure on children under the age of five. In that way, we shall be targeting the benefits on poverty among families. I have seen the mischievous suggestion that I am keen on the idea as I have two children aged under five, but my argument is not entirely autobiographical.

I accept that the direct costs of young children are lower than the costs of teenagers, but if one also includes in the equation the income that the family sacrifices because mothers with young children tend not to work, then the overall picture is different. There is clear evidence that the poorer families tend to be those with young children.

The analysis can also be applied to the other end of the life cycle. When we consider poverty among pensioners, it becomes clear that the pensioners who find it most difficult to make ends meet are the older ones—those over 80, particularly widows. That is why it would be absurd to spend any social security resources on extending pensions to men aged 60 to 65. I do not know of one social policy expert who says that the real target for extra social security spending should be men aged 60 to 65. They all say that the target should be to help alleviate poverty among older pensioners over the age of 80, particularly widows.

It is for those reasons that I hope that the Government's current review of the pension age will raise the female pension age to 65. Once that process has begun, there is no reason why it should not go further. Some of the savings reaped by that measure could be put towards increasing the value of the pension for those aged over 80. That would be a considerable improvement in targeting and could be achieved without means testing.

Mr. Frank Field: The hon. Gentleman used the phrase, "some of the savings". Is his speech on reforming the welfare state purely about targeting, or about targeting and cutting the size of the social security budget?

Mr. Willetts: Our social security budget is heading towards 13 per cent. of the entire national income, so it is important to save money on that budget as it will be difficult to sustain. However, it is possible both to save money on social security and to target the remaining expenditure more effectively. There is no reason why a responsible Government should not achieve both aims.

The scope for shifting from state provision to private provision through insurance should also be considered in the review of social security. I should like to identify some areas where progress could be made. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to industrial injuries benefit. I agree with him on that point. It seems absurd that companies do not themselves take responsibility for compensating employees who suffer industrial injuries and that compensation is provided through a state scheme with a standard contribution. That means safe employers subsidising dangerous employers. It sends out the wrong signals.

Employers in dangerous industries where there are high rates of industrial injuries should be forced to contemplate the improvement of their working practices, not because of cumbersome interventions from Brussels but because their insurance premiums are high and they recognise that they can reduce them by reducing the number of injuries. That would be sensible privatisation of a social security benefit, which would also contribute to the important objective of ensuring that workplaces are safe.

Another area is the expenditure, now running at nearly £1,000 million a year, on mortgages for people who are on income support. There is no reason why the state should act as the guarantor of last resort for commercial loans entered into by building societies. Why should it not be possible for people to take out insurance so that their mortgage payments could be maintained if they suffered the misfortune of losing their jobs?

Unemployment benefit has also been talked about. I must confess to some scepticism there. If any progress can be made in that regard, I would welcome it, but we have to acknowledge that many unemployed are young. They have either no earnings record or only an intermittent record on low pay. For them to accumulate the record of paying insurance premiums which would be the basis for sustaining them while unemployed seems difficult. That is a practical problem which would need to be addressed.

Finally, there is the pension itself. As we have heard several speculative quotations from newspapers, some of which we have established were not accurate, I will quote from a newspaper article of 40 years ago. The heading is "Social Security Under Review". Almost exactly 40 years ago, the Conservative Government launched a review of the social security budget.

Lord Beveridge contributed an article to *The Times*, identifying the options which he thought should be examined. He made it clear that he already thought that his system of national insurance benefits had suffered as a result of the extra costs imposed by the Labour Government. He set out an agenda for the issues which should be considered when contemplating the future of the pension and it may be a good guide to the issues that the present Government might wish to address in the years ahead. He said that the Phillips Committee, the body set up then,

"should examine any methods by which the prospective burden on the general taxpayer for pensions to those past work can be lightened. The methods possible in theory include encouraging voluntary delay of retirement; raising the minimum age for pensions; exclusion from social insurance pensions and contribution for them of persons adequately covered by superannuation schemes in their particular employments; increase of insurance contributions."

In regard to the minimum pension age, I might point out that he later advocated that a full pension should not be payable until the age of 67. There is no reason why the Government should be reluctant to embark on an examination of the options which Lord Beveridge raised 40 years ago.

8.43 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I feel slightly left out in these debates. I have always felt left out in the past because people were never nasty about me. I do not know why that is. What I have said is never quoted or questioned. That is bad. I am beginning to develop a complex. I am also feeling left out because I am not having a review. Everybody else seems to be having reviews, so I might as well announce a review, just by myself. I will do a deal with the Secretary of State; I will submit evidence to his review if he will submit evidence to mine.

I want to speak for a few minutes in this important debate. Sometimes such debates degenerate into ritual. I hope that hon. Members will not take the wrong meaning from that. The debate is an annual event in the social security calendar and it becomes ritualistic. Nevertheless it is an important opportunity to discuss aspects of social security generally.

Although it is not related directly to the uprating statement, the Secretary of State commented on fraud and the need to examine the administrative procedures to be used by his Department. I am as keen as every other hon. Member to make savings on fraud, and to try to root out housing benefit fraud particularly with the assistance of local authorities. However, I am concerned about some claims that the Secretary of State seemed to be making about the amount that he could save on the fraud provisions which he announced in the uprating statement.

I would be reassured if in the reply to the debate, or in a letter subsequently, the Secretary of State could flesh out what further thought had been given to the issue. I understand that the Department had to put up a strong case to the Treasury to get the grant, which I support, but I am nervous that the Secretary of State's claim about the amount which he could save on fraud, £1 billion a year, may be a bridge too far. I would be reassured by more of the detail behind that statement.

In that connection, I have had interesting correspondence from people who work in the Department and who are concerned about administrative changes. I understand that floating around the Department there is a document called the Mayhew report, if I have the name right. I should like to see that report. Responsible staff who are conscientious about their duties are concerned about some administrative changes that have been made. In a time of citizens charters, open government and all the rest of it, perhaps all I have to do is ask for the report, which I have just done. If I cannot get a copy of it, perhaps in the letter which the Secretary of State will send me about fraud he will tell me precisely why.

I too think that 3·6 per cent. may be par for the course in terms of the legal requirements. However, I have to draw attention to a point which is made with monotonous regularity in these debates; benefit recipients are falling further and further behind those who are earning more than the increase in the retail price index. I accept that the RPI is 3·6 per cent. I accept what the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) said about what that will mean in real terms, having regard to inflation, this spring, but year in, year out, pensioners and other benefit recipients fall further behind in the wealth stakes in comparison to those who are lucky enough to be in employment.

The average male earnings figure equivalent to the 3·6 per cent. RPI increase is 4·7 per cent. It may be true that the difference does not add up to a big row of beans in one year, but year by year that inexorably puts people in receipt of benefit at a chronic disadvantage. We must never forget that in the social security uprating debates.

I was not particularly taken with the Secretary of State's comments about statutory sick pay. That is to be frozen, saving some £20 million. I do not understand why statutory sick pay was singled out. Maternity pay has also been frozen at £100. I am worried about future increases. The capital limits and earnings disregards should be considered carefully in the Government review, because there is real scope for progress. The 21-hour study limit and the 24-hour employment limit for those engaged in voluntary activity could be changed to try to encourage people to do part-time work to assist themselves when they are on benefit.

The reduction in invalidity benefit of £240 million is premature. A research project that is currently under way, which is expected to report towards the end of 1993, would provide a valuable insight into what could be done with invalidity benefit. I understand what the Government have done in that direction and I welcome the fact that a great deal more money is being spent, but it is wrong to use this uprating statement to make a change in advance of those research findings.

It is becoming obvious from my case work and from talking to other Members of Parliament that insufficient account is being taken of the increases in water charges. I hope that the Government will monitor their effect on the benefit system. I welcome the fact that the Government have not adopted the proposal to claw back funds relating to the community charge.

I continue to be worried about the take-up rates for some means-tested benefits, especially family credit and income support. The evidence from research projects is

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equivocal. The Government may say that it is still early days, that the changes only came in in 1988 and that such matters take a little time to take effect; I am aware of that. Nevertheless the Government should pay careful attention to how the take-up rates develop.

I am also a little disappointed that something more progressive and beneficial was not done with the social fund. If the Minister has the opportunity when he replies, I hope that he will say something about the comments made by the Social Services Advisory Committee and the Social Policy Research Unit about the social fund.

I have been making some desultory overtures to the Department about the needs of share fishermen in Scotland. A real problem is beginning to emerge. I do not complain that the Government have not dealt with it, because it is a new problem. Share fishermen are having their earning capacity statutorily reduced by the provision for tie-up days in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992. I think that they are the only earning group in the British economy with statutory restrictions placed on the amount of money that they are entitled to earn.

The fishermen are self-employed and there are some problems with how help could be administered. I have been casting around, trying to find some way of getting them access to additional support while statutory restrictions apply to their right to go to sea to earn a living. I accept that it is a complicated matter, but I hope that the Government recognise the problem and will carefully monitor what is happening The number of people involved is not large, but some families are dependent on crew members of boats that are now tied up for long stretches. They are suffering badly.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is inconsistency in the Government's attitude? They say that one reason why they do not want the House to adopt the Maastricht social chapter is that it lays down foolish rules, such as limiting the amount of work that people can do. They want people to be able to work for as long as they want to work. On the other hand, the Government are limiting the amount of work that can be done by the fishermen to whom the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Kirkwood: The experience of the Chairman of the Social Services Select Committee is all-knowing and all-embracing. He even speaks effectively on behalf of share fishermen. I shall report that with some pleasure to the fishermen at the quayside market in Eyemouth on Friday afternoon.

Dr. Godman: Is it not true that at one time those fishermen were allowed to draw unemployment benefit when they could not put to sea because of circumstances beyond their control—for example, heavy weather or the boat being out of the water for repair? Because of the statutory limit on days at sea, those fishermen are now in precisely the same position.

Mr. Kirkwood: The change in the weekly earnings rule had a severe impact on share fishermen, some of whom were denied access to unemployment benefit. That blow hit them some years ago. I represent a fishing constituency and my experience is that something is wrong and action needs to be taken.

I want to voice two more gripes before I sit down. The first refers to war pensions and the changes in the provisions for noise-induced hearing loss. I understand and accept that we are discussing a package deal, so the rank differentials that have been eroded or abolished are acceptable. However, although it is right to have stringent conditions when ensuring that there is a direct link between hearing loss and active service, having established that link I do not understand how it can be fair not to base the award on the degree of disability. I have always understood that war pensions were a legal entitlement, but that entitlement is being summarily withdrawn.

I understand the Government's case that the package, in the round, will benefit people in other directions. That is welcome. However, former service men who have suffered that disability are right to feel slightly let down and to hold the Government to account. They want further explanations of exactly why the change was made.

Secondly, I am concerned about the demise of the independent living fund. I noticed some interesting exchanges in written questions and answers between the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the Minister. The hon. Member for Garscadden is looking surprised. He asked how much it would cost to extend the successor to the independent living fund to those who had gone beyond retirement age. The answer is interesting. Only a £2 million increase in the successor fund would be needed to extend it to people beyond retirement age. The figure would increase to £6 million next year and £9 million the year after. Those are not insignificant sums, but I hope that the Government will seriously consider providing them. That is food for thought for the Department.

I want to say a few words about carers. The increase in the invalid care allowance and the carer premium of 3·6 per cent. to £33·70 and £11·95 respectively are all very well as far as they go. The Government have estimated that the changes will benefit 189,000 recipients of invalid care allowance and 70,000 recipients of carer premium. However, carers are the main providers of community care and they save the country almost £24 billion a year, according to figures produced by some pressure groups.

Some 26 per cent. of all carers and 40 per cent. of all older carers are living in some poverty, often as a direct result of their caring responsibilities. The increases announced in the uprating statement will mean that the invalid care allowance will represent only 10·69 per cent. of national average earnings, which is not adequate recompense for the service to the community that those people perform. Older carers cannot claim ICA for the first time after the age of 65, and without entitlement to ICA the poorest older carers cannot claim the carer premium either.

There are also problems with claiming unemployment benefit when the individual returns to the employment market after he or she has finished caring. If that individual was looking after someone receiving the lower rate of care component, they cannot claim ICA. I appreciate that big sums of money are involved in making some of those changes, but I hope that the Government's review will consider carefully the support that carers are to receive in the longer term.

I hope that the review is successful, and that it will be open and genuine. I hope also that we shall all have a chance to make submissions. I shall do so to the best of my ability. The uprating statement is acceptable and welcome

as far as it goes, but the Government have missed another opportunity to be more progressive and imaginative in providing more support to those who need it most.

8.59 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I like to think that not the disagreement between both sides of the House but the large degree of agreement will impress people who are watching this debate, or who rush out to buy copies of *Hansard* to read all about it. Ultimately, however, the chasm is narrow but deep—which means that there is a living for us to earn. One thing I noticed is that, since the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has been in charge of his present duties, the tone of these debates is much more reflective.

That is something of a disadvantage. Sometimes it is easier to repel a polarised situation by indulging in coarse oratory. When the hon. Gentleman sets out his stall, he does so in such a persuasive way that one has to pinch oneself to think that he might be in error. Whatever other tricks one may produce in debates in which the hon. Gentleman participates, a knee jerk or an elbow to the solar plexus will not repel the hon. Gentleman.

In tonight's debate, as in some recent debates, it has become clear that there is common ground in the sense that it is acknowledged that some regard must be paid to where the money to pay the benefits one wants to pay is to come from. I do not say this in any partisan way, because there has been no trace of that tonight, or for some little while. Even in the 10 years that I have been in the House, I have heard vestigial voices saying that the way to achieve the pension system that we want for all our constituents in need is to raid that great pot of gold out there, if only the Government of the day would do that.

For a long time, it was thought that if one could only get one's hands on the money of the rich, one could improve the benefits system dramatically. That is a lovely idea, but it does not hang together. Around 89 per cent. of taxpayers pay only basic rate tax, so if one confiscated all the money earned above the basic rate level, it would still be a drop in the ocean in terms of improving the benefits system generally. It is common ground on both sides of the House that we must to a large extent have a benefits system that we can afford.

It was clear from the experiences of the last Labour Government that, no matter how good one's intentions, at the end of the day one's finances can find one out. In a bygone age, one could swap remarks across the Chamber about Labour being the party that took away the Christmas bonus one year, or rigged its own pension arrangements so that, having awarded pensions linked to incomes, it then had to avoid them.

All that is true, but I do not say that it was done with dishonour. That Labour Government had the best of intentions. They produced a mechanism which, had the Government been able to fund it, would have brought substantial benefits to the pensioners concerned. Ultimately, that Labour Government's good intentions failed because the country could not generate the income necessary to realise them. The common ground between us now seems to be that the Government must be able to raise the money needed from the tax revenue produced.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that, although he could accept the 3·6 per cent. uprating, it was not very much. One might ask him rhetorically, "Given the state of the economy, where would you get the money to produce a better level of pensions?" Quick as a flash, the hon. Gentleman would reply, "We would never be faced with that problem because we wouldn't get the economy in this state." If I sat on the other side of the House, I would defy the facts and make that reply as well. It remains true that, in any economy, one must see what can be afforded. I do not see what more could be done, and we must simply face up to that.

We must consider some of the more sombre steps that we may yet have to take. Reference has been made, properly, to the amount of Government borrowing necessary to finance the present benefits system. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that we had gone too far, and should set about cutting benefits; the fact is, however, that the Government have decided that they can fund benefits on current levels, through taxes and borrowing.

That is an important point, which may yet be the basis for a significant difference between the two sides of the House. In the last public expenditure settlement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor started on the basis of the amount that the country could afford, and then decided how that money could be allocated. It is clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security fought his corner with considerable skill: he managed to ensure that all benefits were uprated sufficiently, while at the same time operating within a budget that had been decided in the first place not on the basis of what we would like to spend, but on the basis of what was available. That was rather brave.

For all our different reasons, we hope that my right hon. Friend's move will work this year. If it does, however, we must look into the future, and ask ourselves whether such action will always be possible. Will there come a time, sooner or later—perhaps sooner—when the Chancellor of the day decides what can be afforded, and then looks at the social security budget in its entirety? If so, that Chancellor may decide that it is simply not possible to maintain benefits along the lines that we would like.

It is curious that remarks such as this should be swapped across the Floor of the House—for instance, that it should be suggested that the Leader of the Opposition may be thinking of taxing or means-testing benefits, or, at least, not entirely ruling out such action—when the Government are having to conduct a review. I see nothing dishonourable in some of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition.

When I quoted some of those remarks to the hon. Member for Garscadden, he said that the words meant what they said: I think that he was accusing me of putting a gloss or spin on them. I did not need to, because the right hon. and learned Gentleman's words were perfectly plain. He said that there might be a case for many benefits to remain universal, but that it was only right to be prepared to re-examine anything; he did not rule anything out of court.

More recently, the right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke of

> "a strong case for maintaining universality, everyone having access to child benefit and retirement pensions to which they have contributed during their working lives. The commission is perfectly free to propose all sorts of subtractions and additions and alternatives".

A cynic might say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman really meant that, even if the commission made

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such a proposal, he would not adopt it; but I do not think that that is a mark of this Leader of the Opposition. I believe that, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman is telling his own commission that it is

"perfectly free to propose all sorts of subtractions and additions and alternatives",

he genuinely intends to consider them.

I see no great difference between that and the concept mentioned recently by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He suggested that people with sufficient means might wish to make their own arrangements rather than relying on the state system. Surely, we are talking about two ways of acknowledging the same truth—that it is not sufficient to say that we would like to do without dealing with how such action is to be funded.

The hon. Member for Garscadden countered that argument with great force and sincerity. He suggested that there would be something wrong with a system that allowed, indeed almost obliged, the prosperous middle classes—to coin a loose phrase—to contract out of the welfare state, and then simply to leave it there for those who would have to rely on it. I accept, in terms of argument and debate, that it would be wrong, unwelcome and thoroughly unhelpful if those who had been obliged to contract out entirely then regarded what was left as an incubus.

I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that some mean-minded people would not see it in that way; clearly they would. However, I do not think that that would be the predominant view in British society. I do not believe that those who educate their children privately have no regard for those who educate them in the state sector, and I know that no one would seriously make that bald statement in the House.

Let me cite a more homely example. The level of owner-occupation is probably very high on both sides of the House, but I cannot imagine that those who own their own houses would have no regard for people who live in council houses on rents essentially subsidised by the Department of the Environment.

I understand the point that the hon. Member for Garscadden makes. If what he fears were to come to pass, it would be a powerful argument against going in that direction, but I do not believe that British society works in that way. If that seems too extravagant a proposition, let me put it another way. In the House of Commons, even in this new age of the middle ground, there is still a pretty wide descrepancy between those on the right of the Conservative party and those on the left of the Labour party. But those two groups have one thing in common: they are both prepared to come here and legislate in this way. I accept that the hon. Gentleman believes that there is a risk. I do not think so. What I see are different ways of reaching the conclusion that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be working towards.

A moment ago, I said that we might yet, in the not too distant future, have to face decisions that would make it simply impossible for us to spend and uprate across the board. It will be particularly difficult for the governing party to face up to such decisions, and particularly tempting for the party in opposition to exploit the situation. If the roles were reversed, the Conservative party would be subject to that temptation. One has only to consider what has happened to the retired population to realise that we are storing up a problem of gigantic proportions, which we shall have to try to address. At present, the proportion of supporting taxpayers to pensioners is slightly more than three to one. By the early decades of the next century it will have fallen to about two to one.

If one makes that point to the classic awkward pensioner whom every Tory candidate is terrified to meet during a general election campaign—the Albert Tatlocks of this world—they say, "I don't want to know about the burden on the working population. I paid my dues over the years. I fought in a world war." I know a few people who fought in two. They don't want to know about the burden their pensions represent for the working population. Although those people's contributions give them the right to be supported by the working population, the practical ability to maintain them in the style to which they wish to be accustomed lies outside what can be achieved with the tax contributions of the working population.

As the proportion of workers to pensioners decreases markedly, there will be some pretty tough decisions to be made. Perhaps the most partisan remark that I need to make in this connection is that, to some extent, the justification for the optimism of the Labour party in thinking that it can once again be the governing party will be indicated by the extent to which it helps the Government in this debate. I cannot for one moment imagine that the Opposition spokesman wants to spend the next 20 years fighting on the Labour Front Bench and finally, in his grey-haired years, come to the Government side and find that he has only two taxpayers to support each retired person. It seems to me that, if the hon. Gentleman really believes in the Labour revival, he will have to enter into this debate.

On these occasions, it is worth concentrating on the points that unite us. As this debate proceeds, it will be interesting to see the extent to which, in the end, there is no difference between us. As a member of the Select Committee on Social Security, I sometimes find myself outflanked on the right by the Chairman, and sometimes think that I am outflanking him on the left. If that is an indication of a constructive debate, it will ultimately be so much harder for the Government to cover up any sins. Of course, they do not have such sins, so the risk does not exist.

9.13 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): It is no surprise that this debate about the uprating statement has also been a debate on the Government's reviews of public spending—particularly the reviews of social security spending. Future uprating statements, whether under a Conservative Government or a Labour Government, will depend critically on our ability to look rigorously at public spending on social security.

Although Front Benchers may have fun with one another about each other's reviews, it is surely no coincidence that both the Labour party and the Government have now launched fundamental reviews. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) felt a little anxious that the Liberal party did

not have a review. If I were he, I should say that my party had had a very good review—the Beveridge report of 50 years ago—even if it needs some radical updating.

It was a bit rich of the Secretary of State to attack us for having an independent review. Why should he attack a privatised review? He made it clear in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that his will be a secret review, and therefore a classic nationalised review. We live in strange times when such criticisms are made.

I welcome the need for a fundamental and long-term review, but note much foreboding in our community about the Government's review and their intentions. I see many honest citizens in Croydon and throughout the country reaching for their purses and wallets when they hear about the Government's review. I ask why that is.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, announcing the public expenditure review, said that we needed to distinguish between essential and avoidable costs. That must be right; it is simple and truthful stuff with which we can all agree. What are the implications for this review? Although any proper analysis of social security spending should start at the beginning, I worry that the Government might start at the end. In other words, they might start where they can save money—what benefits they can cut —and make a political calculation about what they can get away with at the next election. Perhaps I am being too logical, but I think that we should start not at the end but at the beginning. I will say what I mean by that in a moment.

Let us acknowledge that this is not the first Government review. At least two or three times since 1979 the Government have said, "We need a fundamental review; we need to constrain or reduce public expenditure."

Mr. Dewar: Fowler.

Mr. Wicks: The Fowler review comes to mind, but in their 1990 White Paper the Government clearly stated their objectives:

"The Government intend to reduce public expenditure progressively in volume terms over the next four years."

That did not work. They did not reduce public expenditure in real terms or any other terms. In fact, public spending increased dramatically from £203 billion in real terms at the beginning of this Administration in 1978-79 to a significant £258 billion in 1992-93.

Although there have been many differences across the Chamber—more, frankly, than some hon. Members, in a spirit of politeness, have acknowledged—any Government will face fundamental questions. What do I mean when I urge the Government to start at the beginning of the story and not at the end? I think that we need, first, to ask questions about social change in Britain: how do people live and work, and how will that look up to the year 2000? Given that analysis, what trends are making for social insecurity, and what trends and what policy development could make for social security? My fear is that in future we may not have enough money to give decent benefits to people who have to rely on social security because, for the want of better policies, we are having to provide benefits for people who, in a better world, would not need to depend on social security.

The second task of a proper review would be to state its objectives. The objectives of any proper review of social security would be to ask, how do we develop policies, which often have nothing to do with the DSS, that enhance economic well-being and enable our citizens to become financially independent? Only after that would we need to focus on those who, because of disability or advanced old age, have to depend, quite properly, on universal state benefits.

I will explain my point in three ways. The first is the most obvious, but I make no excuse for returning to the theme of unemployment. Unless we make up our mind as a society to attack Beveridge's giant evil of idleness or unemployment, all our plans, as he said 50 years ago, and as I more modestly say today, for social well-being and social security are out of reach. If we have to spend large sums of money, often paying very low benefits but to masses of people, we shall not in future be able to cater for all the modern needs for which a decent society should cater.

We shall not be able to cater for the needs of the carers, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, the needs of the growing numbers of people with disabilities or those who, in frail old age, often —and rightly—have to turn to the state for help. They include not least the generation which has missed out on the private and occupational pension revolution.

The Government must come clean at the beginning of their review. Do they see a future of mass unemployment? If so, they can hardly quarrel with the expenditure implications which consume a daily growing proportion of our social security budget and of our gross domestic product. They must come clean about their employment, full employment or unemployment assumptions.

The White Paper on public spending clearly shows how much we as a society are spending to keep people out of work who want to work. When we consider the trends among one-parent families and some longer-term sick people who are on benefit, we cannot but ask questions: how many of them would be in work and not on benefit if we were to approach full employment again? There are hidden costs of unemployment in the public expenditure White Paper, which we should make as visible as possible.

A fundamental review of social security and unemployment is more about macro-economic and employment policies and about child care and training than about social security policy. Therefore, I urge the Secretary of State to introduce an interdepartmental element into his inquiry.

My second illustration of starting at the beginning rather than the end of the story involves family breakdown. One of the demographic and social revolutions affecting not only a European society such as ours but others across the world is, sadly, the growing number of children who spend some or all of their childhood in one-parent rather than two-parent families. Almost four out of 10 new marriages will end in divorce, so a large percentage of children exprience family breakdown.

That revolution has not been painless. The fact that 70 per cent. of today's one-parent families depend on income support reflects the failure of society to comprehend or to cope with that revolution. A higher proportion—about 85 per cent.—of one-parent families will spend some time on state income support. That is bad news not only for mothers, children and society as a whole, because life on income support is rotten, but for taxpayers, public expenditure and the economy. I do not believe that life needs to be like that.

[Mr. Wicks]

In Sweden, for example, the picture is quite different. About 80 per cent. of one-parent families are not on the Swedish equivalent of income support, but in employment. There are many reasons for that, including the fact that the state has intervened through labour market policies, employment training and child care to help people socially. Of course there are costs involved in intervening through the state, but the social and economic savings have been colossal. Our failure not only to comprehend family breakdown but to prevent it and to help its victims has major public expenditure implications. The Government should start there rather than by asking whether they can cut a bit off benefits for one-parent families.

My third example deals with the subject of aging, which various hon. Members have mentioned. There has also been a social and demographic revolution of aging, which has major consequences for public expenditure and pensions policy. We shall hear more about that after 1 April, when the so-called community care policy comes into effect.

We are beginning to have a vigorous debate, but there is not yet a consensus on who should meet the costs of aging, either for pensions or, in particular, for care. Soon the Government—any Government—will have to grapple with the equalisation of pension ages.

That is a several billion pound question. Do we go back to 60? The Government would say that we could not afford that. Do we equalise at 63? Do we go to 65? Do we follow the advice of the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) —we now find out that he was apparently quoting Beveridge—and go for 67? Those are important questions. We should not consider those questions in isolation, but should relate them to the other questions with which hon. Members on both sides of the House have to grapple, about the right future mix between public and private provision. We may disagree about that mix, but we should have the debate.

As has been pointed out, the poorest groups are people in their late 70s and in their 80s and 90s, who have missed out on the private pension revolution and who may now need targeted help. I agree with the hon. Member for Havant that such help need not be means-tested—indeed, I urge that it should not be means-tested.

Let us ask questions about the pattern of retirement. Let us not talk about pensioners as a grey mass, which they are not: they are many millions of individuals, some of whom want to retire early and some of whom want to work until they drop and never retire. Let us have flexibility and look at the actuarial implications in ways which make sense to people. Let us not treat people as a mass who have to retire either at 60, 65 or 67—or even 57. Let us offer them choices and freedom, and discover how we can do that in ways which enhance social welfare but also make sense in terms of public expenditure. Those are the important questions.

Finally, the review——

Mr. Frank Field: Ours or theirs?

Mr. Wicks: Both. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead who, almost echoing Government policy, called for open government on the issue. Such fundamental questions should not be about political fixes and cutting benefits. Why do we not encourage public debate on them? Why not consider a discussion paper, a Green Paper, a series of meetings or whatever, to engage the public in the discussion? There are no clear answers. There may be disagreements. At the end of the day, the Government will come to their own decision, with a White Paper and perhaps legislation. But why not encourage a public debate?

I support the review if it turns out to be long-term, fundamental and open. We need to review those questions. Any Government approaching the year 2000 will face difficult social questions involving public expenditure. Let us open the debate beyond this Chamber to the wider mass of people who have a major interest in the issues.

9.27 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): There has been some discussion during the debate about speeches being recycled, so I shall say at the outset that I wrote my speech myself, and that it has not been used before. When I have finished it hon. Members may realise the benefits of recycling speeches and using them time and again—especially when they are as good as the one that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made to the Young Conservatives conference at the weekend.

I was briefly tempted to use again the speech which I made in the debate on the Social Security Bill last November, because no one took any notice of it at the time, so no one would have realised if I had used it again tonight. But then I was much more tempted to re-use the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), which brought in so many new ideas and so much enlightened thinking.

I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), and during its 29 minutes I was wondering whether he might effectively dispel Conservative Members' belief that there had indeed been a gloomy feeling among Opposition Members at the time of the uprating statement. On that occasion we could see, as Opposition Members could not, the faces of those sitting on the Benches opposite us. We saw how miserable they were. Where, even today, were the words of welcome for the uprating statement?

Eventually, after twenty-eight and a half minutes, the hon. Member for Garscadden got there. He said that he welcomed the statement "as far as it goes." That was a magnanimous gesture by the Labour party—but the hon. Gentleman immediately went on to attack the amounts of money involved. We always hear from the Labour party how to spend wealth. Now and again it would be nice to hear Labour Members tell us about how to create wealth.

We hear attacks on the amount of money paid in benefits. The hon. Member for Garscadden says that it is not enough, that it is a measly amount—but does he tell us how much he would spend? Does he give us an inkling of how much the Labour party believes the benefits should be? He does not, because we would ask how much that would cost. Labour Members would not tell us; we should have to tell them how much it would cost. Please will the Labour party come clean? If Labour wants to challenge us on the amounts paid in benefits—all Conservative Members would like to see the levels of benefits increased —please will Labour Members tell us the level to which they think benefits should be increased?

It is only a year ago that Labour was more open and was telling us that Labour party policy was that pensions

should be raised for a single person to one third of average income and to half average income for a married couple. The hon. Member for Garscadden makes an unlikely Father Christmas. Indeed, it has been uncharitably said that he thinks that charisma is 25 December. Christmas presents come ill from the Labour party which twice cancelled the pensioners' Christmas bonus.

Labour's commitment to raise pensions by that amount would have cost £25 billion. We do not know whether Labour still stands by that policy. If Labour had stood by that policy and if it was now in government, we should not be considering a fundamental review of Government spending and how to allocate resources, but a closing down sale. As happened before, we should have found that we were spending infinitely more than we could afford. We at least have the courage to recognise that and the integrity to try to challenge those issues.

We are now told that we have a new Labour party, the fourth new Labour party after four election defeats. From his remarks, it is clear that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) recognises, as we do, that a fifth election defeat is likely for Labour.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hendry: In view of the charitable comments that my hon. Friends pile on the hon. Gentleman, it would be churlish not to give way to him.

Mr. Field: I was not saying that a fifth defeat was inevitable. I said that a victory is there for us, but that we need to make fundamental changes. These debates offer that opportunity. Other opportunities arise to make that contribution to the party. I believe that we should run the Conservatives really close next time and that we should put the fear of God into them that they will lose their red boxes, their chauffeur-driven cars and all the trappings of power. Labour should be serious this time about that objective.

Mr. Hendry: We do not mind Labour running us close as long as it does not win. As long as the majority does not drop below 19, we can live with it. We plan to increase that majority ourselves.

Having seen the new, new model Labour party, we could look around justifiably for clarification about its policies. We looked forward with great excitement last week to the speech by the Leader of the Opposition in which we thought that he would set out the new agenda and the way forward. We thought that he would of course talk about social security. Sadly, he did not. Social security did not get a mention.

We were obliged to wait until this week when the Leader of the Opposition was interviewed by *The Times*. That shows how much the party has changed. A few years ago, even last year, the right hon. and learned Gentleman would have had an interview with *The Guardian*. Some of his colleagues would have gone to the *Morning Star*. Now, Mr. Murdoch is in favour and Labour Members are prepared to talk to *The Times*. We welcome that transformation. However, we find that we still lack a clear explanation of the party's way forward.

We know of Labour's commission on social justice. Conservative Members have attempted to find out how fundamental the review will be. I quote what Labour has said:

"There is a strong case for maintaining universality".

As has been said already in this debate—we have to challenge you on the issue because you will not tell us what it means——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not use the word "you". He has repeatedly done so. I am not responsible for anything of which he has accused me.

Mr. Hendry: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should have realised that.

The quotation continues:

"everyone having access to child benefit and retirement pensions to which they have contributed during their working lives."

Again, there is universality. The quotation continues:

"The commission is perfectly free to propose all sorts of subtractions and additions and alternatives."

In spite of the challenges from Conservative Members, the Labour party will not tell us whether it means that as an open-ended review or whether it seeks to use weasel words to pretend that it wants both sides of the circle playing together.

I shall concentrate not on the way of the past, which is what we hear from the Labour party, but on the way forward. I shall pick up some of the points so excellently explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts).

We have two priorities in social security. First, how do we stop people drifting or moving into dependency? Secondly, how do we help people to come out of dependency? I do not see it as one of our priorities to seek to sustain people and keep them in dependency. That should not be one of our goals.

If we are to stop people moving into dependency, one of our key principles must be to help people to prepare for times of difficulty or illness, or simply for the process of getting older. That is why we believe so strongly in private, personal and occupational pensions. It is a source of great sadness to us that there is still no cross party recognition of the fact that planning ahead should be welcomed rather than scorned.

It cannot be right to spread benefits so wide that those in need do not get the help that they genuinely require because too much help is being given to those who do not require it. I referred just now to massive increases in pensions. If one gives large increases to everyone—including people with large personal incomes on retirement—we shall make it increasingly difficult to target help on those in genuine need. If one asks a child, "Do you want a lollipop?" he will say yes. If one asks a child, "Do you want to pay for it?" one will get a slightly different reply. We must accept that higher levels of benefit cost money.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) said, we are faced with the problem of a working population that is shrinking relative to those who will be living and requiring support from the state. Planning ahead is not callous. It is not a vicious 19th-century Tory principle. It is common sense and reflects the aspirations of people throughout the country.

If we are to be honest about targeting, we shall have to look at some other sacred cows. I know that this does not necessarily fall within the Department's responsibilities, but we must challenge the long-term future of mortgage interest relief. We spend more than £5 billion a year

[Mr. Hendry]

helping people with their mortgages, even though many of them can well afford to pay them. As a result, other people in need of housing support receive less than they require.

Now that the housing market has bottomed out, I hope that we shall gradually start to tackle that principle. With a base rate of tax of 20 per cent., we could start by saying that mortgage interest relief should start at 20 per cent. rather than 25 per cent. That alone would create a saving of £1 billion which could go towards reducing the deficit or towards spending elsewhere.

How does one help people to move out of dependency? Too often, the policies of the past have worked to trap people in dependency. Over many years, choice has been removed. Let us consider what has happened in our inner-city areas, where such policies are most important. The state—either at local or national level—has said to people, "We will look after you. We will look after your housing, education and health. We will look after you when you are young and when you are old and in all aspects of your life. You need worry about nothing. The state knows best. The state will look after it."

In many areas, we have rolled back that principle, but in some areas it survives and people have lost the ability to choose. It is not that they do not want to choose but that they do not understand how to. They are frightened of making choices. Over the past 14 years, we have been tackling those problems gradually. Initially, we told people who wanted to take an opportunity that we would take off the lid that had been holding them down and allow them to make a choice. We told people that, if they wanted to buy their council house, buy shares in a company or start up a business, they could go ahead and do it. Then there was a second tranche consisting of people less willing to take the leap. To them, we said, "We will give you an incentive to start taking out personal pensions and to buy shares."

Our priority must now be to consider people who come into neither category. We shall not achieve that merely by shaking the benefits tree—although it is certainly important to ensure that people do not get benefits to which they are not entitled. For many people, the benefits tree represents security. It is not like a tree of apples from which ripe fruit drops when one shakes it. Many will cling more tightly because the tree is their security.

I agree with some of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), who said that we require a cross-departmental system. The benefits system is part of the package, but we also need to look more widely. Let me give a couple of examples. Many single parents are in dependency for the simple reason that they do not have the opportunity to go out to work. The mother cannot raise income because she has no one to look after the child, and she cannot simply get a job. We need to look at that cross-departmentally.

In my constituency, we have a shortage of housing. In one area we have a number of empty police houses. We have two empty police houses side by side, which is a chronic waste in an area of housing shortage. We should examine whether those empty houses could be turned into units for single parents with children under school age. The houses could be turned into four or five units and single parents would have facilities on site and a child minder. The mother would have the opportunity to get a job without placing an extra burden on the state for a massive provision of child-minding support. In that way, we could help single parents to find work, start tackling their problems and looking to a brighter future.

The same could be said of the unemployed. We should not look simply at how we support unemployed people. We must see how we can give people the cross-departmental support which they need to make them ready to move back into work. For that reason, we need to be open-minded on the principle of working for benefits.

Mr. Winnick: If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he referred to unemployed people moving back into work. Does he realise that the overwhelming majority of unemployed people do not want to rely on benefits of any sort? When vacancies occur, there will often be 500 or 600 people applying for a single vacancy. Sometimes they queue all night for the opportunity of getting a job. The responsibility for what has happened lies with the Government. The hon. Gentleman should be concerned that millons of people are denied the right to work.

Mr. Hendry: If the hon. Gentleman looks across the channel, he will see a socialist Government which has pursued socialist policies and which has an unemployment rate that is almost the same as that in the United Kingdom. It is not a question of the Government's policies having failed. The United Kingdom, significantly as a result of our refusing to take on board the social chapter, is ready for growth, and most of the independent reports expect it to have the highest rate of growth in the European Community by the end of this year. Perhaps the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) can look more at the positive aspects than the negative ones.

The hon. Gentleman makes the important point that unemployed people want jobs. The worst waste for unemployed people is having nothing to do, sitting around all day at home or getting up late and losing the work attitude.

I have been unemployed twice—once when I left university 12 years ago, in a similar time for graduates as it is now, and shortly thereafter. I know what it is like to write letters and wait for replies. One finds that many people do not bother to reply and many other people simply give one a dismissive letter as though they have not considered the application. In those circumstances, it is difficult to maintain morale and continue looking for work daily.

One of the reasons for looking at the principle of work for benefits is the question of how to put people in a frame of mind whereby they are in a position to apply for jobs and be enthusiastic about getting them. Many questions need to be examined: whether working for benefits would be part-time or full-time, whether it would be compulsory or voluntary and whether it would apply to everybody or only to those who have been unemployed for some time.

We need to challenge things. It was President Kennedy who said:

"Change is the law of life, and those who only think of the present and the past are certain to miss the future."

He had vision and imagination in many other areas. We are right to challenge the principles, think the unthinkable and hope to do the unthinkable. That is the way in which we should move forward.

There has been a creeping dependency over many years which the Government have sought to reverse in the past 14 years. That creeping dependency is not desirable.

Moreover, it is something which we cannot support. I support the Government's social security initiatives as part of the package to put those problems right. I will be supporting the Government on the order tonight.

9.43 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the past two and a half hours we have heard several wide-ranging and deeply intellectual speeches from people who are plainly formidably expert on social security matters. As I am sure you know, Madam Speaker, I am not an expert on social security. But as a Back-Bench Member of Parliament I am worried for those constituents of mine who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to defend themselves against the irregularities that arise in their dealings with the local Benefits Agency offices. I shall use some examples to show the need for reviews of the social security system.

All the examples that I shall use come from my two most recent surgeries. One involved a man living in Port Glasgow who told me that he applied for disability living allowance in May 1992. He brought to my surgery a formal acknowledgement of his application dated 1 June 1992. He has heard nothing from Blackpool since. I find that disgraceful.

Mr. Winnick: That is fairly common.

Dr. Godman: Whether it is common or not, it is a matter of deep regret for my constituent.

Another example concerns a young girl who came to see me at my constituency surgery. She is 17 and four months pregnant. Her parents put her out of the house when she announced that she was pregnant. She refused an abortion. She is living in a house which is much too big for her in a part of my constituency where the houses are known as "difficult to let".

The young girl went along to the local benefits office in Port Glasgow to ask for help in her difficult circumstances. She was turned away because she was not in receipt of income support. She is undergoing youth training. Why did not one of the officials sit the girl down—a girl is what she is; she is 17 years old—and say, "We cannot pay you because of the harsh regulations governing payments from the social fund. You are not on income support. But did you know that if you are in such difficulties you can go along to the local social work department?" The hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that, under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, a social worker may have been able to give the girl some financial assistance. Why was not the girl given that advice?

Another example of the failure of the state to protect individuals who find themselves in difficult circumstances is the case of a constituent of mine who is suffering from asbestosis. He is deeply ill, like many of the sufferers whom one finds in shipbuilding constituencies for reasons that I do not need to spell out to the House. He has been advised that he needs an independent medical examination. The man is living in poverty, but he is expected to find the money for that independent medical examination which is required by the Department.

I was grateful to the Minister for saying that he would look into this difficulty for men and women suffering from asbestosis. As you know, Madam Speaker, in almost every case asbestosis is terminal. I am pleased to say that at long last the law in Scotland has been brought into line with English legislation, in that the claim no longer dies when the victim dies. We are grateful for some small mercies.

I raised the question of invalidity benefit earlier with the Secretary of State. He courteously gave way and listened tolerantly to what I had to say. If any benefit needs to be subjected to a tough-minded review, it is invalidity benefit.

Under United Kingdom law, a women loses invalidity benefit at the age of 60 and is given a retirement pension instead. In a case heard in Liverpool, Commissioner Skinner decided that Mrs. Rose Graham had suffered sexual discrimination vis-a-vis EC directive 79/7/EEC. The Secretary of State is appealing against the Secretary of State. The assistant chief adjudication officer telephoned me last summer to tell me that that was the case and I have received correspondence from Ministers on the subject.

The social security commissioner decided that United Kingdom social security law discriminates against women, and that they should be treated in the same way as men when in receipt of invalidity benefit. On the basis of the Liverpool case, I made representations on behalf of a constituent, Mrs. McLatchie, whose invalidity benefit was restored plus the payment of arrears. That was fine and good, and I thought that the Government were acknowledging that EC law has supremacy over our legislation. They are, however, appealing to the English Court of Appeal.

I organised a take-up campaign on behalf of constituents caught in the same trap and about 400 made late appeals. They have all been told that they cannot be paid, despite the fact that Mrs. McLatchie was paid. Incidentally, one of my constituents is going to take the Government to the sheriff court, because under Scots law it is argued that she should receive her money.

I wrote to the then European Social Commissioner, Mrs. Papandreou, formally to request that she initiate proceedings at the European Court of Justice against the Government for that act of gross sexual discrimination. Mrs. Papandreou has gone, but I received a response from the acting director-general, Steffen Smidt, who said:

"With reference to Mrs. Thomas case, I can inform you that there is actually a proceeding before the Court of Justice of the European Community deferred by the House of Lords on the basis of Article 177 of the Treaty of Rome."

That article enables a national court to refer a case to the European Court of Justice, and that has profound implications for any review of social security systems throughout the European Community, let alone in this place.

The letter continues:

"This case concerns Mrs. Thomas and four other persons"—

two are male: Mr. Murphy and Mr. Morley.

"Hearings took place in November 1992, and the Commission is awaiting with the greatest of interest the forthcoming judgements.

At this stage, the Commission has to wait for the above judgement before introducing any proceedings for infringement against the Government of the United Kingdom."

As I said in an intervention in the speech of the Secretary of State, the Advocate-General has proffered his opinion to his colleagues. The other judges may well choose to reject his recommendations, but I suspect that the omens are not good for the Government. If his colleagues accept his recommendations, it will cost the Department of Social Security dear, as more than 400 people in my constituency have appealed.

[Dr. Godman]

It seems that, in future, people who believe that they have a genuine grievance against the Department of Social Security, and hence the Government, may, under the Maastricht treaty—if it is resuscitated by the second Danish referendum—have the right to take the Government to a domestic court. Those people will not have to undertake the long and winding road to Luxembourg but can take the Government to a domestic court because of their perceived failure to protect those people's interests.

In its 15th report for the 1991-92 Session, on page 49, paragraph 34, the Select Committee on European Community Legislation stated:

"There is now a new factor. The jurisprudence of the Court has developed to a point where it has recognised a right for individuals (in carefully defined circumstances) to sue their Member States in their national courts for damages flowing from non-implementation of obligations intended for their protection. In relation to obligations of this nature, the prospect of a flood of actions in national courts may be a greater deterrent to dilatory Member States than the prospect of a simple fine."

In future, people who feel that they have a legitimate grievance against the Government for their failure to protect them under social security legislation may take the Government to court. Those people can use the European Court of Justice as a tactical convenience. The provision is contained in the Maastricht treaty. I make no apology for attempting to use the European Court of Justice for tactical convenience to protect several hundreds of my constituents whose invalidity benefit was stopped when they reached the age of 60, which is the present position.

When the learned men sitting in Luxembourg decide that the Government are guilty of sexual discrimination when paying invalidity benefit, it may result not in reductions in the social security budget, but in the problem of where to find the extra money to pay the scores of thousands of women who will be involved. I look forward to that decision, about which I am fairly optimistic. No doubt Ministers are hoping that my optimism is misplaced and believe that I should not place too much reliance on the European Court of Justice. However, if Ministers and Government officials fail to protect my constituents, I shall willingly use the European Court of Justice and our national courts—if the Maastricht treaty is resuscitated by the Danes—to protect my constituents.

Even the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire is going to conduct a review of the social security system. The reviewers, whether professors or Department of Social Security officials, may have to take cognisance of the role of the European Court of Justice in determining, by way of European Community legislation, what is fair and proper in the administration of individual social security systems in the European Community—soon to be called the European union, I believe. That is an important subject, especially for hon. Members like me who are not experts but have to defend constituents' interests.

The three examples that I gave of constituents who came to my surgery involved people caught in deep poverty. I hope that this evening the Minister will respond sympathetically to those examples.

9.59 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): This has been a reflective and wide-ranging debate. I will try to comply with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) that we stick to the reflective mood and do not lapse into crude oratory. I shall try to avoid that temptation.

When the uprating statement was made, it was with great relief that we heard that benefits are to be protected. There was always a suspicion that sooner or later the social security budget would come under close scrutiny. Although there is the gloss of a general review of the whole benefit system, it has to be made clear that there is a suspicion—I say no more than that—that the review is based on the need to get the Government out of the economic mess that they have got themselves into——

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.)*

MADAM SPEAKER *then put the Question which she was directed to put at that hour, pursuant to Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates &c.).*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1992-93

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £1,893,716,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for civil services for the year ending on 31st March 1993, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 431 of Session 1992-93.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolution by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 2) BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain funds out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending on 31 March 1993: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 128.]

Social Security

Question again proposed.

10.1 pm

Mr. Bradley: Time is even shorter now and I will press on quickly. As I was saying, the Government are trying to find a way out of their economic mismanagement. While the benefit uprating announcement was welcome, it did no more than preserve the status quo for many groups of beneficiaries, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said; it did not address the issue of real improvements in benefits for many people, nor will it give help to the many groups who are denied entitlement to benefit. None of those benefits are being restored.

We should not rely on press speculation, but it is already clear that one early target for review by the Government will be invalidity benefit. The likelihood that taxation of that benefit is on the agenda means that many disabled people face further anxiety while they await the outcome of the review. If taxation of invalidity benefit is introduced, disabled people will lose because they are on low incomes.

The average invalidity beneifit in March 1991 was £67·90. Recent surveys by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys show that disabled people are less likely to find work. Additionally, they incur extra costs because of their disability. They should not be further disadvantaged. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden referred to the opting-out process in the review, which has not been denied by the Secretary of State. The opportunity for private provision for disabled people is more limited, partly because of their individual risk assessment and the cost of premiums. We have to examine that carefully.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury) *rose——*

Mr. Bradley: I think that the hon. Gentleman has just come into the Chamber; because of the time availabe, it would be inappropriate to give way.

Disabled people are just one group who will be worried about the results of the review. I hope that in his reply to the debate the Minister will be able to give assurances to such groups.

The uprating statement did not bring relief to our faces because many people did not get the good news that their benefits were being restored. We should not be fooled by the view that the basic increase in basic state retirement pension is so generous that elderly people will have an income which will enable them to live happily, with finance being no problem.

If we put the retirement pension into context, average pension income has risen in real terms, but it does not reflect a good picture of the overall distribution of income. About 9·6 million of our 10·6 million pensioners are currently receiving state pension, either through national insurance pension, income support, or a combination of the two. Of those, in 1990 72 per cent. were among the two fifths of households with the lowest disposable income. Among the one fifth of all households with the lowest disposable income in 1989, 51 per cent. were retired people.

In 1991-92 the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated that 1,425,000 families were headed by pensioners in receipt of income support. Of those, 105,000 were entirely dependent on income support—but the income support levels are not generous. It is not surprising that pensioners feel that an actual increase of a mere £2 a week is derisory and is not a reflection of their real costs. One pensioner told me that the £2 increase merely covered the increase in the window cleaning bill. We should not be fooled into believing that the uprating is so generous that many pensioners will not continue to live in abject poverty.

We must recognise that a crucial group of people will not benefit from the uprating statement, and that is 16 and 17-year-olds who are denied the right to benefit. The Government's guarantee of a place on a training scheme has proved woefully inadequate. Thousands of young people have not had the opportunity of a place on a training scheme, yet they are still denied the right to benefit. Many organisations are now talking about the problems of poverty among 16 and 17-year-olds. For example, Youthaid estimates that 124,700 16 and 17-year-olds are unemployed and have no place on a training scheme, and 97,000 of those are not receiving any benefit or payment.

It is clear from the evidence that that places an additional burden on the families of that group of youngsters. The poverty of the 16 or 17-year-old is being transferred back into the poverty of the family. In many cases, that has led to the break-up of the family because it cannot afford the extra burden of a 16 or 17-year-old who is denied a proper training place or any benefit. I hope that the Government will reconsider the denial of benefit to that very vulnerable group of people.

I want quickly to deal with the position of disabled people and their carers, which was eloquently described by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). I want to draw a particular point to the Minister's attention and I hope that he will be able to clarify the matter when he replies to the debate. As he knows, the administrative chaos in the introduction of the disabled living allowance has caused great anxiety and hardship for thousands of disabled people. That was compounded by the sudden ending of applications to the independent living fund. It is my understanding that unless disabled people were in receipt of DLA, they could not claim from the ILF. They were doubly disadvantaged because of the chaos in the administration of DLA.

In another place, in response to a question only yesterday by Baroness Hollis, Lord Henley said that individuals did not have to be in receipt of disability living allowance to receive an award from the independent living fund. Will the Minister confirm that, if people subsequently receive disability living allowance and had applied before the cut-off date to the independent living fund, they will still have the opportunity to obtain an award from the ILF? Lord Henley's statement did not make the position clear. Correspondence with the ILF states that people have to be in receipt of DLA, not simply to have applied for it. If that is the case, people should not have been denied the right to apply to the fund. Clearly, that needs to be rectified, and I hope that the Minister will respond.

I reinforce the comments of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire in relation to those who care for the disabled. A study by the Royal College of Nursing and the Spastics Society published today acknowledges yet again the valuable work done by carers. Studies estimate that the savings enjoyed by the state as a consequence of

[Mr. Bradley]

the work of informal carers is £24 billion per year. It is unacceptable that carers should be so poorly recompensed for the work that they do.

It is clear that the amount of money spent on care is infinitesimal. Financial support for carers currently accounts for 0·02 per cent. of the total social security budget, and invalid care allowance represents only 10·69 per cent. of national average earnings. That is scandalously low. Is it not time that the Government acknowledged the value of carers and their work and ensured that their efforts are recognised as a job of work and properly recompensed? There is no suggestion that carers demand to be recognised in that way—they work willingly—but we should accept that we owe a debt to those people for the savings that they make for the state.

Little has been said this evening of the problems with the social fund. The Department's own study, "Evaluating the Social Fund", highlights the fact that 60·5 per cent. of the survey sample had to cut back on food and living expenses, 46·6 per cent. cut back on clothing, and 20·6 per cent. on paying bills. Those on income support and at the lowest income level who have to apply to the social fund cannot afford such cutbacks. It is not good enough for the Government to say that they are considering the Department's report. They commissioned it, and they have had time enough to evaluate it, state their considered view, and say what they mean to do. The Government surely cannot be satisfied from that study that all is well.

In Committee this morning, debating a social security benefits statutory instrument on the preserved rights of individuals in residential care, the point was made that, despite uprating, there is overwhelming evidence that the care gap between income support levels and the fees charged for residential care is growing massively. Where people with so-called preserved income support rights are currently in residential care, the new community care legislation makes the local authority responsible for ensuring the future funding of that arrangement. That could lead to potential evictions from residential homes or, more probably, such homes going out of business. If that happens, those individuals will not enjoy the protection of preserved rights.

Will the Minister say how he views the future uprating of benefits against those costs? During the progress of the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe)—now the Under-Secretary of State—clearly recognised that problem and led an effective campaign which led to the acceptance of a new clause. Unfortunately, it did not end up in the Bill—but we will not go into the reasons for that. That problem has not gone away, and we must be sure that the Department recognises that and will bring forward proper provisions.

I believe that in recent years—whatever the uprating has been in terms of inflation—there has been a dramatic increase in the number of households and individuals facing debt problems. More than half a million households have serious multiple debts, and are in arrears to three or more creditors. That it because income levels for those on benefit are still too low. Many have had to turn to credit companies. I do not wish to be parochial, but a survey of Money Advice clients in Greater Manchester revealed that two of the main contributory factors to financial difficulties were unemployment and low incomes—both of which have increased under the present Government.

I hope that the Government will address those two important issues today. The only real way forward is to bring about a move back towards full employment, in the meantime recognising that a proper level of benefit is necessary to ensure that low-income families do not suffer the multiple debts that they are currently experiencing.

10.15 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): This has been an important debate—partly because we are disposing of some £2·5 billion of taxpayers' money, and partly because social security legislation touches on those in the greatest need. We should debate closely and carefully the way in which the money is spent. Things may change now that I am on my feet, but so far this has been a high-quality, thoughtful debate: I feel that it deserves a large audience, and more participation by hon. Members, than it has achieved—but we are aware of the great attraction that social security matters hold for many of our colleagues.

In his opening remarks, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garsgadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to the success of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security in the public expenditure survey which was concluded last year. Anyone who imagines that discussions between my right hon. Friend and myself and our dear and close friends in the Treasury are cosy fireside chats is very much mistaken; it was a tough public-expenditure round, and I do not think that my right hon. Friend has been sufficiently congratulated on the successful outcome that he achieved—a very full uprating of benefits across the board, and no increase in national insurance contributions. I consider that a remarkable achievement.

We are now faced with the issue of a long-term review of the pattern of social security. Given the size of the social security budget and its potential to increase, I do not think that anyone should be surprised if from time to time, instead of examining the pattern of expenditure year by year, we should take a more fundamental look at the way in which money is going, and decide whether the current pattern is appropriate for the next few years. I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)—and, indeed, the hon. Member for Croydon, North-west (Mr. Wicks)—welcome the news of a fundamental review.

I should like to say more about that, but I want to respond to a number of the points that have been raised. I shall not be able to cover all of them in the time available, but I shall consider them carefully tomorrow, when I have read *Hansard*.

I understand the anxieties that are felt about the important question of the independent living fund. The fund was originally introduced as a transitional measure, to operate until the introduction of the care in the community measures. Those measures are to be introduced at the beginning of April. During its short life, the fund has been a remarkable success. In the first year, expenditure ran to about £1 million; in the current year, it is approaching £100 million. In April, when the fund trust is ended and cases are handed over to a successor body, some 22,000 severely disabled people will constitute the case load.

Many hon. Members who follow these matters will be aware of the situation, but I should like to make it absolutely clear that we intend, in the very near future, to legislate to replace the independent living fund with two new trusts. One of these will take on the handling of the case load of 22,000 with freedom, if the care needs of individuals increase—as, sadly, they often do—to increase the level of payments in those cases. The other trust, which will operate in tandem with local authorities, will be in a position to top up with cash, where the services that local authorities provide cannot meet the full care costs of the more severely disabled people. Obviously, we shall have to see how this works in practice, but I believe that we have the right formula. That main responsibility for the provision of the community care packages that disabled and elderly people will need must lie with local authorities. In the case of the most severely disabled people, there is an argument for continuing an independent living fund that can operate in conjunction with the local authorities, and we shall so legislate.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) mentioned the interaction between the independent living fund and the delays in the payment of disability living allowance. I shall seek, in the course of my reply, to address that matter. It would have been open to the trustees of the independent living fund, before deciding to cease taking claims with a view to having an orderly hand-over of cases to the new trust in April, to deem someone who had applied for disability living allowance to have been in receipt of it, and therefore to be eligible for help through the independent living fund. In practice, that did not happen, but the option was available. The trustees were living within a budget. There were other constraints upon them. I hope that by April, when the two funds are operating, a number of people who might very well have applied if the fund had not been closed down for the purpose of achieving an orderly takeover will be able to apply for help from the new independent living fund.

It is not surprising that the social fund too has been mentioned, although it is surprising that it was referred to only in the opening and closing speeches by the Opposition. I understand the great interest in the whole operation of the social fund and its importance in addressing the exceptional circumstances and exceptional need at the fringes of the social security system. The amount involved is close to £80 billion a year. Since the invention of the pattern of social security, there has always been a need for some provision at the fringes that cannot be coped with in a regulated way. In these cases, discretion is absolutely essential. We have had the report by the social policy research unit of York university, the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Government's own consideration of the pattern of the social fund.

It is obvious that very soon the Government will have to announce how they see the future of the fund. It was introduced just about the time that I came to the Department. Since then a number of things have struck me very clearly. One is the relative success of loans. The SPRU report drew particular attention to the way in which the concept of loans has gained acceptance, following a very hostile initial approach. There is now increasing acceptance, on the part of people who need help form the social fund, that loans are a sensible way of tackling many of their needs.

There have been about 1 million community care grants and about 5·5 million loans since the social fund started. The importance of loans lies in the fact that a given amount of money can be used successively to help a number of people. Thus, money can be put to much better use by being recycled.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister knows that there is a dispute about the cash-limiting effect of these provisions. On the specific point about loans, may I ask him if he is prepared to have a look at the question of repayment periods? Weekly deductions from benefit are often very high—or genuinely appear to the person concerned to be very high —and loans are sometimes refused on that ground.

Mr. Scott: I cannot go further than I have, but that is one of the matters that we shall consider when we make our announcements about the social fund.

A number of hon. Members asked about delays with the disability living allowance. I face an uncomfortable two hours tomorrow morning before the Select Committee on Social Security, which perhaps is the best forum to deal with that in detail. I want to pay tribute to the staff. I reiterate my regret about the distress that a number of claimants felt about the delay in the delivery of DLA, but the staff have done extremely well to deal with 1 million claims since DLA was introduced, and nearly 1 million claims have been cleared by staff. I see that the Chairman of the Select Committee has joined us now, and I shall look forward to expanding rather more on that topic tomorrow.

Dr. Godman: How long does it normally take for a commissioner's decision to be acted on by officers of the Department?

Mr. Scott: Assuming that the commissioner's decision is not appealed, it would operate very quickly. The hon. Gentleman raised a series of individual cases to which I cannot reply this evening, but I undertake to consider each one to see what lessons the Department can learn.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) asked about invalidity benefit and where the projected savings of £240 million would come from. They will come from improving the medical controls over the delivery of invalidity benefit. People invited to medical examinations for invalidity benefit will be given more notice and will be asked for reasons if they feel that they cannot attend. They will be warned that failure to attend without giving proper notice may lead to their losing benefit and adjudication officers will have power to disqualify in those circumstances.

However, if there is a good cause for a further examination, we hope that they will be held more quickly —normally within six weeks—and we shall ask examining doctors to produce more comprehensive reports than hitherto. We believe that the savings that we have forecast will result from that. It is £240 million over the three years of the survey period, running at £50 million, £90 million, and £100 million over those three years.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked about take-up. We are concerned to ensure maximum take-up of the benefits that we make available. We estimate that £9 of every £10 of income-related benefits is taken up, and four out of five people take up the benefits to which they are entitled.

[Mr. Scott]

The Government have an unparalleled record on carers. We have a very good record on the take up of invalid care allowance, on the carers' premium and on other support for carers. Caring is likely to move substantially up the political agenda in forthcoming years. We shall watch that with much care to see what we can do within the resources available. I pay tribute to the huge army of carers, who contribute to ensuring the quality of life of many elderly and disabled people in our society.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister has highlighted the importance of carers, to whom both sides of the House attach similar importance. When the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) was speaking for the Government this evening he said that the review will save money for taxpayers and redistribute resources. When there is a redistribution rather than tax cuts, where will carers stand in the pecking order for the largesse?

Mr. Scott: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who well understands the complexity of the social security system and the shifting sands of demand within it, expects me to issue a batting order. I mentioned the increasing awareness of the role of carers which has been shown by the Government and other providers. We have recognised that role more than any previous Government, and I shall certainly not be drawn into issuing a batting order, despite my love of cricketing analogies.

In the past year, social security has been increasingly recognised as a vital factor in the lives of millions of our fellow citizens. We need to be fair to those who rely on benefits, but my right hon. Friend and I are also conscious of the fact that we have a responsibility to the taxpayers who provide the £80 billion a year that we spend on benefits.

I commend the orders to the House. We are considering five pieces of legislation which will ensure that the social security system will work effectively next year. We are setting benefit rates, providing increases to the guaranteed minimum pensions and making the normal adjustments to national insurance contributions.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 3rd December, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

St. Albans Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.31 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to raise the issue of St. Albans hospital and the centralisation of acute services in north-west Hertfordshire. It is a subject of intense interest to the residents of St. Albans. I share that interest because, although the hospital is not in my constituency, it serves many of my constituents, especially those in London Colney. On the same basis, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) also shares our concern, as does my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) whose constituency contains the hospital.

Since the health authority first unveiled the proposals to centralise the services in 1990, with their consequent effect on St. Albans hospital, my right hon. Friend has been at the forefront of a long and vigorous campaign to preserve as many services as possible for the residents of St. Albans. At every turn and with exhaustive efforts, he has fought on behalf of the people of St. Albans, reflecting their great concern about the hospital services.

This is a matter of local pride and concern. Local people are worried about the distances entailed in having to travel to Hemel Hempstead and the attendant risks in the case of accidents. Their concern reflects the esteem in which the services and professionals at the hospital are held. I wish to refer in particular to the paediatric services and St. Julian's ward, which are the subject of much affection and esteem.

When the decision was finally taken in December last year to centralise the services and to move some from St. Albans to Hemel Hempstead, there was great disappointment in St. Albans. It would be hard to overestimate the disappointment which has been manifested on several demonstrations and marches, all of which were properly conducted. Similar anxiety has been expressed by several groups in the district, local churches and the community health council. My right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans shares that feeling.

It must be said that when the decision was taken, due weight was given to the professional opinions of the consultants who serve St. Albans hospital as to the best way to save high-quality services in Hemel Hempstead and St. Albans.

On the other side of the argument, I draw attention to the strength of local feelings and suggest that weight could also be given to them. Local feelings run deep indeed in St. Albans, and they are conditioned by the fact that, although the town has retained many important services in its hospital, including a 60-bed elective surgery unit, nevertheless, a substantial number of beds have been lost as the hospital previously had 293 beds. It has lost its maternity, gynaecological and paediatric services and—most significantly—from 8 March it will lose the accident and emergency services in the full form in which they now exist.

I call urgent attention to that loss. It is the focus of great concern, and people are wondering exactly what accident and emergency provision in St. Albans will be left with after 8 March. There is a strong case for taking a long hard look at that provision. Under the present proposals, after

8 March there will be no service at all for six weeks, and then a nurse practitioner-led service, treating minor accident and emergency cases, will start. I urge that urgent attention be paid to the strong case for upgrading that service to a much higher level.

The health authority compiled some figures in a survey carried out in 1991 and released in August 1992, which revealed that, of the 35,000 or so attendances at St. Albans hospital, about 6,500—about 18 per cent. of the total—could have been met in that year by a nurse practitioner service. So a relatively small proportion of the cases that were being treated at St. Albans hospital would be suitable for the intended level of service.

The survey also considered how many of those cases would have been dealt with by a doctor-led service, involving either a general practitioner or some other suitably experienced and qualified doctor. It was found that, of the 35,000 attendances, a further 57 per cent.—or 20,000 cases—could have been met by such a service. That means that about 75 per cent. of the total attendances at the hospital that year could have been dealt with by a doctor-led service. That would make a great difference.

A doctor-led service would be an important facility for people in St. Albans, and save many of them a great deal of travelling. It would also save much of the pressure that would otherwise fall on the service at Hemel Hempstead. There are strong grounds for such a service to be introduced in St. Albans.

In making that suggestion, I am fortified by the fact that such a proposal was ventilated by the health authority in a leaflet issued in August 1992, which said:

"We hope to involve local general practitioners in making the best use of the minor accident treatment unit".

Furthermore, last October the chief executive of the North West Hertfordshire health authority produced another document, which was intended to be the basis for local discussions leading to health authority recommendations. It suggested that

"the unit should be nurse practitioner, but this would not preclude GP involvement".

I therefore suggest that such an upgraded service is already in the health authority's mind. There is an urgent case for the service to be upgraded to that level, to provide a better service for the people of St. Albans.

If this is a question of resources being made available for the provision of such a unit, the argument is strong and the case is clear that those resources should be provided for the people of St. Albans. They should be made available for a doctor-led unit, which would be open on the same 24-hour basis as the former accident and emergency unit. Before implementation, that unit should be the subject of full consultations with the general practitioners in St. Albans to ascertain the part that they wish to play and whether they wish to take the reins of the accident and treatment service, or whether they feel that it would be best served by some other form of suitably qualified and experienced doctors.

Perhaps most urgently of all, I call attention to the six-week interval that will ensue when the full accident and emergency service is closed on 18 March. With the plans as they stand, for those six weeks there will be no accident and emergency provision in St. Albans. The issue has been put to the health authority, which has said that the six weeks is needed for nurse retraining. I suggest that that is not a satisfactory explanation and that training could be provided in a way that would enable the service to be continued. The explanation is not a satisfactory reflection on the health authority. Great concern is being caused to the residents of St. Albans. They are to lose their accident and emergency service, and it would seem that they are not to have any form of transitional service for the following six weeks.

There are several other matters that are of great concern to my constituents in London Colney and elsewhere, including the other residents of St. Albans. Important issues remain to be resolved, including transport to Hemel Hempstead. Many patients have to use public transport or private transport to reach a hospital, but many of my constituents will be faced with a difficult journey. Some of them will have to endure two such journeys. I have much in mind my constituents in London Colney, who will have to travel into St. Albans and then on to Hemel Hempstead.

I appreciate that the health authority has considered these matters and that it proposes to provide a bus service from the centre of St. Albans to the hospital at Hemel Hempstead, but that service will operate for only certain hours of the day. It may be suitable for those who are visiting the hospital, but it will not be satisfactory for casualty patients or for those who wish for any other reason to use the hospital outside the hours of the service. I hope that attention will be given to that and to the predicament of elderly people. I know that there are many elderly people in London Colney and the rest of St. Albans who use the hospital there. I am mindful of the journeys that they will have to undertake. I invite the health authority to give special consideration to those people and the arduous nature of the journeys that they will have to undertake.

There is concern that there should be a continuation of maternity services at St. Albans. These services, in their full form, are to be centralised at Hemel Hempstead. What level of service will remain at St. Albans? There is uncertainty about that because different suggestions have been made. I urge that the health authority should follow the recommendations that are set out in the report that was specially commissioned to examine maternity services in St. Albans under Dr. Elizabeth Scott. I believe that it should implement as many of those recommendations as possible, especially those that relate to community midwifery, which were considered to be extremely valuable by the authoress of the report.

I have referred to several important issues for the people of St. Albans, including my constituents in London Colney. There is a great sense of disappointment, as there would naturally be in any district at the loss of such a hospital. Much local concern arises from that.

I know that St. Albans residents of all shades of opinion are united in wanting their hospital to remain in the form, and with the level of service, to which they are accustomed. I invite the House to consider the views of those local residents. We must take into account the views of the users of our services and give due weight to their opinions. So strongly expressed are the opinions of those in St. Albans at present that I can only urge the House to give full weight to them, and can only ask for the maximum possible provision to be given for accident and emergency and for other services remaining in St. Albans. The people will at least be able to feel that, although their hospital has been changed and its services have been centralised, they still

[Mr. James Clappison]

retain high-quality and safe services. That is the very least that I ask on behalf of the residents of St. Albans this evening.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) for raising this important issue. The debate gives me the opportunity to place on record the reasons for the decisions which have been arrived at and also to set out what I believe to be some of the advantages which will accrue from North West Hertfordshire health authority's proposals for centralising acute services within the district. I hope, too, that I can allay some of the concerns that my hon. Friend has shared with the House this evening.

The problems of the health authority's acute services are, of course, long standing. In November 1989, the health authority began a comprehensive review of its acute services, as it was becoming an increasingly untenable proposition to continue to provide the full range of acute services on two hospital sites—at Hemel Hempstead General and St. Albans City hospitals. The need for change was dominated by a concern for quality and safety of care together with the ability to ensure that the provision of viable, cost-effective services was maintained. The key elements of such a service were defined as recruitment and retention of specialist skilled staff, accredited junior doctor posts with the right mix of volume and experience, and the optimum use of resources, both revenue and capital.

There were a number of compelling reasons for change. Action needed to be taken to ensure that the unit, in competing with other hospitals for limited numbers of staff, was in the best possible position to recruit extra nurses, midwives and support workers. To reduce junior doctors' hours, additional doctors would be required across both hospital sites. However, the number of posts recognised for training is strictly regulated by the Department of Health and the royal colleges because of the need for a full range of experience. Posts not recognised for training do not attract good staff. Moreover, experience was showing that the two hospitals could not attract junior staff to existing posts.

There was also the issue of the optimum size for a viable unit and the need to concentrate expertise to provide good quality care. The unit has failed to attract specialist services which it might otherwise have been expected to attract because neither St. Albans nor Hemel could sustain such services in individual hospitals.

Finally, there is a continuing need to replace dilapidated building stock with appropriate new facilities designed to meet the demands of modern medical techniques and procedures.

The report of the 1989 review concluded that accident and emergency services, paediatrics and maternity services could not be replicated efficiently and safely on two sites, only a few miles apart, within the district. It was important to achieve the concentration of expensive and sophisticated diagnostic and treatment technology and highly trained staff necessary for all those services and, indeed, to address concerns about the accreditation of medical posts and the supervision of junior doctors. Two hospitals, each attempting to provide the same services and competing for staff, would represent a diminished service, becoming unsafe and eventually uneconomic.

In 1990, following full public consultation, the health authority submitted proposals to the Department of Health, which recommended the centralisation of most acute services on one site. Hemel Hempstead was chosen because the existing buildings at Hemel could better cope with the additional work load. The implications of the proposals for the residents of St. Albans were considered carefully by officials in my Department over several months.

In January 1992, my predecessor rejected the overall proposals on the grounds that they did not give sufficient weight to the need for local access to hospital services for St. Albans residents. However, he agreed that acute accident and emergency services could be centralised in Hemel Hempstead, accepting the clear evidence that that would offer a higher quality and, above all, safer service to all residents of the district.

My predecessor also approved the centralisation of in-patient maternity services at Hemel. Maternity services had been temporarily centralised at St. Albans in 1989. They are now housed in an excellent new consultant maternity unit in Hemel Hempstead.

My predecessor also gave approval of the establishment of an elective surgical unit in St. Albans, but asked the health authority to draw up detailed proposals which would maximise services to patients in St. Albans. He asked the health authority to consider plans for the provision of services at St. Albans to treat the majority of minor accidents and examine models of maternity provision—general practitioner or midwife-led—which would respect the understandable wishes of pregnant women in St. Albans not to have to travel to Hemel Hempstead for delivery unless absolutely necessary.

I must emphasise that my predecessor's decision did not challenge the concept of centralisation. I am convinced by the arguments in favour of centralisation, especially in the interests of safety, quality and efficiency for the district as a whole. The concern then was to find a configuration of services which allowed major acute and emergency services to be provided on one site, but which still retained a wide range of services for the majority of local residents at the other.

The health authority prepared its response in the light of my predecessor's letter and, having tested public reaction, submitted revised proposals to my Department in October 1992. I gave those proposals careful consideration and visited the district to see the services provided, assess the impact of the revised proposals and hear at first hand the views of the local people—the patients, consultants and others.

I was satisfied that the health authority had not only responded to my predecessor's request for reconsideration but adapted the original proposals as far as possible in the light of public concern. I believe that the health authority had demonstrated cost-effectiveness, increased quality and safety in its revised proposals and that the district as a whole stood to benefit. I therefore approved phase 1 of the scheme.

I will briefly outline the health authority's revised proposals. They provide for additional staffing, equipment and training for the community midwifery service so that home births can be offered as an option to women who are assessed to be at low risk of complications and for

improvements in antenatal care provision in St. Albans with the provision of an antenatal day care unit there. Those recommendations enhance the centralised in-patient service provided at Hemel Hempstead and ensure that a high quality maternity service is provided for all mothers in north-west Hertfordshire.

The proposals also provide for the creation in St. Albans of a new elective surgical unit of 60 beds in the Moynihan block and a new day care unit in the main theatre complex in the Gloucester wing. Those proposals maximise theatre utilisation and provide capacity for up to 7,000 in-patients per annum at St. Albans City hospital. Most importantly, those plans are sufficiently flexible to allow for an increase in the number of elective beds in line with the demands of purchasers.

A project team led by the unit's director of quality assurance has now been established to oversee the development of a minor accident treatment unit, and I have noted carefully the remarks of my hon. Friend about that. Initially, the unit will be run by nurse practitioners and operate between the hours of 9 am and 9 pm, seven days a week.

That will provide a valuable service by greatly increasing the number of minor accident cases which can be treated in St. Albans rather than in the major accident and emergency department at Hemel Hempstead. It will provide much speedier treatment of a range of minor accidents and injuries for the residents of St. Albans. Whether that can be upgraded to, for example, a GP-led service, depends very much on the attitude of local GPs. I am pleased to say that the health authority is in discussion with local GPs and that it seems likely that the service can, indeed, be expanded. Having said that, I note what my hon. Friend said about other features of the arrangement and about the six weeks following the closure.

In-patient paediatric services are now concentrated on the Hemel Hempstead general hospital site. The concentration of services has allowed the unit to satisfy itself and the local population that a safe and good quality service can be provided. As a consequence, nurse staffing levels, particularly the availability of RSCNs, have improved. On medical staffing the service is now fully supported by permanent medical staff rather than a series of short-term locum doctors. The consultant paediatricians can now focus their availability to deal with emergencies on the one site, where both paediatrics and the special care baby unit are located.

Out-patient children's services continue to be available on the St. Albans city hospital site. In addition, arrangements are also in place for children to attend St. Albans for the removal of dressings, and so on. In addition, from 1 April this year the unit plans to offer a monthly paediatric day surgery service for children from the St. Albans area.

I am, of course, aware that public opinion, especially in the eastern part of the district, has remained antagonistic to the proposals. It was largely on account of the strength of local feeling that I took the decision to assess the scheme personally, even though the capital investment called for by the revised proposals is within the limit for the regional health authority to take such a decision without referring to Ministers.

In giving approval to the proposals, I made plain to the health authority the need to gain public confidence by emphasising the benefits of the reconfiguration. I am pleased to note, therefore, that the authority has drawn up comprehensive plans to ensure effective communications to reassure the public about hospital services—for example, by deploying local newspapers to inform the public of the services available to them.

Most public concern has been centred on the closure of the accident and emergency services in St. Albans and the related issue of ambulance services. I am assured that the "blue light" journey times between St. Albans and Hemel Hempstead will not be more than 15 minutes. In any case, ambulances would take urgent cases to the nearest accident and emergency department with the most appropriate facilities. Five hospitals with such facilities ring the district within eight to 16 miles of St. Albans.

In the event of a major accident, there is access to more than 100 paramedics across the two counties. Within the district there are currently 18, a number which will rise to 24—the national target—by 1994. That would represent one out of every two ambulance staff trained as paramedics and a paramedic on every available ambulance. I stress the importance of pre-hospital care in the treatment of accidents and emergencies today.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere said, public concern has focused on the difficulties of access and parking at Hemel Hempstead. I am pleased to report that the health authority has taken positive steps to address those anxieties. Access will eventually be improved by a county and borough council plan for a new spur road and by agreements which will give 250 additional parking places.

Proposals for the provision of an hourly inter-hospital bus service are currently being assessed and the service will become operational from early March. I understand very well the strength of feeling. During the two visits that I made to the district, I was left in no doubt about it by the public reaction. It has also been made known to me by pressure from Members of Parliament, including in particular my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

A certain misunderstanding and misapprehension also exists about the nature of the proposals. Much opposition has focused on the perceived diminution of service, as though the closure of St. Albans hospital were being considered. For the reasons that I have given, nothing could be further from the truth.

In conclusion, I am confident that once the new proposals are clearly communicated and understood they will be of benefit to the residents of north-west Hertfordshire by providing them with a safe and high quality health service of which they can be proud. I hope that all local interested parties can work together with the health authority to ensure the smooth implementation of the proposals.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 11 February 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 18 February.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 February 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Contracting Out)

1. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in extending contracting out in the prison service.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): From 1 April, the Prison Service agency will assume full responsibility for taking forward Government policy on the involvement of the private sector in the management of prisons. The agency will make recommendations to me later this year.

Mr. Coombs: In warmly welcoming the private management of prisons initiative, may I ask my hon. Friend to extend the initiative to young offender institutions? Given that a third of crime is now committed by people under the age of 17, is not that a strong case for strengthening the network of young offender institutions? Such strengthening could be done by the private sector.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right: young offender institutions are a most important part of the prison service and we need the best standards in them.

It is clear that competition and tendering can bring better management to parts of the prison service, so, undoubtedly, the director general will want to look at that early. At present, we are conducting a tendering exercise for education. The initial signs promise extremely well for the young offender institutions which are so important.

Mr. Soley: Will the new contracted-out private prisons be covered by Crown immunity? If not, will the Minister ensure that Her Majesty's prisons have Crown immunity withdrawn from them so that all prisons can operate on a level playing field?

Mr. Lloyd: What we want is exactly the same playing field for all prisons. I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly on Crown immunity because I am not sure of the details that it covers. I shall certainly let the hon. Gentleman know. The equal playing field, to use the hon. Gentleman's term, which was the gist of his question, is what we are aiming at.

Mr. Sweeney: Can my hon. Friend confirm that we are engaged in the biggest prison building programme this century? Can he give an assurance that those places will not be wasted and will be put to good use in dealing with miscreants?

Mr. Lloyd: Prison places will be filled not by the prison service but by the courts. It is the largest prison building programme this century. We are almost at the end of it and 18 of the 21 new prisons are open. The last three prisons will open next year. They have improved facilities in the prison service which enables an improvement in the sort of programmes that are so necessary if prisoners are to return to society better able to lead law-abiding lives.

Police (Restructuring)

2. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with which organisations he has had recent discussions about the local organisation and local accountability of the police force.

3. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations his Department has had with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities regarding proposals to restructure police forces and police authorities.

7. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those chief constables whom he has met since December 1992 to discuss his proposals for restructuring the police force.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have had many discussions with a wide range of interests and organisations on the subject of police reform. I intend to produce firm proposals for change and I shall consult widely on those proposals before final decisions are taken.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Home Secretary say clearly whether he intends to move towards larger police forces? If he does, how does he propose that local communities should have an influence so that the police are sensitive and responsive to their needs? When he makes his statement, will he bear in mind the representations that he has had from people in different parties in his county of Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Clarke: As I said, I shall bring forward proposals in due course. Obviously, I need time to work on them and then I shall go out to consultation on them. The aim is to produce stronger police forces with strong local police authorities that can improve further the effectiveness of the protection that the police offer against crime.

When I produce the proposals I shall consult widely on them, including the people in Nottinghamshire with whom I have already had general discussions. I have floated openly the fact that I am looking at all these matters and ideas are already pouring in. I shall formulate my own proposals and then go out and have discussions on them in due course.

Mr. Gerrard: The Home Secretary must be aware of the public concern at the huge increases in crimes such as burglary. Does he accept that to deal with such increases we need effective partnerships at local level between local authorities, the police and the general public? Against that background, if restructuring is necessary, why does not he approach the matter as a joint exercise with the local authorities and the police, rather than ploughing on with his own agenda, which is undermining local partnerships and confidence?

Mr. Clarke: I am very concerned at the high level of crime. That is why I am looking closely at how we can improve the effectiveness of the police force in making its contribution to protecting us against it. As Home Secretary, I am expected to produce proposals for strengthening the police force. Then I shall discuss with local authorities and others the implications of those proposals. But I cannot be expected to put my whole job into commission and not even to make proposals until I have cleared them with all the relevant interest groups. Interest in the police and crime goes beyond local authorities; the public as a whole are interested and I am sure that they are all waiting for my proposals.

Ms. Lynne: If the Secretary of State met the chief constables, did he by any chance discuss with them one of the recommendations in the Sheehy report—that the post of chief superintendent be abolished? Is he aware that certain chief superintendents in the Greater Manchester area and other urban areas are responsible for a far greater caseload than those in police forces in other areas? Will he take that into consideration before he makes his final decision?

Mr. Clarke: I meet chief constables all the time and I have discussions with them on all the matters that we are now discussing, including police structure, police financing and pay, how to reward good performance and how to organise commands more effectively. In due course, we shall produce proposals. So will Sir Patrick Sheehy. It is pointless debating proposals before we have them. In due course the Sheehy group will make proposals and we shall consult on them before we put them into effect. Meanwhile, the Superintendents Association, having given its evidence, is undoubtedly waiting, like the rest of us, to see what proposals Sir Patrick and his colleagues make.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we need a police structure across Britain that is fully accountable and response to local needs? Is not responsiveness best achieved by beefing up local liaison and community policing panels, which were successfully introduced under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984? Does he also agree that accountability works both ways? The police have to be accountable for what they do and the money that they spend and local authorities have to be accountable if they do not properly support the police. The worst local authorities have not done so.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that the local liaison arrangements are extremely good in many places. I strongly approve of the move towards neighbourhood policing which is being made throughout the country. It will give more power and discretion to local commanders and keep them in one place for longer so that they get to know the patch for which they are responsible and the people within it. We also need to improve the effectiveness of the police authorities. When people talk about the local accountability of their police force, they do not always automatically think of the police authority. They are more likely to complain to their Member of Parliament or to the Home Secretary than to the police authority.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend understand that there is urgent need for reorganisation? The Government keep telling us that they are putting more money in. The police keep telling us that there is not enough money. Those of my constituents who are not exactly involved in crime say that they are not getting value for money.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend puts clearly the question that every sensible member of the public asks. We are spending much more on policemen and Britain has more policemen than ever before. They are higher paid and better equipped, yet there are constant voicings of dissatisfaction, despite the fact that the police face rising demands on them. That is why we need to look afresh at

strengthening the way in which we lay down national and local standards and compare the effectiveness of different police forces. We need to have proper structures in place to ensure that the performance of all police forces is brought up to the standard of the best.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the experience of Thames Valley shows that it is perfectly possible for the police service to provide a good service to the public across more than one county area? Given that spending on the police has increased by about 74 per cent. since 1979, is not it common sense to seek the best possible value for every pound that is spent?

Mr. Clarke: We have police forces that cover more than one local authority, police forces such as the Metropolitan police in which the local authorities are not involved, and police forces that are covered by one local authority. The pattern is determined by history rather than logic. I am looking at that history at the same time as looking at the important things—how strong and effective the police authority is; how clearly it lays down local standards and demonstrates that it is delivering them; and how well it helps the police to communicate with their local population. I shall produce proposals that address all those questions as soon as I can.

Mr. Blair: Does the Home Secretary understand that, with crime apparently out of control in many parts of the country—a crime is now committed every six seconds every day—what people consider important is that institutional change should help the fight against crime and that there should be no break in the connection between policing and the local community? Whatever other changes the right hon. and learned Gentleman may make, will he undertake not to remove the right of local representatives—Conservative, Labour or whatever—who have been elected by local people, to have a say in local policing and an influence on it? Many consider that central to the fight against crime.

Mr. Clarke: First, crime is not out of control, although it is an extremely serious matter. The level of crime is rising: that is the reason for our proposals for secure accommodation for juvenile offenders and for dealing with people who offend on bail and those who organise rave parties. The Government are known to be working on various proposals. At the same time, we are encouraging the process of making the police more effective and the local liaison mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

Of course, the structure is also important, as I have just said. But, with the greatest respect, I do not think that the public would lay as much stress as do the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and his party on whether local councillors dominate the police authority.

Mr. Tracey: Does my right hon. and learned Friend, like me, feel a certain scepticism when he hears Opposition Members—especially those on the Front Bench—talk of support for the police? Over the past decade, they have voted against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Criminal Justice Acts and the Public Order Act 1986, not to mention the prevention of terrorism Acts.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right. The shadow Home Secretary, the hon. Member for Sedgefield, is one of those who are changing the rhetoric of the Labour party. It is becoming closer to that of President Clinton, who advocated the restoration of the electric chair during his campaign in America. The fact is that the hon. Member for Sedgefield advocates no new proposals and his party has a history of voting against each and every proposal that we have presented to strengthen the fight against crime.

The hon. Gentleman does not yet know what my proposals are, but, the moment that it is suggested that I might change the organisation of the police force, he is plainly prepared to oppose those proposals, just as he has opposed all our improvements in the past.

Immigration

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to attend a further meeting of the Trevi group on immigration and related issues.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Trevi is concerned with police co-operation and not with immigration policy. European Community ministerial meetings on these two separate areas of work usually take place on consecutive days. The next formal meetings are scheduled for 1 and 2 June in Copenhagen.

Mr. Corbyn: I am grateful for the Minister's claim that the Trevi group is concerned only with policing functions. Perhaps he will take this opportunity to publish the proceedings of all Trevi meetings: then we could be assured that it is not a secret society designed to harmonise immigration and asylum policies throughout Europe and to prevent people from seeking political asylum and safety in western Europe. Does he agree that there is an agenda to try to deny refugees safety and human rights throughout Europe by means of common closing of frontiers?

Mr. Wardle: Trevi has nothing to do with asylum seekers. Any decisions made by the Trevi Ministers will be published and made available to the House, as they regularly are.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, at the November meeting—the most recent meeting of Immigration Ministers—decisions were made on manifestly unfounded applications for asylum, host third countries and expulsion policy, and those decisions were made available to the House and placed in the Library. All the policies that I have mentioned are entirely in keeping with the Geneva convention.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although many hon. Members on both sides of the House would want any application for immigration to be dealt with compassionately, we should also bear in mind the best interests of people already living in this country?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The present Government and successive Governments in this country have operated a firm but fair immigration policy. We shall continue to do precisely that.

Mr. Allen: The Minister must be aware that there is great concern that immigration, asylum and other policies are being decided by secret meetings—in the European dimension, by the Trevi group and the ad-hoc group on immigration, and by the K4 group of civil servants. One

example of such policies is to go for the lowest common denominator on visitors' visas. The Government are abolishing the right to appeal against the refusal of a visitor's visa. Will the Minister today give an undertaking that, instead of listening to colleagues in Trevi and other groups, he will listen to those in the other place who are currently discussing the abolition of visitors' visa rights? The Government should listen to the House of Lords when it throws out their proposals, not to people in the Trevi group.

Mr. Wardle: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's speculation about what will or will not happen to the Asylum and Immigration Bill in another place. The House will agree that it must make sense for member states of the European Community to harmonise immigration policies, not seek to uniform policy. They should discuss important issues of common interest within a framework of intergovernmental co-operation. Following the Maastricht treaty, that is precisely what will happen under the pillar of co-operation.

Child Cruelty (Evidence)

5. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to alter the law on evidence in cases of cruelty to, or murder of, children.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): My right hon. and learned Friend recognises and shares the concern that has been expressed following a recent case. He has no plans to change the law on evidence, but he will wish to give early and careful consideration to what the Royal Commission on criminal justice has to say on the matter when its report is available in a few months' time.

Dame Jill Knight: There is widespread public concern about the baby Griffin case in which two people who were known to have battered, burnt and killed that child walked scot-free from the courts. Is my hon. Friend aware that that is just the latest in a long list of such cases? What has he to say to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which has been calling for a change in the law to end the injustice and provide more deterrents against such wicked acts?

Mr. Jack: I share the concern of my hon. Friend, who has quite properly brought the issue to the attention of the House. I am aware of what the NSPCC has had to say and have studied its evidence to the royal commission. The Home Office has asked the NSPCC to send us the results of its research, which we shall study most carefully. In its evidence it said that it wanted to draw attention to the issue, but it does not have a prescriptive solution to the problems outlined by my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister take careful note not only of the evidence of the NSPCC but of other medical and social caucuses? I think that he will agree that it is frightening that children who are killed appear to have no rights. No one wishes to take away someone else's legitimate rights, but the child victim must be first and foremost in our minds at all times.

Mr. Jack: The thesis of the hon. Lady's question is entirely right. However, when dealing with criminal justice issues, we must focus on matters of evidence, which is the central point of the case. She may have seen reports in the newspapers discusing the opinions of the Crown prosecution service on the subject. It carefully detailed its views and centred on the issue of evidence. The royal commission will be the place where all the arguments come together.

Mr. Bowis: Has my hon. Friend seen the exposé in the *Evening Standard* of the cruelty to, and exploitation of, children and young people by a villainous character? While they are vulnerable through unemployment, he seeks to send them out to raise money that goes straight into his pockets. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the law is adequate to meet such problems and, if necessary, have it changed quickly? Will he also ensure that the police are undertaking a full and swift investigation into the perpetrator of that crime?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to that newspaper report, which I found most disturbing. He will be aware that child cruelty matters can be handled under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. I shall certainly look carefully at his words and ensure that the law is adequately framed to deal with the matter.

Prisoners (Education)

8. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for further and higher education for prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Competitive tendering, as I said earlier, has demonstrated that there is scope for making significant improvements in the quality of delivery and the value for taxpayers' money of education to prisoners. I am therefore placing in the Library a list of 68 prisons and young offender institutions where contracts are now to be offered for the future provision of education services.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that the great success of Holloway's education department in getting women on access courses depended on their being eligible for concessionary fees? Does he realise that further education colleges are having to charge the full fee of £550 per woman? From where does he think those women prisoners will get that money? Will he ponder on the state of mind of the head of Holloway's education department, who in the space of two weeks has received an MBE for her services to prison education and a redundancy notice as a result of the Government's contracting out of education plans?

Mr. Lloyd: The lady about whom the hon. Lady speaks has rendered exceptionally good service to the prison education service. I have no doubt that she will be extremely attractive to the new suppliers of education who are looking for people of experience and skill. I suggest to the hon. Lady that she should study carefully—I have put the information in the Library—what the new providers will do, what they have undertaken and that for which they have contracted. If she does that with an open mind, I am sure that she will join me in agreeing that the exercise has proved a fruitful one from which the education service in prisons will benefit.

Mr. Faber: My hon. Friend will be aware of the appallingly high level of drug abuse in some prisons. Has he had an opportunity to meet members of the Addictive Diseases Trust, who are pioneering——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question would have been most appropriate as a supplementary to Question 6, which I could not call. I regret that it is not appropriate in its present form as a supplementary to Question 8, which relates to further and higher education. The hon. Gentleman should move his question into education.

Mr. Faber: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is educative treatment for the taking of drugs in one of our prisons? Is he aware also that the Addictive Diseases Trust is trying to cure addiction through education in one of our prisons? I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would consider expanding that programme of education into other prisons.

Mr. Lloyd: I congratulate my hon. Friend on getting his supplementary question so neatly in order. He is right to stress that the treatment to which he referred is an important part of education in our prisons. I attended the launch of the Addictive Diseases Trust's new enterprise at Highdown prison and was most impressed with the programme that it is developing. Opposition Members may like to know that the trust is not part of the prison service. It comes in from outside, which shows how much skill and benefit we can gain from taking knowledge and capability from outside. I have told the ADT that I shall be examining carefully what it achieves in its present location to see whether that can be treated as a blueprint for a scheme that could be spread across the prison service. My hon. Friend is right to say that drugs are as much a menace in prison as they are outside.

Miss Lestor: Notwithstanding the Minister's comforting words about the future of the education scheme, especially in Holloway prison, if he has confidence in the future of such a scheme will he give a guarantee that the women who are participating in it, who were featured on a Radio 4 programme this morning, will have their fees paid so that they are not cut off in mid-stream from education courses that will be of lifetime benefit to them?

Mr. Lloyd: I did not hear the programme to which the hon. Lady refers. I can say, however, that no prisoner will lose out because of the change in the way in which education is managed in prisons. At Holloway, there will be no change—certainly not until the end of August. There is therefore plenty of time to ensure continuity. Whoever pays the fees, the opportunities that are there now will be continued. The great change that is coming about means that opportunities will be increased by the tendering exercise that we have introduced. That is because more imagination is being injected into the provision of the service.

Burglary, Theft and Mugging

9. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further powers he intends to give the courts to deal with the incidence of burglary, theft and mugging.

Mr. Jack: We are developing proposals to increase the powers of courts to deal with persistent juvenile offenders, some of whom may have been convicted of the offences to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply and I am well aware that his office has been in touch with the Macclesfield division of the Cheshire constabulary, but is he aware that, within that division, burglary from the home is up by 30 per cent., theft of or from cars is up by 30 per cent. and theft of other sorts is up by 24 per cent? The detection rate in my division is some 35 per cent. —one of the highest rates of detection in the country, on which my police should be warmly congratulated—but is my hon. Friend not prepared to do something about the fact that much of the trouble is caused by young recidivist offenders who are arrested by the police and taken before the courts but released into the community to re-offend?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend, with his usual robustness, puts his case with great clarity. I congratulate the Cheshire police on their efforts to deal with the crimes that my hon. Friend listed and on their support for the home watch scheme, which my hon. Friend also supports. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I are four-square behind my hon. Friend in his wish to deal with persistent juvenile offenders who carry out many of those crimes. I wish that we had similar robust support from the Opposition.

Mr. Trimble: Before the courts can deal with offenders, they must be brought before the courts. What is the Minister's reaction to the apparent decline in the number of cases coming before the courts at the moment?

Mr. Jack: My reaction is to refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that the Home Secretary gave earlier on his efforts to improve the police service and its effectiveness, because in that way criminals can be caught and ultimately brought before the courts for justice.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that the frustration of police, magistrates and judges is not restricted to Cheshire at having to go on cautioning, cautioning, cautioning, and then releasing into the community young offenders who are persisting in their offending? Has the time not come to remove the hard core of persistent offenders from circulation?

Mr. Jack: My hon. and learned Friend will know the efforts that we in the Home Office are making to expand the amount of local authority secure accommodation, which would deal with some of the problems that he mentions. Equally, we must not forget that there are other ways of dealing with juvenile offenders. However, I agree that dealing with the persistent juvenile offender is an important priority; it is certainly at the top of my list of priorities and that of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister face the fact that there has been a 163 per cent. increase in burglary in the past 13 years and that there is immense pressure on the police, with the result that there is a low clear-up rate? Will he respond to the Labour party's plea for urgent action? Is it not time that the Government faced up to their responsibilities and gave leadership and support to those who need to fight crime at local level?

Mr. Jack: I will respond to what the Labour party has said. I am flattered, to a degree, by the fact that it has endorsed the very policies that we are following. We have formed the new National Board for Criminal Prevention, reactivated a ministerial group on crime prevention, pioneered the safer cities concept and expanded it by a further 20. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would stand up and endorse the policies that have already resulted in a 90 per cent. reduction in burglary in the Sparkbrook area of Birmingham, and reductions in burglaries in Bradford, Salford, Bristol and Deptford. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to endorse and support those policies.

Fire Regulations

10. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the draft fire regulations resulting from EC directive 89/391/EEC.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Following the issue in May 1992 of a consultative document on the proposals, there was some concern about the extent to which the draft regulations exceeded the requirements of the EC directives. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced in December that the draft regulations would be given further consideration.

Sir John Hannam: Does my hon. Friend accept that the last thing we want as we pull out of recession is for our businesses, especially our smaller businesses, to be clobbered by a new wave of fire regulations costing several billion pounds? In the light of the Prime Minister's drive to reduce these crippling burdens, will my hon. Friend ensure that his Department does not add to the requirements of any EC directive? Indeed, will he seek to reduce them?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend confirms precisely the concerns about unnecessary costs and over-regulation that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary highlighted when he announced a fresh look at the proposals in December. We want to be sure that people at work are as safe as possible from the risks of fire, but we are determined not to push costs on to businesses, nor burdensome regulations which go beyond the needs of safety and common-sense precautions.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise that one group of small businesses with a particularly poor record on fire are hoteliers offering bed and breakfast accommodation? Will he make sure that any new directives about fire ensure the highest possible safety standards to try to save people from death as a result of fires in those entirely inadequate places?

Mr. Wardle: The regulations will apply to large hotels and boarding houses, and the hon. Gentleman will know that those establishments have to have a certificate under section 1 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The smaller premises will be excluded, but will, of course, still be liable to the general provisions of the 1971 Act.

Car Crime

11. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to reduce car crime.

Mr. Jack: The themes of Car Crime Prevention Year continue to play a significant part, in all police force areas, in encouraging action to combat car crime. In addition, we are actively promoting the secured car parks initiative and I have formed an advisory group further to inform policy development in combating car crime.

Mr. Evans: I welcome the Government's initiatives, but is the Minister aware of the growing frustration—he will also have heard it today—about the low deterrence and low punishment that some of these young offenders are receiving? Age is no barrier to the misery that they bring to society, and age should be no barrier to the sort of sentence meted out to deter these people. May we have an assurance from the Minister that he is looking at this problem and that those young offenders will be left in no doubt that society has had enough?

Mr. Jack: First, I commiserate with my hon. Friend. I know that he has been a victim of car crime and speaks with great feeling on the matter *[Interruption.]* If that is the Opposition's attitude to the victims of crime, let it be marked in this place. My hon. Friend will have acknowledged the line that I have taken this afternoon on the subject of persistent juvenile offenders, many of whom are involved in car crime. I also draw his attention to the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which put special responsibility on parents of young people who may be involved in crime. It bears down heavily on that as well and I hope that it will contribute to providing a solution to the central issue of my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Mandelson: Are the Minister and the Home Secretary aware of the shameful incident which took place in my constituency yesterday, and which was shown to the nation on ITN's "News at Ten" last night, in which an 11-year-old boy stole, rode, and crashed a car and then swaggered with his mates in front of the television cameras because all that the police could do was to release him, reported but uncharged? That incident is not typical of Hartlepool, but it is illustrative of what is happening in all constituencies right across the nation. Will the Minister tell the House what he intends to do to crack down on persistent young offenders and explain to my constituents why the Government have failed to provide the secure accommodation in Cleveland that is needed to detain these young offenders?

Mr. Jack: The Home Office and the Department of Health, who are in the lead in providing the necessary resourcing for secure accommodation, are working hard to secure our objectives. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman said that he supported the action that we shall be taking on persistent juvenile offenders. We have at least put that to the top of the agenda and are working hard on that policy. I am grateful for his support.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the car crime wave which swept through Croydon and south London last year? Does he agree that one of the best ways of combating this is to encourage the admittedly growing use of car security devices by encouraging insurers to charge lower premiums if such devices are used?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. I have already seen the Association of British Insurers on that point. It has recently introduced what it calls the Thatcham report, which is a way of assessing the

effectiveness of car security devices. At the launch of that in London recently, I again called for a tangible demonstration of premium reduction in respect of properly installed car security devices.

Mr. Maclennan: Bearing in mind that it is only two years since the Government sought to introduce new principles of sentencing which were supposed to be definitive, why have the Government felt it necessary to embark on this review? What evidence is there that they got it so wrong two years ago?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member might look at some of the evidence on juvenile crime that has gone to the Home Affairs Select Committee. He would then see that the overall incidence of juvenile crime has fallen, but this small group, which the whole House has identified, of persistent juvenile offenders has fallen through the net—juvenile offenders who have not responded to any of the regimes in place. It is quite clear that the public and the House want us to take action.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that the borough council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, in conjunction with the Norfolk constabularly, have brought out a closed circuit television scheme for all their public places and car parks and that since its introduction car crime has gone right down? Is he aware that this is the first scheme of its kind in the country, and will he encourage other authorities to bring in similar schemes?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; where Norfolk goes today, others will follow—as, indeed, they have in Bradford. I can cite an example there where the safer cities programme has helped to fund an inner-city CCTV scheme which has reduced car crime by 60 per cent. Interesting Home Office research on this subject will be published very shortly.

Wolds Prison (Disturbances)

12. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inquiry into disturbances at the Wolds prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Regular reports are made by the Home Office controller based at the Wolds and details of all incidents are reported to prison service headquarters. None of these has merited a separate inquiry.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister at least hold an inquiry into the alarming number of assaults occurring at the Wolds private prison? Is he aware that figures released by his Department show that in the state sector the average number of assaults is six per prison per year? In an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), he said that eight assaults had occurred at the Wolds in a single month. Does that not show the folly of prison privatisation and the stupidity of extending it? Is it not made even more damning by the fact that, while the state sector prisons are very often overcrowded and underfunded, the Wolds is a state-of-the art prison with facilities which are only dreamt about in the public sector?

Mr. Lloyd: Of course I look at the figures very thoroughly, and I find that the Wolds is punctilious in reporting every incident. All such incidents are recorded and put in the figures. The Wolds figures are before adjudication, whereas the figures from the rest of the prison service are after adjudication, so I do not think that they provide a fair comparison. I am very happy with the way in which the Wolds is conducted, but I look very carefully at the figures that come to me.

Bingo

14. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding Section 48 of the Gaming Act 1968 and the Bingo Act 1992 relating to the promotion and advertising of bingo.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the passing of the Bingo Act 1992, we have received representations from the Bingo Association of Great Britain and the National Bingo Game Association about the advertising of bingo.

Mr. Brandreth: Does my hon. Friend recognise that bingo is essentially a recreational activity in this country, where the punter spends small sums of money comparable with those spent in an evening at the pub or the cinema? Does he therefore recognise the anomaly whereby a socialist crook like Robert Maxwell can advertise newspaper bingo on television while a modest bingo club such as the one in Chester—which is superb, despite having small prizes—cannot even advertise on local radio?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is half right: bingo is a social activity, but it is also gambling. Because it is both, and because the gambling is light, the restrictions on it are far fewer than for other forms of gambling. My hon. Friend's local bingo club may not be able to advertise on the radio, but we have made it possible under the 1992 Act for it to advertise its club facilities and its address in his local paper.

Violent Crime

15. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met his counterparts in the European Community to discuss penalties for violent crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has regular meetings with his counterparts in the European Community to discuss co-operation across a range of criminal justice matters, but penalties are a matter for the criminal law of each member state and are not normally discussed with our European partners.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that in Belgium people who rape young women can receive sentences of 10 to 15 years' mandatory prison service together with hard labour, and that for other kinds of rape they will be given solitary confinement and a confinement period of a minimum of eight years? Is he also aware that the women in this country are getting sick and tired of judges handing out soft sentences to rapists, and that there are those who think, as I do, that perhaps we should do something a bit more drastic to those people, including cutting off their goolies?

Mr. Wardle *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister should be given the opportunity to answer.

Mr. Wardle: And to do so intact, I trust. What happens in Belgium is a matter for the Belgians. My hon. Friend

will be aware that stiffer sentences have been made available to the courts. *[Interruption.]* I hope that my hon. Friend will remind those who complain about sentences in this country that the Opposition have opposed every piece of law and order legislation since 1979.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Heppell: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the impartiality of Independent Television News is threatened by the appointment as its next chairman of Mr. Michael Green, a known Conservative supporter and Conservative donor? Or does the Prime Minister share the views of his predecessor and ask himself, as she did, "Is he one of us?"

The Prime Minister: No, I do not think that the impartiality of ITN is at all threatened by the appointment of Mr. Green, any more than I would question the impartiality of many programmes whose presenters may have one or other political opinion.

Q2. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the actions of one single militant teacher trade union which proposes to ballot its membership to boycott all tests *[Interruption.]*—Yes, all tests associated with the national curriculum? Will he also join me in saying just how damaging that would be to the education of the nation's children?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that point, and I thoroughly condemn the union concerned. I believe that it will be seen by parents as a concerted attack on the rights of pupils and their parents to know what progress the pupils are making in their education at their individual schools. I very much hope that the teachers of that union will reject the proposition put before them.

Mr. John Smith: Is it not a deplorable indictment of Conservative government that during the Conservative years crime has more than doubled? What action does the Prime Minister propose to take to protect our citizens from the crime wave that is sweeping the nation?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to want to put the blame for everything on the shoulders of the Government—quite apart from the view expressed by his shadow home affairs spokesman this morning. Let me illustrate for the right hon. and learned Gentleman some of the things that we have done. There has been the passage of the Public Order Act, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, both Criminal Justice Acts, the Prison Security Act and the Act to ban joy riding, every one of which was opposed by the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party.

Mr. Smith: Has the Prime Minister noticed that, whatever he claims to do or to have done, the crime rate rises consistently year after year? Does he think it remotely tolerable that, according to the Government's crime survey, there are about 25,000 break-ins in this country every week? When will he do something about protecting our citizens from that?

The Prime Minister: I note that there was no pledge from the right hon. and learned Gentleman to support legislation that we brought forward in previous years or to support us in the future in dealing with crime. Crime has increased ever since the second world war, under all Governments. Our record in combating crime is comparable with that of other countries in western Europe. This trend has been seen year after year, but it is not a matter which can be dealt with just by legislation. I doubt whether any other Government would have provided for the police the resources that the present Government have provided. Certainly, no other Government would have sided with the victim against the villain in the way that the present Government have.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that last night Gloucestershire county council set a budget £10 million over its standard spending assessment? Does he know that Gloucestershire county council has debts of £25 million but has no plans substantially to reduce that figure? Does my right hon. Friend agree that plans should be made immediately to see that Gloucestershire county council seeks to reduce its debts so that money can be spent on education rather than on debt servicing?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is regrettable that any authority should set an excessive budget. We have made it clear that we shall not hesitate in any way to cap such budgets. It is open to local authorities to set new, lower budgets, and I very much hope that Gloucestershire county council will do so.

Q3. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: I was interested in the Prime Minister's initial reply about his engagements for today, but what about his engagements for tomorrow? My Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill seeks to put the missing millions back on the electoral register and to secure access to polling stations for disabled people. Will the Prime Minister be around tomorrow to vote in support of that measure, and will he bring his friends with him? I know that he needs all the friends that he can get nowadays?

The Prime Minister: I shall, in fact, be in my constituency meeting those friends.

Mr. Elletson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the conviction of the IRA terrorist Jimmy Canning represents a real success for the security services? Will he join me in congratulating those services in putting that murderous thug behind bars?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that will be the wish of the overwhelming majority of people in this country. I am happy to congratulate both the Crown prosecution service and the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Ashdown: While the Vance-Owen plan extracts the very best out of the terrible opportunities left open to us in Bosnia, does the Prime Minister realise that this is not a peace of which either he or other western leaders can be proud? It is their failure which has resulted in a price being paid in the dismemberment of the Muslim community, the disintegration of a state which was recognised by the United Nations, and reward for the aggressors. Does the Prime Minister understand that while we must all hope for peace in Bosnia, our hopes for peace in Europe will depend on our learning the lessons of this miserable affair?

The Prime Minister: I regret that the right hon. Gentleman continues to take a wholly negative view of the enormous amount that has been done to seek a satisfactory peace in Yugoslavia. What is significant is the remarkable co-operation between the United States, the European Community and the United Nations in seeking to bring that conflict to an end. The best way forward, and the only credible way forward that has yet been found, is the Vance-Owen plan, which we strongly support. I very much welcome the policy statement from the United States Government earlier this week.

Mr. Moss: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the three councils in Cambridgeshire—East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire—which recently announced a zero component for the district council portion of the new council tax? How is it that some councils can deliver a highly effective service to their taxpayers while others, such as Harlow, are gross overspenders? Could it be because the Cambridgeshire councils are not controlled by Labour?

The Prime Minister: I think that there are two answers. First, the councils are efficient; secondly, they are not run by the Socialist party.

Q4. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: Does the Prime Minister not think it scandalous that at a time when the Health Department budget has been put into the public sector spending review and when prescription charges are about to be increased by 10 per cent., the West Midlands and Wessex health authorities have been allowed to squander £67 million on renting luxury homes in London, on air travel, on entertainment and on corrupt computer deals involving former Cabinet Ministers?

The Prime Minister: I have no intention of commenting on the detailed points made by the hon. Gentleman. There are adequate ways of making sure that they are examined. As to the health budget and all other budgets, one reason for undertaking a fundamental review is to make sure that taxpayers' money is well spent and that it is spent first on those areas that most require the expenditure.

Mr. Allason: When my right hon. Friend undertakes his review of European regulations that are handicapping British industry, will he turn his attention to the tourist industry and consult the Torbay environmental health officer who requires every hotelier in Torbay to check, monitor and register the temperature of every deep freeze in every premises three times a day on penalty of prosecution? Is that not exactly the kind of daft regulation that we should get rid of?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that regulation to my attention. I will ensure that it is examined. There are many regulations that we could usefully manage without. The intention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is to identify them so that we can remove them.

Q5. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hutton: Is the Prime Minister aware that many health authorities and national health service trusts are currently being forced to cancel operations and close wards because of the inadequacies, and in some cases the mismanagement, of NHS resources? Is he aware, in particular, that in my constituency Roose hospital, which provides excellent geriatric care for elderly people, is being forced to close? Will he tell the House what measures will be taken to ensure that such hospitals stay open? How does he believe it helps health care for hospitals such as Roose to close?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the increased resources for health authorities—spending of £36 billion this year and planned spending of more than £37 billion next year; an increase in national health service expenditure by up to 57 per cent.; and an increase in the number of people treated. The hon. Gentleman should be congratulating the health authorities and the health service on that remarkable record.

Q6. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agreed that it is the job of Government to attack cartels, cliques and vested interests—cartels in trade unions, cliques in Labour-controlled local authorities and vested interests that support the vast majority of Labour Members?

The Prime Minister: I strongly suspect that my hon. Friend has struck a sore spot. Every member of the shadow Cabinet is sponsored by a trade union, two thirds of the votes at the Labour conference are still wielded by trade unions; they will not support our tests in the schools because that is what the National Union of Teachers wants, they oppose our reforms on health because that is what the Council of Health Services Employees wants, and they fight competitive tendering because that is what the National Union of Public Employees wants. There is no doubt whose pockets they are in.

Mr. Faulds: Has no one—*[Interruption.]* Cheeky little pup.

Madam Speaker: Order. I recollect that "Erskine May" does not allow that sort of language.

Mr. Faulds: "Cheeky little pup" is a term of endearment, Madam Speaker. Has no one in government the simple intelligence to understand that the Cyprus—*[Interruption.]*—rather, the Vance-Owen plan—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mr. Faulds: Bosnia is not a laughing matter—*[Interruption.]* Those idiots on the Government Benches. Has no one in government the simple intelligence to understand that the Vance-Owen plan as now drawn up is unacceptable because it rewards Serbian ethnic cleansing and is in danger of creating a Palestinian-type situation within a quarter of a century? Will the Prime Minister for once listen to reasonable advice from America, and will he understand that that plan can become acceptable only if the Serbian aggression is held, if the danger to the Bosnian Muslims and their territory is removed, and if war criminals in Yugoslavia are brought to proper trial?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has set out many of the matters which have been our policy for some time and were reiterated earlier this week by the American Administration—in particular, the point about war crimes. We have also supported—and others are now joining us in doing so—increased and hardened sanctions, particularly along the Danube, to put further pressure on the Serbs. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the map is not yet a settled matter. Nevertheless, there have been very dramatic improvements towards peace as a result of the Owen-Vance proposals. We need to continue to pursue those, and to continue to put pressure on each of the combatants until they reach a conclusion which will be satisfactory, which can be policed properly and which can bring the dreadful conflict to an end.

Royal Taxation

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about my further discussions with Her Majesty the Queen about taxation and Civil List payments.

On 26 November, I told the House that the Queen had asked me to consider the basis on which she might voluntarily pay tax on her personal income and also take responsibility for certain payments under the current Civil List arrangements. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had made a similar request in respect of his income from the Duchy of Cornwall.

I am now able to tell the House that the further discussions between the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the royal household have been completed, and that Her Majesty and His Royal Highness have accepted the arrangements proposed.

The royal trustees are today publishing a report setting out the future tax arrangements for both the Queen and the Prince of Wales. The report includes a memorandum of understanding recording the detailed rules which will apply for income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax. The agreement takes effect from 6 April 1993.

It provides for the Queen to pay income tax on all her personal income, whether from investments or from other sources. In addition, tax will be paid on that part of the privy purse income which is used for private purposes. There will be no tax payable on income from the Civil List, since that is used to meet official expenses and is not a source of personal income for the Queen; the same will apply in respect of other payments and facilities provided by the state for official purposes.

Her Majesty will also pay tax on any realised capital gains on her private investments and on the private proportion of assets in the privy purse.

In the unique circumstances of an hereditary monarchy, special arrangements are needed for inheritance tax. There could, for example, be no question of taxing assets such as the royal palaces which the Queen owns as sovereign and not in a private capacity. The agreement reached with Her Majesty therefore provides that inheritance tax should apply to all bequests or gifts by the sovereign other than to transfers of assets from one sovereign to his or her successor.

As the House will know, the Prince of Wales is already fully liable to tax, except on the income that he receives from the Duchy of Cornwall. From 6 April 1993 he will pay income tax on his Duchy of Cornwall income to the extent that it is used for private purposes; this arrangment will replace the voluntary payment of 25 per cent. of Duchy income that he currently makes to the Consolidated Fund.

The Inland Revenue will administer these arrangements, and the tax received from the Queen and the Prince of Wales will be included in the Inland Revenue's accounts. The Queen and the Prince of Wales will both have the same confidentiality on tax matters as any other taxpayer. Although these arrangements are voluntary, both the Queen and the Prince of Wales intend that they should continue indefinitely. Any changes in taxes or tax rates will automatically be applied.

The report of the royal trustees also sets out the new arrangements that are being made for the management of the royal collection of paintings and other works of art. The royal collection is held by the Queen as sovereign and passes from one sovereign to the next. The collection cannot be sold to generate private income or capital for the use of the Queen, and the Queen does not benefit personally from the income generated by the collection.

So as to make the status of the royal collection clear, Her Majesty intends that the maintenance, conservation and presentation to the public of the royal collection should in future become the responsibility of a new charitable trust. The trust will fund itself from the income generated from admission charges and other sources. The new arrangements should improve access to the royal collection for the whole country.

The report also confirms that the Government have accepted the Queen's generous offer to refund the cost of a further five of the parliamentary annuities payable to members of the royal family under the Civil List legislation, in addition to the three annuities that she already refunds. That will apply from 1 April 1993. The result will be that only the annuities paid to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh will continue as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund.

I am confident that the House will welcome these initiatives by the Queen and the Prince of Wales. The new arrangements will ensure that, so far as possible, the Queen will pay tax on her personal income according to the normal tax rules and will herself take responsibility for the Civil List payments to almost all other members of the royal family.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I thank the Prime Minister for returning to the House within a reasonably short period to make that announcement. There will be widespread acceptance of the principle that Her Majesty the Queen should not be exempt from tax on her personal income, and that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales should not be exempt from tax on his income from the Duchy of Cornwall. It will also be appreciated that the initiative came from the royal family itself.

I welcome the proposal to establish a royal collection trust, which will maintain the benefit of the royal collection for the nation. However, although it is accepted that assets held by the Queen as sovereign should not be liable to inheritance tax, will the Prime Minister explain why all private assets passing from one sovereign to the next should also be exempt? Although private assets such as Sandringham and Balmoral could well be regarded as having at least partial official use, which could be recognised, is it necessary to exempt all other private wealth from inheritance tax?

Although it is accepted that the sovereign is entitled to the same privacy in tax matters in respect of her personal affairs as are other taxpayers, can the Prime Minister tell the House in general terms how much is received each year by the privy purse?

With regard to the expenses which may be set against that income, can the Prime Minister say what they might be in general terms? Is my understanding correct that the Queen may set against liability to tax arising from the privy purse the payments which she makes to the Consolidated Fund to reimburse payments made to other members of the royal family?

Finally, can the Prime Minister give us an assurance that as much factual information has been given to the

[Mr. John Smith]

House this afternoon as will be provided at the press briefing to be given by the Lord Chamberlain and a senior Treasury official at 4.15 pm?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, so far as I am aware, there is no information available or which is relevant that I am unable to give the House but that will be given later today. I believe that I am able to give as much information as will be available later.

I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his support for the proposals and Her Majesty's initiative and for the new arrangements for the royal collection.

As for inheritance tax, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that there is a unique circumstance in a hereditary monarchy, and it is right therefore that there should be specific exemptions for assets passing from one sovereign to his or her successor. I believe that is necessary to protect the independence of the monarchy, and I would not wish to detract from that independence in any way. The concerns that I would have were the arrangements to be any other would be the danger of the assets of the monarchy being salami-sliced away by capital taxation through generations, thus changing the nature of the institution in a way that few people in this country would welcome.

The sum total of the Civil List is about £8 million. I cannot immediately give the right hon. and learned Gentleman the total of the privy purse, not least because many aspects of the privy purse relate to income from the Duchy of Lancaster and not to matters of which I might immediately be aware. I will find the answer and write to him.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman's point on payments to the Consolidated Fund being set against tax is entirely accurate, and I believe that that is a proper provision against expenditure made by Her Majesty the Queen.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Are there any implications in my right hon. Friend's statement for the royal yacht or for any other forms of transport for the royal family?

The Prime Minister: The royal yacht and the other facilities such as the royal flight are provided by Government Departments in support of the Queen's role as Head of State. The expenditure is carried on votes approved by the House. These long-standing arrangements are completely unaffected by the announcements I have made this afternoon.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As I was the hon. Member who introduced a Bill two years ago to achieve these objectives, my right hon. and hon. Friends have asked me to respond.

The Prime Minister's statement will not only be welcome on our Benches, but will be seen in the country as principled and popular and one that enhances rather than reduces the status of the royal family. If the royal family is as responsive to the public mood on this issue in the future as it has been in the recent past, it will ensure its continuance for a long time to come.

Only one factual question was left unanswered, and I ask the Prime Minister to be explicit. Can he confirm that the implication of what he said is that the tax rate at which the monarch and the Prince of Wales will pay will be the same as that for everyone else in their tax bracket? Will the right hon. Gentleman and his Government be as speedy to respond to propositions from these Benches as the Queen has been in this respect?

The Prime Minister: It may of course depend on the merit of the proposal, but I will always be anxious to respond speedily whenever I can.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for these proposals. I can confirm that Her Majesty will pay income tax at the marginal rate of 25 per cent. and 40 per cent. in precisely the same way as every other taxpayer.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement this afternoon will be widely welcomed not only by the House but by the vast majority of people in Britain? It brings to a conclusion the discussions that have been taking place over several months, and I trust that he is aware that the outcome will be regarded as most satisfactory.

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that his announcement on capital gains tax and, in particular, inheritance tax is also satisfactory? Is he also aware that many people in the United Kingdom will regard the transfer of assets from one monarch to another as an essential part of the monarchy together with its maintenance at a standard which the country desires for many years to come?

The Prime Minister: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his warm support for these proposals. I strongly agree with his remarks about inheritance tax. I suspect that it would be the overwhelming wish of people in this country that the natural and important assets of the monarchy should be sustained and that it is necessary to make appropriate inheritance tax arrangements to ensure that that remains the case.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is it not clear that this is the first time that there will be a comprehensive list of the royal collection which will enable us to see what is owned personally by the Queen and what is owned as a result of her position as sovereign? Will there be publication of what is owned by her position as sovereign? More importantly, why will the royal collection not be owned by the royal collection trust, a body to be set up to administer it?

The Prime Minister: It was thought more appropriate to establish trustees to deal specifically with the new arrangements for ensuring that the collection was generally available, more widely seen and operated on a basis which required no subsidy either by the Exchequer or by Her Majesty the Queen. There were detailed discussions as to the best method to achieve that, and the one chosen was the one that I announced this afternoon.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the new arrangements for the royal collection. Certainly there is no doubt that the royal collection will be codified. Whether those elements of it that will be owned by the Queen will be set out in a separate pamphlet, I cannot immediately confirm, but I see no objection to that.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members believe that, if greater steps had been taken to publicise the fact

that the monarch hands over some 80 per cent. of her income from the Crown lands already, the public pressure for her to be taxed in this way would never have arisen? Does he also agree that, if that money which she receives in the privy purse, which itself is payable out of the Crown lands, is to be taxed so far as it is there for personal purposes, in all equity the whole of her income from the Crown lands should be taxed at the applicable rate and not at the effective rate of 83 per cent. at which it is taxed today?

The Prime Minister: I can see that my hon. Friend may well have a future ahead of him in the Inland Revenue department examining Her Majesty's tax returns. The underlying point he makes is entirely right as it is certainly true that the hereditary revenues from the Crown estates by far exceed official expenditure in support of the Head of State. I think that that is a point which is understood by my hon. Friend and by many others, but not perhaps by everyone.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In addition to what the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) said, may I question the omission from what has been read by the Prime Minister and in the accompanying documents and the lack of any mention of income from the Crown property which the Queen voluntarily hands to the Treasury each year? The figure set out on page 16 of the Consolidated Fund accounts amounts to £71 million. On page 17, there are other figures which probably amount to the sum total which has just been mentioned by the hon. Member for Teignbridge. Does the Prime Minister agree that that has been an excellent bargain for the taxpayer for the whole of the Queen's reign?

May I ask the Prime Minister to do his best to ensure that those members of the royal family who are now dropped from the Civil List will be accorded the degree of privacy which would be enjoyed by the nephew of any newspaper editor?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Prime Minister: I think that there will be a genuine hum of agreement, as the right hon. Gentleman has just heard, for his latter point. He makes a good point in the figures he quotes, particularly about the £71 million. I did not specifically mention them in my statement to the House, as there were many figures and for me to do so would have detained the House for a long time. As the right hon. Gentleman has seen, they are in the attendant documents which will now be available to the House.

To return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge, it is a fact that the surrender of the hereditary revenues which has been in place for over 200 years has ensured a very remarkable sum accruing to the central Exchequer over that period. I believe and hope that the new tax arrangements which are clearly quite different from anything we have seen before will also enable people to realise that very substantial contribution.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be widespread agreement that this demonstrates yet again the Queen's excellent judgment which she has shown consistently throughout her reign? Does he agree that that is why our monarch is admired throughout the world for the service that she has given our country?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. That was evident from the point that I made to the House when last I reported on the matter. The impetus for the payment of tax came not from the Government but from Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement and welcome its content. I am sure that many hon. Members will want to explore in more detail the inheritance tax provisions. Does the Prime Minister intend to end the anachronistic system under which the Civil List alone is outside the scrutiny of the Comptroller and Auditor General? Will he put it on the same basis as the £50 million-odd that is spent in support of the monarchy by the Department? That scrutiny causes no embarrassment.

The Lord Chamberlain will be holding a press conference at 4.15 at which I understand that an information pack will be available to journalists. Has the Prime Minister made arrangements for an identical information pack to be put in the Vote Office?

The Prime Minister: I will check. If the information pack was not going to be in the Vote Office, I shall ensure that it is there as a result of the right hon. Gentleman's request. On his earlier point, the Treasury has been the statutory auditor for the Civil List since, I think from memory, 1816. The audit arrangements are part of the Civil List arrangements. They have been approved by Parliament several times in recent years—in the 1950s, twice in the 1970s and again in 1990. Despite the right hon. Gentleman's blandishments, I have no plans to change that.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): May I at once welcome the generous offer by Her Majesty, especially bearing in mind the fact that the revenue from the Crown estates exceeds that from official sources? I note that there is a memorandum of understanding, but I ask that a realistic policy be adopted towards any expenses that are incurred. We look to the monarch to represent the traditions and pride of Britain. We are not looking for a cut-price, basement option.

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's view. Of course, it is for that reason that we have made the appropriate inheritance tax arrangements and that, to follow up the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, many of the payments which are made to other members of the royal family are to be offset against tax. That precisely meets my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that he has today implemented clause 40 of the Commonwealth of Britain Bill which I introduced 18 months ago and which is before the House again? Is he further aware that the changes that he has announced today are as nothing to the changes under the Maastricht treaty under which the Queen will become a citizen of Europe with duties and responsibilities like everyone else? To speak of the continuity of an hereditary monarchy in those circumstances is unreal.

Is the Prime Minister also aware that across the political spectrum there is a growing interest in much wider constitutional reform—matters such as the relationship between Church and state, the degree of devolution to Scotland, Wales and the English regions, and the desire for greater democracy? There are people in Britain who would

[Mr. Tony Benn]

like to be allowed to elect their Head of State, as America does. Does he agree that the time has come to fight off what is otherwise cynicism and disillusionment with many of our institutions by holding a proper inquiry into the British constitution to which people could give evidence? The House could address its attention to such an inquiry instead of all the creepy-crawly bowing and scraping that has come from so many Members of the House today.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman raises various points. I certainly was not aware that I had implemented clause 40 of his Bill. I can make him no promises as to the first 39 clauses or any which may follow clause 40. On citizenship, if the right hon. Gentleman cares to read the Maastricht treaty more carefully, he will find that Her Majesty the Queen and every other British citizen remain British citizens first and foremost, and at no stage will that be changed.

The right hon. Gentleman raised a much wider remit in his other points. I do not believe that he would carry many people in the country with him in the beliefs that he expressed in his final remarks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): May I echo something that has already been said? The sovereign, as a focus for military, civil and voluntary service in this country, has responded to the popular will. Does my right hon. Friend share my hope that no test will be made of whether any income from copyright damages should be subject to tax? May I suggest that the newspapers involved drop their opposition to the case, settle and reflect the popular mood in the same way as Her Majesty?

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but I am not sure that I would be prudent to respond to it this afternoon.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As one or two people are claiming credit for this proposal, let me remind the Prime Minister that, on the opening day of this Parliament, Black Rod came into the Chamber, stood beside me and asked us to go and see the Queen. I told her to pay her taxes, and I think that my voluntary unpaid research assistant, Black Rod, has done a reasonable job for a start.

Will the Prime Minister now deal with the hard part of the arrangement? Will the Queen be taxed on the £6,500 million that *The Sunday Times* declared to be her total assets in May 1992? Will she be taxed on the £500 million that supposedly constituted her personal wealth on the same date? Will she be taxed on the £341 million of investment income mentioned in Philip Hall's book about tax and the monarchy? Or will she be taxed on the £50 million or less that some of the newspapers have recently fed out, suggesting that the Queen does not really have much money at all, and that she will probably pay only two million quid in taxes?

The Queen has been forced into paying tax by pressure from people outside. The last thing that she wants to do is to give those people the impression that there is one tax regime for her and another for the ordinary punter.

The Prime Minister: I am unwilling to give credit where it is not due. Although the hon. Gentleman sought to make a passable case for taking the credit himself, I repeat that the initiative came from the Queen.

Mr. Skinner: Joke!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman admits to being a joke, and I will not argue with him.

Madam Speaker: It is his birthday today.

The Prime Minister: In that case, I happily withdraw my last remark. On behalf of the House, I wish the hon. Gentleman a very happy birthday, and I will not respond in the beastly way in which I would otherwise have responded to the ludicrous question that he asked me.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): May I invite my right hon. Friend to consider a hypothetical situation? At some time in the future, the balance of party representation in the Chamber may be rather different. If Her Majesty were called on to exercise her royal prerogative and choose between two leaders, one with a high-tax policy and the other with a low-tax policy, would there not be a severe risk of her being inexorably drawn into the forum of party-political conflict? Although her own conduct would be impeccable, is there not a risk that comment on it would not?

May I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the decision that Her Majesty should pay tax at the prevailing rate, and think of introducing a special rate that would cross the political boundary?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can accommodate that last suggestion. It is the express wish of Her Majesty that she should pay income tax on her assessed income, in precisely the same way as other income taxpayers, and I believe that that is the right way for her to proceed. As for my hon. Friend's earlier point, Her Majesty is of course unable to vote.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Is the Prime Minister aware that the average inheritance in my constituency is £13,000, and that many people in Pendle will look askance at the special arrangements for inheritance that he has suggested today? Will the right hon. Gentleman compile an inventory showing which goods belong to the state and which belong to the monarch? No such inventory exists at present.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is how his constituents would react, I do not believe that he knows his constituents remotely as well as he should. I have set out the arrangements under which Her Majesty will pay tax, and I think that they are perfectly clear to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if institutions in this country depended on the popular perception at any one time of individual holders of them, there would be precious few institutions left? Will he state explicitly what he has repeatedly said implicitly—that it is Conservative party policy to support the monarchy?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that the Conservative party, and every member of the Conservative party—and many beyond it—are strong monarchists and would not wish to see changes in the institutional hereditary monarchy in this country.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May we try to clarify the position of the rouyal collection trust, which is to be set up at the beginning of April? Why should it not become the

owner? It is all very well to say that the Queen will continue in ownership, but the Prime Minister knows that she is advised by the keeper of the Queen's pictures and others. What would happen if the royal collection trust and the keeper of the Queen's pictures came into conflict over accessibility, as well they might? What provision will be made for what we understand to be a considerable part of the royal collection which has never been shown and is in storage? Are practical arrangements to be made for a division of responsibility to allow the accessibility for which the Public Accounts Committee and others have called?

The Prime Minister: Of course, there will be practical arrangements, as the hon. Gentleman suggests. One advantage of the ownership remaining with Her Majesty the Queen is that, as she is unable to dispose of the royal collection, it will remain in this country and remain available for people in this country to see, both in the short and the long term.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this country and the Commonwealth are exceptionally fortunate to have a monarch, in the person of Queen Elizabeth II, whose sense of duty is unquestioned? Will he assure the House that the impact on her personal expenditure will not restrict her in carrying out her duties to the highest standards to which she has always adhered and which we wish her to maintain?

The Prime Minister: I can unequivocally give my hon. Friend that assurance, and tell him that I know that that would be the wish of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does not the Prime Minister recognise that the royal family's decision to accept taxation is a product of the growing criticism of the royal family and the hereditary Head of State principle? Will he introduce legislation so that the taxation of the Queen and the royal family is not a voluntary matter and so that they are taxed in the normal way like the rest of the community? Will he also ensure that, as a large number of the buildings inhabited by the royal family are owned by the state, they will be more readily open to the public so that they can see what is in them, including what they, the public, own?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the premise at the start of the hon. Gentleman's question, and I think that very few other people will. Her Majesty has offered to pay tax on a voluntary basis and has made it clear that she expects it to be a continuing responsibility. His Royal Highness Prince Charles has done precisely the same, and that will remain the position. Taxation will continue, but on a voluntary basis. I see no reason and no need to introduce legislation.

Business of the House

4.3 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton:) With permission, I should like to make a business statement. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill *[Lords]*.

TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY—Progress on remaining stages of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Motion relating to the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY—Until about seven o'clock, completion of remaining stages of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Motions on the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order and the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order.

Motion on the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order.

THURSDAY 18 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Foreign Compensation (Amendment) Bill *[Lords.]*

Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 22 FEBRUARY—European Communities (Amendment) Bill—progress in Committee, 12th day.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet on Wednesday 17 February at 10.30 am to consider European Community Document No. 8412/92 relating to a Council regulation on feeding stuffs for particular nutritional purposes.

[Wednesday 17 February:

European Standing Committee A: Relevant European Community document—8412/92, feeding stuffs intended for particular nutritional purposes; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee—HC 79-vi (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

Given the many stories about deteriorating national health service waiting lists, there is considerable anxiety in the House, especially on the Opposition Benches, that there should be an early statement on the Tomlinson report. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will convey that message and perhaps even indicate to us whether he expects a statement in the near future.

I press the right hon. Gentleman again to seek a statement from the Home Secretary on what he may have in mind for the reorganisation of the police. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is considerable concern both about levels of crime and about the impact of what the Home Secretary has in mind on police morale.

I ask the right hon. Gentleman to consider again a debate on public spending, for which we have pressed and to which we believe the House is entitled.

Finally, when does the right hon. Gentleman think that we are likely to have another Opposition Supply day?

Mr. Newton: I expect that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be making a statement on the Tomlinson report on London hospitals in the fairly near future. I cannot be precise about the date this afternoon.

The hon. Lady will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who was answering questions only an hour or so ago, is considering the structure of police forces to see whether existing arrangements can be improved. There are no firm proposals at this stage and clearly, therefore, no basis on which my right hon. and learned Friend can make a statement. I am sure that he would wish to inform the House in an appropriate way when he has reached conclusions.

I note the hon. Lady's further requests for a debate on public spending and for Opposition time. I cannot add now to what I have said over previous weeks, especially in respect of Opposition time. I am sure that there can be further discussions through the usual channels.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate on taxation next week so that the House can examine once more taxation and representation? Such a debate would enable the House to consider whether the Queen should have the vote because she is now to pay taxes. It is an important and democratic principle.

Mr. Newton: I hesitate to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was saying a few moments ago. I suspect, however, that those who are Members of another place, who pay taxes but do not have votes, might wish to express an interest in the matter. It is one that raises some wider questions. My hon. Friend will know that the Budget is not far away, which means that he will have plenty of opportunities to talk about taxes.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Has the Leader of the House seen the report this morning that only 17 per cent. of the population believe that better services will result from the privatisation of the Post Office, as against 37 per cent. who believe that the service would deteriorate? That is an even bigger gap than that which exists for rail privatisation. Given the widespread concern in the House, as evidenced in early-day motion 848, that the privatisation of the Post Office would affect especially rural areas, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that there will be a statement or a debate to clarify the Government's intentions?

[That this House recognises the importance of rural and community post offices to those in receipt of DSS giro cheques for payment of pension and other benefits; further recognises the difficulties of many benefit recipients whose financial circumstances make it difficult to secure bank accounts; calls on Her Majesty's Government to provide guarantees that the proposed DSS plans to pay benefits direct to bank accounts will not be at the expense of the financial viability of rural and community post offices; and further notes that the loss of valuable income through bank charges is an additional burden they cannot afford.]

Mr. Newton: I can say, in slightly different terms from those that I used in reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about the position of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, that recent press stories about the Government's plans for the Post Office can be described only as pretty wild speculation. Ministers have yet to consider options. No decisions have been taken, and therefore there is no basis for a statement. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to probe further, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be answering questions on Wednesday next.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Some months have elapsed since the new Governor of Hong Kong took office and subsequently made proposals for constitutional development in Hong Kong which have led to a good deal of discussion in many circles, including a useful debate in another place before Christmas, but this House has not had an opportunity to discuss Hong Kong for some time. Will my right hon. Friend remedy that omission fairly soon?

Mr. Newton: Without making any commitment at all, I can only say that I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I, as the original Westminster ratepayer who brought before the Westminster auditor the complaints about the sale of cemetries and the rigged sale of council houses under Shirley Porter's stewardship, ask for a debate in the House of Commons on the whole question of the pork-barrel political activities of Westminster city council?

Mr. Newton: It is so long since the hon. Gentleman asked me about anything except Members' interests that for a moment I had some difficulty considering what I might say. But I think that what I have to say is that I cannot promise him the debate for which he asks.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Select Committee on Defence this week, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence last week, in what might be described as a pre-emptive strike, agreed that the proposals in "Options for Change" should be reviewed. As the House lost the opportunity last year to debate the defence estimates because of the general election and in the light of concerns across the House, will my right hon. Friend give the House the opportunity to debate defence matters before the Easter recess?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly do so if I possibly can. Had the hon. Member for Derby, South asked me about this, as I half thought she might since she did so last week, I had intended to reply in what I think will be considered reasonably forthcoming terms. What I have in front of me is, "There is no time next week, but I shall certainly look at the possibility of finding time in the not-too-distant future." Therefore, I hope that I can create some pleasure on both sides of the House.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the Leader of the House consider allowing time for a debate on early-day motion 1215 on standing charges?

[That this House views with great concern standing charges being imposed on pensioners by British Gas, Electricity and Telecom, meaning an extra burden of £190 per year; recognises that many pensioners are already living below the poverty line; finds these scandalous charges a drain on their already overstretched resources; therefore calls for the immediate abolition of all standing charges; and calls for the President of the Board of Trade to call a meeting with all companies concerned with a view to alleviating this unnecessary hardship.]

The people of Britain and Scotland are disgusted at the way in which privatised industries are plundering the poor. Standing charges cost senior citizens, many of whom are already living below the poverty line, a further £190 per year. When will the Leader of the House allow a debate on that matter in the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that, in the many arguments that have taken place on the matter over the years, it has been thought proper to refer to the fact that the policy that he has urged would cause increases in unit electricity prices which would not necessarily benefit small users. However, standing charges are clearly a matter for the utility companies. On telephone charges, I understand that Oftel has recently announced plans to extend the support line scheme which is designed to protect the position of the elderly and those on low incomes.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Depending on progress and with some approximation, will my right hon. Friend say when he expects the vote on the official Opposition's amendment on the social chapter to take place and what his response is to Lord Tebbit's advice yesterday?

Mr. Newton: With regard to the factual question, I am not in a position to provide a clear-cut forecast at the moment because that depends on the progress on the Bill. With regard to the observations of my noble Friend, I shall simply observe that they are the observations of my noble Friend.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, on the day of the Royal Air Force debate, contributions on the Royal Air Force were largely restricted to the period when there was a 10-minute limit on speeches and, consequently, there was little opportunity to debate fully and adequately the changes that have occured, particularly under "Options for Change". As there will, quite properly, be one-day debates on the Army and Navy, will my right hon. Friend consider another day's debate on the Royal Air Force?

Mr. Newton: I always bear in mind, or will undertake to bear in mind, anything that is put in as quiet and reasonable a way as my hon. Friend put his question. I do not wish to excite too much hope. I have in mind at present, and had in mind, in replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) and referring to the hon. Lady the Member for Derby, South, a wider-ranging debate that would enable hon. Members to make points on all the services and on foreign affairs generally.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will have heard that the Prime Minister, after his statement, was not able to answer some questions. Will it be possible, not next week, but in the near future, to have a further statement in the light of the press conference that starts in one minute? Amnesia affects many of us. We forget what has happened in the past and do not pay tribute to the contribution of the royal family to the Consolidated Fund. The tax arrangements will be indefinite. Some of us have bad memories and we would not like the creeping socialism that seems to be arriving in the classless society. We fear the prospect of President Heath or President Benn contending for leadership.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member echoes the remarks of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) during questions to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and I do not wish to add to what my right hon. Friend said in reply.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My hon. Friend is well aware of the great interest in the House and outside in the Government's promised White Paper on energy policy and the future of the pits. I know that it is his intention to allow the House an opportunity to debate it as soon as possible after it is published. However, may I ask him to give favourable consideration to the possibility of allowing for a two-day debate, the first day being open-ended, on the successful model of the arrangements that he made for the Second Reading of the European Communities Bill last June?

I hope that he will agree with me that, given the complexity and importance of the subject, it is impossible in a normal one-day debate, ending at 10 o'clock, in which, generally speaking, after Front-Bench spokesmen, Privy Councillors and other dignitaries have spoken, there is just an hour or two left, for Back-Bench opinion to be expressed and for a reasonable spectrum of opinion to be brought before the House.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request and I acknowledge that there is a good deal of interest in this matter, but I think that arrangements for debating a White Paper which has yet to be published are best considered after it has been published.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion No. 1341 in my name?

[That this House recognises that the West Yorkshire Fire Authority is legally bound to provide services that meet efficiently all normal requirements; notes that in order to comply with the Conservative Government's capping criteria for 1993-94 the authority must close Bingley Fire Station and lose a turntable ladder at Brighouse, an emergency tender in Halifax and a prime mover in Moortown as well as shut Sowerby Bridge Fire Station; further notes that Mr. Manuel, the Chief Fire Officer, says these cuts will breach the minimum standards of cover and reduce the West Yorkshire Fire Service to that of a third world fire service; places on record the encouragement given by the Earl Ferrers to the authority to breach the cap to maintain minimum levels of service when he spoke to a delegation on 14th January; believes the underfunding of the Fire Service is not only a national disgrace but a recipe for disaster; and publicly states its support for the authority if it decides to set an 'illegal' budget as the Home Office Minister suggested.]

It recognises that West Yorkshire fire authority is legally bound, under Home Office rules, to provide minimum standards of service, but, in order to beat the cap issued by his Government, it will be unable to provide those minimum standards. The chief fire officer has given that warning. Can we have an urgent debate so that lives are not lost and property not destroyed needlessly?

Mr. Newton: I am not aware of any reason why West Yorkshire fire authority should not meet the nationally recommended minimums of fire cover and keep to its statutory duties, but if the hon. Lady believes that there is evidence to that effect, I am sure that she will bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and that he will consider it.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind the recent imposition by the United States of grossly unfair anti-dumping duties on European steel producers, that the European Community itself uses equally flawed anti-dumping rules to impose duties on east European steel producers, and the fact that the GATT round seems to be bogged down and is three years overdue for completion, is not it about time that the House had a debate on the GATT round and on trade in general? That would, not least, give our Ministers a chance to tell us what they are doing to use their influence to reduce intensive protectionist measures in the European Community to ensure that the world trading system does not descend into 1930s-style tit-for-tat protectionism.

Mr. Newton: There have been several references in the past few minutes to debating foreign affairs and defence. I should have thought that some of my hon. Friend's points might be relevant were I able to find time for such a debate. I cannot find time for a specific debate on GATT at present.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, Sir Leon Brittan, the European Community Commissioner responsible, is meeting the new United States trade representative in the United States today, I believe. I am sure that he will be anxious to overcome the difficulties to which my hon. Friend referred, as I know equally well will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he visits the United States to see President Clinton and others later this month.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Further to an earlier question, will the Leader of the House entice the President of the Board of Trade to the Dispatch Box to give openly to the House the news that he is deliberately leaking to newspapers about the 31 pits? Does not the Leader of the House consider it an absolute disgrace that in those leaks the President of the Board of Trade is taking his own side for granted in suggesting that they will troop through the Lobbies like sheep behind him? Is not the President of the Board of Trade holding the whole House in contempt by communicating with newspapers rather than with the House, and will he please stop playing ducks and drakes with miners' families?

Mr. Newton: I do not believe that my right hon. Friend is responsible for the stories to which the hon. Gentleman refers or that he is taking anyone for granted. He is working very carefully and thoroughly to produce a properly thought-out White Paper. As for enticing him here, he is already committed to being here next Wednesday to answer questions.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. Friend dig deep into the archives to see when we last had a debate on the arts? I suspect that it must be a year, if not two years, since we had a full and proper debate and I think it is time that we debated the strategy of the new Department of National Heritage and the Arts Council since the publication of its strategy—or would it be better for me to table an amendment to the European Communities Bill?

Mr. Newton: The veiled threat in my hon. Friend's last remark—perhaps it was not even veiled—might give me some encouragement. As it is, however, despite that veiled or unveiled threat, I will simply take note of my hon. Friend's request.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I recognise that the Leader of the House has set aside some considerable time next week for Scottish business, but does he accept that one of the critical current issues facing us is the future of the legal aid system in Scotland? Given that the Government propose to alter this legislation on 1 April, with huge reductions in access to legal aid, thereby restricting the ability of the most vulnerable sections of our community to obtain legal assistance, can he tell us what procedures the Government will follow? Will we have statutory instruments, will we have a motion, will we have a debate, and will there be an opportunity for us to consider this very important matter?

Mr. Newton: As I think the hon. Lady knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will shortly be laying regulations and it seems highly likely that there will be occasion for a debate in the light of the point that the hon. Lady and others have made. I will just remind her, as I reminded another questioner a week or two ago, that in total some 48 per cent. of households—very nearly half of all households—will remain financially eligible for legal aid.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): In view of the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for municipal gutters, could we have a debate on ethics in local government and discuss the recent reports from boroughs such as Lambeth, Hackney, Peterborough and Monklands, which have been in the news and are all Labour-controlled authorities?

Mr. Newton: There appears to be some support on my own Benches, including from some in very high places, for such a debate. Despite that, however, I will once again take note of my hon. Friend's very reasonable request.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): What is the likelihood of an early statement being made by, say, the President of the Board of Trade, or even the Prime Minister, about the building of a replacement vessel for the elderly royal yacht Britannia? Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a belief gaining ground throughout the United Kingdom that the Prime Minister has made a promise to the Queen and the royal family that they shall have such a vessel built for them? I wish to point out, as a Member representing a traditional shipbuilding constituency, that this would be taken very badly amiss ——*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We are dealing with next week's business.

Dr. Godman: I asked for an early statement.

Madam Speaker: Good. That is where it should have ended.

Mr. Newton: In view of your steer, Madam Speaker, I shall say only that I cannot promise an early statement.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Although my right hon. Friend has said that he might not be able to find time next week for a debate on the conduct of some of our privatised industries, will he reconsider his answer? It would enable many of my colleagues to talk about the turnround of our former nationalised industries and the fact that, whereas they were a burden on the taxpayer, costing about £3 billion a year, they now contribute to the Exchequer, have improved productivity, are much more

efficient and provide a better service to the customer. Would not such a debate enable us to prove what a great benefit they are to this country?

Mr. Newton: That is a very helpful question. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade might find it more helpful were it asked next Wednesday instead of some of the questions that it seems likely he might be asked.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Instead of the proposed business for Monday week, would it be possible to have a general debate on Maastricht so that the Government could give us their assessment of the inclusion of the social chapter and its implications? Does not the Cabinet appreciate the advice that Lord Tebbit has given Tory Members of Parliament on how to proceed?

Mr. Newton: Whenever I have been in the Chamber during the first 11 days of debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, people have usually found it possible to make general observations whatever the specific subject under discussion.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): What point is there in general observations about the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? What chance is there of making progress if the Government intend to drop the entire treaty if the social charter were to be included by a majority of the House? Will the Leader of the House make it clear whether that is the Government's intention?

Mr. Newton: I reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said on radio. He said:

"We can't ratify a treaty other than the one we negotiated; we don't intend to join Britain into a treaty which includes proposals and ideas which we think are destructive to British jobs".

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the Leader of the House consider early-day motion 1370?

[That this House acknowledges the invaluable work carried out by REUNITE on behalf of those who suffer child abduction; and urges the Government not to terminate its grant to REUNITE on 31st March 1993.]

It is an all-party motion dealing with Reunite, the National Council for Abducted Children. The Government intend to withdraw the organisation's grant, thereby causing the collapse of the only advice service to Government and non-governmental agencies in Britain on the 1,200 children a year who are abducted illegally from Great Britain and held hostage in many countries throughout the world. More than 100 hon. Members have been assisted by Reunite to trace and identify children who have been stolen from their constituencies. Would it not be outrageous if the Government's decision were carried out because it would mean the demise of an organisation committed to the return of the children of British citizens who have been abducted illegally?

Mr. Newton: As I am not familiar with the exact state of play in any negotiations that might be taking place, I shall confine myself to saying that it is not uncommon for the Government—I have been involved in this work in various ministerial capacities—to provide funds on a start-up or pump-priming basis. I understand that, in 1989, the Home Office voluntary service unit agreed to fund Reunite temporarily to help it establish itself and find other sources of support.

Points of Order

4.27 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It has been a tradition of the House that on Thursday afternoons, after Prime Minister's Question Time, we automatically have the business statement for the following week and then any other statements, the only exception being if there is a private notice question. Has there been a change in the procedure to enable the Prime Minister to make a statement on royal finances before the business statement, because normally he should have made it after? Does the Prime Minister have precedence over the rest of the House?

Madam Speaker: Any statement by the Prime Minister always takes precedence over other statements.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A fortnight ago, I was called to ask a question on the business statement. Last week, because I had a message from the Leader of the House saying that he was still considering my question about the Nimmo Smith/Friel report, I did not ask the question. Since then the Leader of the House has been given a transcript of a newspaper office record that throws the very gravest doubt on the findings in this highly sensitive report. Will the right hon. Gentleman have an opportunity to report to the House of Commons? If this is said outside the House of Commons, we shall be subject to litigation.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the question he has just asked is one that, had he caught my eye, he might have put to the Leader of the House. I give the hon. Gentleman a number of opportunities to put questions. Regrettably, I could not do so today.

Mr David Trimble (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware of the importance to Back Benchers on both sides of the House of the business statement and of the questions that follow it. I appreciate that the practice is to give the Prime Minister precedence when he has to make a statement after Prime Minister's questions—a practice that was quite understandable today in view of the significance of the subject. Is it possible, however, to ensure that that practice will not prejudice the interests of Back Benchers who wish to raise matters following the business statement and that in the rather exceptional circumstances in which the Prime Minister has to make such a statement we shall get extra time for business questions?

Madam Speaker: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is seeking. It is is my custom to attempt to call the Whips of minority parties. I did so today in the case of his own party. Regrettably, I cannot call all Members following the business statement.

BILLS PRESENTED

WEDDINGS

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, presented a Bill to make new provision regarding marriages; to provide for marriages to be solemnised in any place and at any time by a duly authorised person; to provide for the registration of authorised persons; and for

connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 March, and to be printed. [Bill 135.]

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Bill Walker presented a Bill to increase the penalties for certain offences under the Protection of Animals (Scotland) Act 1912: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February, and to be printed. [Bill 133.]

Community Care

4.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I beg to move,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 6) (House of Commons Paper No. 404), which was laid before this House on 8th February, be approved.

The report sets out the proposed allocation of special grants to local authorities for the financial year beginning 1 April for expenditure on community care services, as defined in section 46 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. It also describes the main features of the grant and the conditions that we intend to attach to it.

It may be helpful if I sketch the background to the report and say a word about our community care policy generally. The changes that are being introduced in April represent the achievement of a goal that was set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" in 1989. They follow two earlier stages of the implementation of our community care policy—the first in 1991, when we introduced arm's-length inspection units and greatly improved local authority complaints procedures; the second in April 1992, when, for the first time, we required the publication of community care plans by every local authority with responsibility for social services. The community care plans will be published annually from now on.

The significance of the changes that we shall make in April this year, however, lies in the fact that, perhaps for the first time, services will be tailored to meet need rather than, as, I am afraid, has tended to happen sometimes in the past, modifying needs to fit the services that happen to be available. The policy represents a coherent and properly funded approach to community care. It will guarantee for individuals who need services a choice between improved domiciliary and day care services at home and care in a homely setting for as long as possible, but where people are unable to stay at home they will be placed in appropriate residential accommodation. That will be achieved primarily through the process of individual assessment, which must by law not only examine the needs of every individual but take account of the person's wishes. Secondly and very importantly, it will take account of the needs and wishes of any carers who may be helping the individual to live at home.

We have four principal objectives in pursuing this policy. The first is that better consideration should be given to the alternatives to residential care. It has been common ground that one weakness of the present system, which allows people to obtain higher rates of income support to finance their entry into residential or nursing homes, is that sometimes people have been placed in those homes without full consideration of their individual needs and, in particular, without proper examination of whether, through the provision of additional domiciliary or day care services, they could be enabled to remain in their homes longer.

The second objective of the policy is the promotion of improved domiciliary, day and respite care services. I attach particular importance to the improvement of respite care. Anyone who has had personal knowledge of the burden which literally million of voluntary carers shoulder willingly will recognise that one way—perhaps the best way—of enabling them to continue shouldering

that burden is through the greater availability of respite care. It may be for a week a month or only a week a year for someone who is not carrying such a big burden, but one of the best changes this April will be the removal of the perverse incentive which discourages local authorities from paying for respite care.

The third objective is the encouragement of the purchaser-provider split. That split, which has already shown its value in the health service reforms that were implemented two years ago, will bring forth even greater and faster benefits to community care. The marketplace —the mixed economy—is already better developed in social services. There is already healthy competition between providers of social services in the independent sector.

The fourth objective is to ensure that we create a flourishing independent sector. We want a variety of organisations—voluntary organisations and private for-profit organisations—to compete in the marketplace. One consequence is that standards will continue to rise, as they have done in the past 10 years, in the residential sector and elsewhere. It will also widen the choice available to individuals. Of course, through the statutory direction on choice we have built in a binding requirement on local authorities to honour, within certain practical limitations about cost levels, the preferences expressed by individuals. Not only will standards rise and choice widen, but we will see better value for money as a result of a flourishing independent sector.

The key to success in all this will be the greatest level of co-operation within the statutory sector between local authorities and health authorities. We will not accept any attempts by one agency or the other to pass the buck for responsibility for individual clients. It will also, however, require co-operation between the statutory agencies and the independent sector. I am glad that in many parts of the country there is evidence that such co-operation is building up, although I will have a little more to say in due course about the need for improved consultation with the independent sector by individual local authorities.

The whole policy is being introduced against the background of a two thirds real increase in social services spending since 1979. There has been a massive injection of resources all over the country, and the special grant report reflects that progress. The precondition of the payment of the grants to local authorities was that, by 31 December last year, every local authority should sign, jointly with the relevant health authorities covering the districts where they were both responsible, an agreement setting out the way in which, first, they will handle arrangements for the discharge of patients from hospital and, secondly, the way in which the purchase of long-term nursing home beds will be handled. I am glad to say that every local authority reached that deadline and satisfied the precondition.

The settlement with which the policy is being funded has demonstrated the Government's commitment, and the way in which we have honoured our pledge, to finance the policy in an adequate—I would say generous—fashion. The settlement comprises three elements. The first is the transfer of £399 million from the Department of Social Security. That figure, which was arrived at after detailed analysis and consultation, represents the money that the Department of Social Security would have spent in 1993-94 on higher rates of income support for people needing residential or nursing home care had there been no change to the policy.

In addition, we have allocated a further £140 million which is totally new money. It is additional to the resources that would have been spent if the policy had not changed. That £140 million will enable local authorities to improve the assessment procedures because, as I said, they are at the heart of the way in which we shall ensure that individual needs are assessed and met.

It will also enable local authorities to improve the day, domiciliary and respite care services which they make available to those who do not need any residential placement. It will also enable local authorities to meet any additional costs of fees for placements that they may make where those fee levels are higher than the higher rates of income support settled by the Department of Social Security.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I am grateful to the Minister for dealing with the funding issue. Has he received representations recently from the Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils on its view, shared with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, that there is an overall funding shortfall of £135 million?

Mr. Yeo: I shall deal with the shortfall after I have sketched in the third element in the transfer, which is the £26 million being made available to local authorities to pay for clients who previously would have been handled under the independent living fund.

There have been suggestions from local authority associations about the adequacy of funding for the policy as a whole, in particular in relation to the costs which may arise where placements are made to homes whose charges are in excess of the higher rates of income support. The Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities have commented on the matter. I regard the claims that they have made—that the policy is underfunded to the extent of £250 million—as totally bogus. Indeed, the AMA greeted my right hon. Friend's announcement in October last year with what can only be described as a wave of scaremongering.

It said that the cash shortfall would put 12,000 elderly and disabled people at risk of not receiving services. Unfounded claims such as that succeed only in frightening and worrying some of society's most vulnerable people. The AMA's figures do not add up. They assume that the numbers of elderly and disabled will grow exponentially. The curve of the AMA's graph goes through the roof, creating by September 1995 another 56,000 people—they do not actually exist—apparently needing residential care.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I was pressing the Minister to comment on the claim of his political colleagues in local government that there was a gap of £135 million.

Mr. Yeo: I am explaining why the claims are exaggerated. As I say, the numbers are unfounded. The figures are in sharp contrast to ours, which were based on a cautious assumption—perhaps I should put it the other way round and say they were based on the generous assumption—that by September 1995—*[Interruption.]* I am making a serious point.

We analysed carefully the numbers of people who would be likely to need services. We had regard to the rate of hospital discharge and demographic considerations. We then added to the figures produced by those two trends another 37,000 people, and we assumed that that number would be seeking services from local authorities. But even

[Mr. Yeo]

those figures are substantially lower than those used by the local authority associations, and it is there that a substantial part of the difference between our figures and theirs arises.

Next year, directors of social services will have at their disposal £565 million for reform, money that has been ring-fenced to ensure that it reaches its target. If councils want to spend even more on community care, they can draw on their own resources. The personal social services standard spending assessment now runs at more than £5 billion a year.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): The Minister will recall the commitment that was given about ring-fencing community care funds for mental health illness and for drug and alcohol abuse centres. That ring-fenced funding was later removed. What guarantee have we that the ring-fenced funding to which he has referred will be implemented?

Mr. Yeo: The specific grant for mental illness, now up to more than £31 million—raised by about 10 per cent. for 1993-94—has been an important element in the funding of local authority provision for people with mental illness. That is a specific grant for those services. There is a specific grant, of about £2·2 million, for alcohol and drug treatment. I appreciate that the hon. Lady is referring to the decision not to ring-fence the funding of residential treatment centres for alcohol and drug abusers. That decision is at present the subject of judicial review. The outcome of those proceedings will be known probably early next week, so it is difficult for me to say more on the subject now.

For that reason, I had intended later to point out—it may be convenient if I deal with the matter now—that the total figure in the special grants report is £20 million less than the £565 million that we are allocating in total to local authorities for the funding of community care. We shall make that £20 million available to local authorities and say how it will be distributed as soon as the present legal process has been completed.

The method of distributing the grant was discussed at length and attracted much interest from local authorities. I believe that we have arrived at the fairest possible method. We are not expecting too radical, too destabilising or too swift a change from the status quo but instead are making a smooth transition towards the achievement of our goal of reflecting in the distribution formula need, preserving individual choice and enabling care to be carried out at home.

As I say, we have attached conditions to the payment of the grant, the first being the ring-fenced condition, and that has been widely welcomed. It will not apply in perpetuity. We believe that after three years the policy will be sufficiently integrated within the totality of social services provision, and by that stage it will be an erosion of local authority discretion to continue to apply ring fencing.

The second condition which we shall apply is the requirement that 85 per cent. of the money being transferred from social security should be spent by local authorities purchasing services from the independent sector. We attach the greatest possible importance to that condition. We believe that there is already a valuable history of independent sector residential care provision on which we can build. But the condition does not apply only to the purchase of residential services. Local authorities will also be able to satisfy it by purchasing from the independent sector domiciliary, day and respite care services.

I hope that the whole independent sector will seize the opportunity offered to expand its activities in that area. The statutory sector cannot and should not work alone. I expect to see the independent sector taking on more of the work traditionally associated with local government.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My I press the Minister on the consistency of two of the factors that he has mentioned —the Government's apparent desire to ensure that people are not forced unnecessarily into care and to stimulate domiciliary alternatives to care, and the requirement to spend 85 per cent. of the DSS money in any one area on the independent sector? How do those factors square with the fact that, to my knowledge, many parts of the country have no independent domiciliary sector whatever? They do not seem to square.

Mr. Yeo: The reason why, I fear, some parts of the country have no independent domiciliary provision is the deep and enduring hostility of the local authorities to independent sector providers of all kinds, especially the private sector. In areas where there has been a more open-minded and rational approach to the provision of social services, there is no great difficulty in finding independent sector providers of all kinds of community care. The new condition was announced last October, although we have modified and slightly relaxed it after consultation. I hope that it will mean that, even in the past four and a half months, local authorities have been discussing with the independent sector how they can stimulate such provision.

All that will help to make community care plans needs-led rather than service-led. We shall not tolerate the use of the money for some empire-building exercise by local authorities for their own service provision. I hope that we shall thereby reduce the scope for the incompetence, mismanagement and fraud which, sadly, has occurred in a few local authorities, and which besmirches the reputation of local government as a whole.

If the independent sector provision is to be fully realised, local authorities must collaborate. The study by KPMG which we commissioned last year, in support of the conclusions of our own monitoring exercise, showed significant shortcomings in local authority consultation with the independent sector. That is not an option; it is essential. We have therefore issued two statutory directions to strengthen the requirement to consult.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): I am still puzzled by the fact that 85 per cent. of the money is to go to the independent sector. Essentially, although not always, that means the private sector, so let us use proper vocabulary. Instead of 85 per cent. of the money going predominantly to the private sector, would a wise policy not be to ensure that 100 per cent. of it went to good services, whatever their source?

Mr. Yeo: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who has some knowledge of such matters, claims that the independent sector is really the same as the private sector. It most certainly is not. Before entering the House I spent the latter years of my working life in what one might call

the real world as a full-time employee of a large voluntary organisation supplying services extensively to local authorities. Many other voluntary organisations do the same.

It is absurd to suggest that we can use the term "private sector" to cover the work of Age Concern, Mencap, the Spastics Society and many other distinguished voluntary organisations, which are now increasingly substantial suppliers of services under contract to local authorities. Of course, it is because we want all the money to be spent on good services that we are determined to ensure that most of it is spent in the independent sector. As I said at the beginning of my speech, that is the best safeguard; that is what will deliver higher standards, value for money and wider choice.

Mr. Wicks: Why?

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities have been given the challenge of making the reforms work. They have been given the cash that they need. They have had the help of the community care support force. It is now up to them. The success of community care rests on the directors of social services. They are used to managing change, and the community care support force is issuing practical guidance to assist local authorities if unexpected eventualities arise.

The report brings those long-awaited reforms to the brink of implementation. That progress has been achieved in co-operation with most local authorities and health authorities. I pay tribute to their efforts. The benefits of the policy will be felt throughout the country by vulnerable and needy people and their families and friends. I commend the report to the House.

4.55 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Tonight the House has what will probably be the only opportunity—certainly the only opportunity in Government time—to debate before April the implementation of the changes due to take place in the arrangements for community care. The formula before us in Special Grant Report (No. 6) sets out the reality of community care in the next financial year —a reality in stark and marked contrast to the media hype about the likely impact of the changes which emanated from Richmond house until shortly after the general election.

Before 9 April 1992, the then Secretary of State and the junior Ministers were telling us in glowing terms how the delayed new arrangements would improve the lot of all and sundry. They talked about the avoidance of unnecessary institutional care—the Minister mentioned that again tonight—about recognition of the needs of users and carers, and about choice. Those statements gave renewed hope to users and carers, pressure groups and voluntary organisations, and providers in the public, private and independent sectors. April 1993 would be a new dawn, an end to what had been for many people years of private personal struggle and uncertainty.

When the election was over, a new message began to emerge from Richmond house. I am sorry that the Minister for reduced expectations—otherwise known as the Minister for Health—is not here tonight. He was wheeled into action to tell us all to modify our vision of the future after April 1993, and his message was reinforced in writing to local authorities: "Play it down, folks, and don't be unrealistic."

One or two Opposition Members have been criticised for not being realistic about what would happen after April, and for having said for some time that not only may April fail to herald much-needed long-overdue support for a vast number of people in desperate need, but that the circumstances of some users and carers could get worse. It take no pleasure in saying that the report before the House, dealing the manner in which the changes are to be implemented, substantiates and reinforces those concerns.

It is important to remind ourselves of the reason for the changes due in April, of the real motivation behind the community care elements in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. The central purpose of the whole exercise was to unravel the incredible mess that the Government had got themselves into over the ever-increasing cost of income support payments to residents in private care. They wanted to unravel the social and—more importantly, from the Government's point of view—financial consequences of an ill thought out free market experiment in welfare which began in 1981.

That experiment took the DSS budget for supplementary benefit and income support from £11 million when the Government came to power to a staggering £2·4 billion in the current financial year, and reinstated institutional provision as the central plank of Government thinking on the care of old people. The number of places in care homes has shot way beyond any demographic increase in the number of elderly and very elderly people. That experiment shunted people into permanent care when, sometimes at half the cost to the public purse, many of them could have had what they really wanted—services geared to their remaining in their own homes.

The free market experiment encouraged dependence by rewarding moves towards more intensive nursing provision rather than rehabilitation. I have received representations from people whose relatives have moved from their care to the nursing sections of jointly registered homes for one reason only—that those honourable people in the private sector whom the Minister so crudely compared with corrupt local authorities had moved them to obtain more money for caring for them, although they did not need that nursing care.

Neither the DSS nor the Department of Health has addressed those issues. That free market experiment left thousands of old people without a penny to their names, using their own pocket money and begging subsidies from relatives and charities to meet the cost of their care. All right hon. and hon. Members have heard of similar cases, and every case is an individual tragedy. It was a free market experiment which led to the Government being defeated by their own Back Benchers because of the enormous public outcry about its human consequences.

We are here tonight to unravel the consequences of free market ideology being applied to the circumstances of some of our most vulnerable citizens—an unholy mess which has resulted in the gross misuse of millions of pounds of scarce public resources and, more importantly, has caused genuine distress and suffering to people who through no fault of their own are forced to look to the Government for their care and security.

It would be nice to say that the Government have learnt their lesson and that the community care changes will extract us once and for all from the results of the shambles, and that demented old people will no longer be shunted from the middle of London to questionable private placements in the Yorkshire dales. To use the parlance of

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the Select Committee on Health, old ladies in Dulwich will have the chance to stay in Dulwich rather than going to Clacton. The concept of choice should not be simply, "Which private home do you want to enter?" but, "Would you and your carer like to choose for you not to enter a home?" That is real and proper choice, and it is the choice that people want.

The report, however, tells us something different. It tells us quite clearly that, apart from shunting the funding problems on to local authorities, the Government are opting for the status quo. Having launched the free market experiment, in facing the consequences the Government are clearly more concerned with the interests of private providers of care than with the interests of users and carers.

The Special Grant Report (No. 6) says loud and clear that Government policy in the implementation of community care changes is completely provider-led—private provider-led.

Nowhere is that more graphically illustrated than in the calculation of the distribution of the special grant. Half the social security transfer element is being distributed to authorities in proportion to income support expenditure in respect of the numbers of individuals in private residential care and nursing homes in their areas.

Mr. Yeo: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that we offer local authority associations the opportunity for that part of the distribution calculation to be adjusted for migration from the area from which an individual came to the area where they were being cared for?

Mr. Hinchliffe: I was aware that discussions had taken place, but the Government have to answer the central accusation that the entire reform is geared to the status quo—to retaining the problems that we have had for the past decade as a result of the Government's commitment to floating the free market in care, and that those problems will continue after April.

When I expand on the point I was making, the Minister will understand my concerns about the formula. It takes no account whatever of the fact that, under the guise of what the Government have termed community care, older people and the disabled are frequently being placed in permanent settings many miles away from their own home areas. The Minister must recognise that.

Private care homes have developed where entrepreneurs have seen suitable properties, and not necessarily where the local population has presented a demand. Numerous private hotels and boarding houses in coastal resorts in the south-east, for example, have been converted for the care of older people and residents of psychiatric hospitals. In many instances, they have been filled with people from London who have been forced to move from their own homes and home areas due to lack of domiciliary support or suitable accommodation in their own communities.

The fact that the Government have chosen to concentrate future funding in the areas where those people have gone rather than where they have come from compounds the obvious mistakes arising from provision being determined almost entirely by the market. The new funding system clearly assumes that older people or the disabled will continue to be placed often 60 or 70 miles or more away from their home areas and their families. Rather than funding the changed system on the basis of known populations and needs, enabling the development of genuine care in the community, the Government have proved themselves to be concerned more with the continued commercial interests of the market.

The practical consequences will be obvious to those right hon. and hon. Members who have considered what the figures in the distribution of April's funding mean for their constituencies. For some inner-London boroughs, currently with minimal care beds, the opportunity to develop alternatives to sending people many miles from home are frankly non-existent. It is no real consolation for an older or disabled person in inner London to be told that they now have a choice of which home they wish to enter when, as a result of Government policy, the choice is Clacton, Brighton or 200 miles away in the Yorkshire dales.

It is not just in inner London that the nonsense of funding distribution arrangements occur. In my own area in west Yorkshire, we can compare the positions of two similar adjacent local authorities, Bradford and Leeds. I am not making a party political point because, fortunately, both councils are Labour-controlled.

Bradford has 80,000 people of pensionable age, 30,000 of whom are over 75; Leeds has 130,000 people of pensionable age, of whom 50,000 are over 75; yet the Government's funding system gives Bradford £60 for each pensioner and £158 for each one over 75, while Leeds gets £38 and £101 respectively. Any objective assessment would conclude that Leeds is likely to need greater community care resources, but the Government's formula rewards Bradford simply because that area has more properties suitable for conversion into care homes. It is as simple as that.

Conservative Members may be heavily into Victorian values, but is it right that the location of mill owners' mansions in the 1800s should provide the basis for community care funding more than a century later? Is it right that many of my constituents and those of many other hon. Members should continue to be placed away from their home areas because the Government's funding system is, frankly, plain daft?

Having dealt with the sublime, I will move on to the ridiculous. As the Special Grant Report (No. 6) indicates, in addition to basing their calculations of 50 per cent. of the special grant on the random location of existing private care beds, the Government are determined that 85 per cent. of the social security transfer element mentioned by the Minister must be spent on purchasing care within what they call the independent sector. The fact that the Government backed off their original intention for 75 per cent. of the overall funding to be committed in that way is evidence of the fact that there might just be someone left at the Department of Health with a grip, albeit limited, on reality.

No Opposition Member objects in any way to attempts to develop independent community care provision which has relevance to advancing the rights of users and carers and genuinely improves their choice, but does not the vast bulk of independent sector care, even after the Government have spent sizeable amounts trying to stimulate domiciliary provision, consist of private residential and nursing homes? Would it not have made more sense to be sure there were independent sector

alternatives to institutional care in every area before requiring the expenditure of that proportion of the funding?

I appeal to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to examine the practicalities of the requirements for such expenditure in their constituencies. They will probably find, as I do, that it positively obstructs the ability of local people to address after April local priorities in terms of community care needs.

To be parochial for a moment, the principal agenda item in terms of community care needs in my constituency is a radical improvement in day care facilities for young adults with learning difficulties. I have had numerous meetings with desperate parents who, once full-time education ends, frequently find themselves left alone to cope. The local authority recognises that the excellent adult training centre at Lawefield lane in my constituency has insufficient resources to meet the demands. The local authority simply does not have the funding to expand the centre and employ more staff. April should have been about meeting the needs of such young people and their parents, but the funding formula prevents the local authority from tackling such urgent priorities in the most obvious way—by paying for the expansion of the existing centre and additional staff. Instead, it will have to buy from a frankly non-existent private sector because the Government put ideology before common sense.

The independent sector may eventually devise a scheme to help, but it could take years. In the meantime, parents and their sons and daughters are left to struggle. Frankly, I do not think that that is good enough, and how it all fits in with the concept of choice is beyond me. The choice of my constituents is improved public provision. What about the right to choose local authority care and good quality local authority public services? Where is the choice when people no longer have a local authority home in the area in which they live because it has been closed?

The other side of the Government's agenda is all too clear. While they positively discriminate towards so-called independent providers—to the obvious detriment, in some respects, of users and carers—they discriminate against public provision. It is right to apply the same standards to local authority residential care as we do to the private sector, but the same Government who require those consistent standards then prevent local authorities from making the investment needed to upgrade their establishments.

What we have is a back-door method of closing council homes and reducing the choice about which the Government talk so much. The narrow application of the concept of choice means that people entering local authority care homes are excluded from receiving the new residential allowance. That is blatant dogmatic discrimination by a Government who are attempting to prop up and stimulate the private care market through the systematic destruction of public sector provision.

What choice will there be after April for those with drug and alcohol problems, in the light of the Government's decision to renege on the ring fencing of funding for drug and alcohol projects? As projects close, the choice for sufferers will be a police cell, prison or the streets; and for some, unfortunately, it will be the mortuary.

Mr. Yeo: Can the hon. Gentleman explain how any of the policies that we are debating will prevent local authorities from buying any services that they consider appropriate to the needs of the drug and alcohol abusers? Where is the obstacle?

Mr. Hinchliffe: If the hon. Gentleman lives in the real world, he will recognise that, when authorities are taking decisions on the expenditure of restricted sums of money and the choice is between, say, the placement of an elderly lady in a care home and the placing of an alcoholic or drug addict, it is a good bet that they will go for the elderly lady: in some people's eyes it is an issue of who is deserving and who is not. Is the Minister aware that a survey of 67 drug and alcohol agencies in the voluntary sector providing 1,300 bed spaces shows that 70 per cent. will start losing income in April and 46 per cent. will no longer be viable by the end of July 1993?

I am conscious of the fact that we are talking today without knowing what the outcome of the application for the judicial review will be at 10.30 on Monday morning. It is an absolute disgrace that the Government have been dragged into the courts on an issue which any human being can see is of great concern. I was in the Chamber when a former Secretary of State gave a clear commitment to ring fencing. I remember the hon. Gentleman's words well. He gave a commitment—I stress this point—on the back of huge pressure from his Back Benchers, including hon. Members who are here today. The Government's logic on this issue is frankly beyond me, and beyond belief.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and I understand it. Basically, he is saying that any human being would take the view which he takes. Surely, "any human being" includes local councillors, and therefore local councillors could well take that decision if they chose to do so. In Kent, the local authority has chosen to ring-fence for a year, and we shall see what happens at the end of that 12 months. To push the decision up from the local authority to central Government merely on the basis that somehow central Government are human beings and local authorities are not seems to fly in the face of much of what I have often heard the hon. Gentleman say.

Mr. Hinchliffe: In a sense, the hon. Member for Mid-Kent has missed the real problem with these projects. He will know that many of the projects in London and in areas such as Leeds, which I know well—the detoxification centre—and other similar excellent organisations in Bradford and elsewhere, take in people who are not residents of the local authority in the area involved. The key issue is getting those other local authorities, which may have no real knowledge of the work of organisations such as the alcohol recovery project in London, to take seriously the work that they do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and I spent some time visiting the projects and looking at some of the issues which people involved with them are worried about at present. I have seen one or two of the people who are benefiting from the present policy.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Does my hon. Friend accept that the dispute about the funding of services for drug addicts and alcoholics underlines the Government's inconsistency in the policy? The agencies which provide the care want precisely the same stability that the Government have undertaken with regard to private residential care for elderly people—that is, for the money

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to go where the people currently live. Does not that reveal that the Government are applying different standards to private residential care provided for elderly people and to voluntary organisations providing care and rehabilitation for drug and alcohol misusers?

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point to the inconsistency between the Government's policy on this and their policy on the so-called independent sector providers to whom she refered. When I visited one of the projects recently, I met a woman who was receiving treatment for a drink problem. That woman has two children who are currently in care, and I know that the work that that project is doing will enable her to return home and be with her children.

If the Government's current illogical position is based on attempting to save money, it is completely the wrong way round. By failing to ring-fence those projects, resulting in the closure of a number of projects along the lines predicted in the survey, the Government are forcing up public expenditure on the prison service, the hospital service and young children in care, regardless of the human consequences.

Even at this late stage, I sincerely hope that the Minister will have a rethink during the debate. I am well aware that there is equal concern on the Conservative Back Benches about the way in which the Government have gone back on their previous commitments. I urge the Minister to consider why, over the past few years, the term "community care" has become in a sense a byword for neglect. In many people's eyes, it is an excuse for the Government to make savings and to release resources for the use of the Exchequer.

The Government should realise that, for many people, the Ben Silcock case raises questions other than those which were subsequently addressed by the Secretary of State. Such questions included the right to asylum facilities within the community, not locked away from the community; proper after-care for mentally ill people who leave hospital; joint funding for community care plans which does not taper down to nothing, as so much joint funding does; strategic planning involving everyone, including the user and his or her family.

The Minister used to work for the Spastics Society. I am sure that he will have seen the report which came out yesterday, produced jointly by the Royal College of Nursing and the Spastics Society. The report made it clear that the process of strategic planning had been made far more difficult by the deliberate erection of barriers and the creation of competition between arms of health and care services—for example, with the advent of trusts and the new health market.

When the 1990 Act was going through the House, some of us pointed out that its health and community care elements were contradictory. Millions of people are now looking to April, desperately hoping for answers to some of the problems that I have outlined and hoping for urgent change, but what hope is there for the new system when local authorities under both Labour and Conservative control point to a huge shortfall in the funding contained in the report before us today? I have talked to senior Conservative councillors who are deeply worried about what the changes will mean for people in their areas.

What are the prospects for the implementation of the new system when, as the Association of Directors of Social Services demonstrated recently, the vast majority of local authorities expect real cuts in their social services budgets in the new financial year? It became clear in the Health Select Committee recently that the Government had no plans to monitor the implementation of the reforms, so is it any wonder that users and carers—I meet people in various groups on a regular basis—are asking whether the Government really care? The impression is being given that, frankly, they do not.

What could have been achieved if, instead of the privatised welfare experiment in the 1980s and early 1990s the Government had been prepared to think out the use of the nearly £10 billion being spent on what Griffiths called perverse incentives to enter private institutional care? What could have been achieved if, instead of undermining the ability of local authorities and voluntary organisations to offer alternatives to institutional care, the Government had been prepared to invest in what people really want, which is help to remain independent rather than incentives to give up the ghost? What could have been achieved if concepts such as that underpinning the independent living fund had been developed and extended instead of being allowed to degenerate into the present shambles?

A few weeks away from April, severely disabled people, voluntary organisations, local authorities and, it seems, the Government have not the least idea how the new system will operate. The dogmatic obsession with the market means that the community care funding contained in the report will largely miss its real target. The Government have allowed the private institutional tail to wag the community care dog, and the real losers will be the users and carers who so urgently need a radically different agenda.

5.23 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): As we have been reminded, the report is another—and perhaps, before April, the last—step towards the implementation of an Act that was passed by the House more than two years ago. I recall sitting with several other hon. Members who are in the Chamber this evening on the Committee that considered the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. My recollection is that, while there was a good deal of controversy about the national health service part of the Bill, there was general support for the philosophy behind community care, as set out in the Bill. There might have been discussions about the detail, but there was general support in the Committee and the House for the idea of community care.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) spent so much time demonstrating the antipathy to the private sector for which he is well known. It was perhaps hardly surprising.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a great deal of respect in terms of his commitment to social services issues, for giving way. My antipathy is not to the private sector: it is to a Government who distort the allocation of funding in social services in the direction of the private sector, at the expense of the public sector and care in the voluntary sector, which is often dependent on council support. I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that point.

Mr. Sims: I will simply modify my remarks and say that the hon. Gentleman's prejudice clouds his assessment of Government policy.

When the Bill received its Third Reading, I was disappointed that we were told, and had not been told until then, that although the NHS part of the Bill would be implemented a few months later, implementation of the community care part of the Act would be deferred for a couple of years. Having said that, I am bound to say that the preparations for community care have proved extremely complex. A great deal of work needed to be done and has been done. Indeed, credit for the successful preparation for the Act is due in no small measure to the diligence of several officials in the Department of Health who have been extremely busy issuing guidance, holding seminars and so on about how the Act is to be carried into effect.

Perhaps I could also compliment the community care task force, which has done an effective job and was a useful idea. It sent people with knowledge of the detail of community care out to local authorities to assist them in making their preparations. Perhaps in his reply my hon. Friend the Minister will say a word about the future of the task force. There seems to be a question mark over whether it will continue after 1 April. I should have thought that, having shown its value in the preparatory stage, something akin to the task force, if not the same body, might continue, at least in a fire-fighting capacity. It would serve a useful purpose.

Special credit must go to all the people in local authorities and other organisations who have been responsible for putting the community care policy into practice. Any hon. Member who has had the opportunity to discuss the matter with local authority officers, officials in local voluntary organisations and so on will realise the enormous amount of work that has been done in preparation for 1 April, over and above people's normal duties, which, in the case of social services departments, are extensive. The success or otherwise of the community care provisions will depend on what happens locally. It will depend on organisations, local authorities, health authorities, the private sector, the voluntary sector and the individuals involved working together. We must wish them well as they progress towards what I suppose we might describe as C Day.

The report that we are discussing arrives not before time. It has been difficult for local authorities to make their detailed plans without knowing what central Government funding they will receive. They were told the global sum in October. They had some information about the funding, but only in this report do they know the final figures.

Indeed, I was with my own director of social services only this morning. He had not yet seen the report, so I was able to hand him a copy. He found that my borough was to receive £103,000 less than the earlier figures suggested. I suppose that, in budgets of millions, that is not significant, but it demonstrates the difficulties under which local authorities have had to work. I shall not go too far in comparing the relationship between local authorities and central Government with the way in which commerce and industry would work in similar circumstances.

Part of the grant recognises the extra costs that local authorities will incur in implementing community care: that is distinct from the transfer of the income support element. If the policy works out as we all hope that it will, the amount of social care in the community will increase and funds to cover that will be needed. The amount of health care in the community will also increase. If we are giving local authorities extra funds to meet their extra costs, may we know what extra funds the health authorities will receive to meet their share? Should we not expect, in due course, a report giving details of a special grant for them?

My hon. Friend the Minister will not be surprised if I draw attention to the basis on which the grant was calculated and to which the hon. Member for Wakefield has already referred. According to paragraph 3(a) of the report,

"50 per cent. of the social security transfer element has been distributed between authorities in proportion to Income Support expenditure in respect of individuals in residential care and nursing homes in their area."

I think that the hon. Member for Wakefield used the word "private", which does not appear in the report. Perhaps that is another illustration of his prejudice. Not all residential and nursing homes are private; some are run by voluntary organisations and others by local authorities —not necessarily in their own local authority area.

The point is, however, that the money is to be distributed according to where the recipients live, rather than where they come from. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, that must disadvantage certain areas—for example, parts of both inner and outer London—from which a number of recipients of income support have moved to Kent, Sussex and Surrey, not necessarily as a result of compulsion. The authorities involved will receive a larger share of the income support tranche than they would have otherwise, while authorities in inner and outer London will lose.

My authority estimates that some 400,000 elderly people have moved out of the borough into homes in areas such as those that I have cited. A large amount of money has probably been lost because of the use of the formula that we are discussing.

Mr. Rowe: That important point should not be confined to community care. In the Medway health authority area, for instance, we had to struggle with an unsatisfactory funding arrangement which was weighted excessively towards older people moving into areas such as Brighton.

Mr. Sims: I was not suggesting that the problem was confined to inner and suburban London; the hon. Member for Wakefield mentioned other areas that are affected, and I appreciate that the same thing happens elsewhere.

In an intervention, my hon. Friend the Minister made an interesting reference to migration figures being considered. That was news to me and I hope that he will be able to expand on it, either during the debate or later. He knows of my interest. I wish to place on record my appreciation of the way in which he received a deputation from the London boroughs, which I led, and of the sympathetic hearing that he gave that deputation. I hope that he will be able to go some way towards improving the formula to remove the current sense of injustice—if not now, before this time next year.

Mr. Hinchliffe: It would be wrong to give the impression that every inner-London borough has suffered as a result of the funding system. Would the hon. Gentleman care to speculate, for instance, on why his

[Mr. Hinchliffe]

authority, Bromley, receives £91 for each person over the age of 75, while for some reason Wandsworth receives £144·07 per person?

Mr. Sims: No, I would not. I shall merely say that that increases the sense of injustice and suggests that the formula is, to say the least, capable of improvement.

The question that inevitably arises, and will continue to arise, is whether the total grant, however it is distributed, will be enough to enable authorities to implement the policies set out in the community care legislation. The answer is, of course, that we simply do not know: we are entering unknown territory. As the implementation of the Act unfolds, cases will come to light, and will be assessed, with results on which we can only speculate. We do not really know the extent to which needs will be revealed, or what will be involved in trying to meet them.

That leads us to the problem encapsulated in the expression "unmet need". The dilemma, as I see it, is this: under the Act, a local authority will be required to assess each case, to specify the needs that the assessment reveals and then to meet those needs. It may not be able to do so, however. The chronically sick and disabled persons legislation, for instance, imposes an absolute obligation to meet the needs that are revealed.

Ideally, an assessment should be agreed with relatives —and, of course, with the user in particular. I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has arrived in the Chamber: she was good enough to commend my local authority's practice of securing the user's agreement to the assessment, along with his or her signature on the document. Nevertheless, the guidance now being given to local authorities is somewhat ambivalent, suggesting that it may not be wise to specify actual needs in an assessment because the authority concerned might then be open to legal challenge.

I hestitate to use of the word "deception", but it seems that assessments could be misleading. My anxiety is increased by the evidence given to the Select Committee by officials from the Department—this relates to what was said by the hon. Member for Wakefield. The officials seemed to suggest that, although the progress of community care would be monitored and some statistics would be collected, statistics relating to unmet need would not be collected. That rather negates the whole principle that community care should be driven by needs rather than resources.

During the passage of the legislation, many of us said, time and again, "This is all very fine, but will the resources be there to meet the needs?" We were assured that the resources would be there, and we have been assured again today that the report is part of that provision; but how can the Department know that the resources are adequate without having information about unmet need?

I understand the difficulty. It is desirable to specify the need, and it is also realistic to accept that it may not always be possible to meet that need. We all know that budgets —even if they are twice the figure that we are discussing —are finite. There could be circumstances in which it would be impossible to meet every need. Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider ways to resolve that difficulty? Is it practicable to have a genuine and open assessment of need and the extent to which it can be met? We should be straightforward about the matter and say to the users, "This is our assessment of your need and this is what, ideally, you should have—A, B, C, D and E—but we can currently offer you only, A, B, C and D. We accept that, in time, we should be able to help you in other ways."

I think that the users and relatives will accept that funds are not unlimited, but we should all know where we stand. The local authority should have it on record and know the exact position. It should know not only the needs that it is meeting, but the needs that it has been unable to meet. Those statistics could then be collected at Richmond house and my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers will be able to see whether community care is working.

Perhaps in a few years' time we shall hear that everything is going smoothly and the resources have proved adequate—I hope so. The resources may be adequate in some sectors, but inadequate in others. There may be room for adjustment or increase, but at least that would be a fairer and more realistic system than the present apparent fudging and uncertainty.

Of course, there are still worries—there are bound to be —about exactly how community care will work, particularly the interface between health authorities and local authorities, notwithstanding any agreements that may have been made. There is a distinction between social care and health care, how each one is defined and where they overlap. Given good will and common sense, I am sure that those difficulties can be overcome.

There are uncertainties—with only a few weeks to go, some are inevitable—but some of them could be clarified. For example, what happens when someone is in a home where the fees are higher than his income support and he receives a top-up, which then ceases? What is the local authority's responsibility? I have a letter from my local assistant care director which refers to that dilemma:

> "The verbal advice from the Department of Health is that a resident in receipt of Income Support and who therefore has preserved rights after the community care changes, whose top up from whatever source is withdrawn after that time, must seek a cheaper placement. If no such placement is available they may apply to the local authority to supplement their Income Support allowance. The Department of Health is however stating that the resident must move placement in order that local authorities are not just used as an automatic source of funding."

The problem is that people left, right and centre could withdraw their top-up knowing that the local authority will automatically take over. Clearly, we must guard against that, but it seems that there could be cases where the withdrawal of the top-up could be due to unavoidable circumstances such as a relative dying. It would be harsh if someone who had been in a residential or nursing home for many years were then required to move for the reasons that I have described. I do not necessarily expect my hon. Friend the Minister to give a straightforward answer today, but I hope that he will clarify the position, certainly before 1 April.

Ms. Jowell: The issue of the shortfall between income support limits and the actual cost of residential care is, rightly, a source of enormous worry. It is one sector of expenditure where the local authorities and local authority associations feel that the Government have failed to heed the evidence of the scale of the difficulty nationally. Local authorities calculate that the national shortfall is £73 million. That shortfall is currently made up by relatives, charities and a range of top-up sources, but could, after 1 April, become the responsibility of the local authority. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would

be a source of tremendous instability in a new system if such a large amount were not underwritten by the Government from the outset.

Mr. Sims: It would be unreasonable to expect the Government to write a blank cheque for the sort of figure given by the hon. Lady, but it would be helpful to have some clarification about what the position would be given the circumstances that I have outlined. It would be reasonable for the local authority to have some discretion in the matter.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): In a debate on a statutory instrument in Committee yesterday, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), said that he and his Department were seeking to draft amendments to section 43 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to ensure that some categories of residence received top-up support from local authorities. He said that he could not say yet what those categories would be and that that was a matter for the Department of Health. The Minister could help today's debate, because yesterday it was placed on record that active consideration is being given to the issue by the Department.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing me up to date on the latest state of play on that issue and I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend the Minister later.

Although I have voiced some reservations and some of the understandable concerns felt by those who will be implementing community care, I welcome the report—although I believe that it has come a little late. I hope that my hon. Friend's Department will watch carefully as the community care policy unfolds. I hope that the Minister will keep himself fully informed and, where action seems appropriate, will take it without delay.

5.48 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Liberal Democrats welcome many of the Government's ideas on community care, many of which are progressive. In the main, the philosophy that underlies their ideas is correct. Unfortunately, the report will not lead to enough money being provided properly to implement the Government's philosophy. I say that because social services departments of local authorities throughout the country are struggling to put together next year's budgets with inadequate finance. I declare an interest as an elected county councillor in Gloucestershire who serves on the social services committee of that authority.

More than 80 per cent. of directors of social services in England predict that their budgets will be reduced in April, which is the time when they are due to take on important new responsibilities for community care. According to a survey conducted by the Association of Directors of Social Services, 81·7 per cent. of local authorities which responded to the questionnaire seemed set to cut spending on social services when their budgets are finalised in April. A further 8·5 per cent. expect a standstill budget.

The consequences for the users of social services will be immense. For example, they may be subject to additional charges for services such as home helps and meals on wheels. Crucial inspection staff who are required to monitor standards in residential homes will not be appointed. Residential homes and day centres for elderly and mentally handicapped people could be closed. Additional staff required to implement the community care reforms and to respond to rising levels of social need will not be brought on to the social services payroll.

According to the president of the ADSS, Peter Smallridge, the news for social services coming from the results of the survey carried out by the association is extremely gloomy. Members of the association warned last year of the danger that, despite ring-fenced money being made available for community care this April, the impact of Government policies towards local government expenditure as a whole would drive many councils—country as well as urban—to make cuts in other crucial areas of the social services budget. That seems to be what is taking place.

The great flaw in the report is that part of the calculation uses our old friend standard spending assessment. I shall not rehearse all the arguments about SSA because they were advanced in the debate last week. Even the Government seem to admit now, however, that SSA is not right. I welcome the Secretary of State's commitment to review the system, which seems to imply that even he thinks that it is not perfect. The Government say that SSA is not a statement of need but merely a method of distributing a predetermined amount of money.

Gloucestershire county council, on which I serve, has carried out a detailed survey of existing residents in care who receive benefit. The director of social services, Deryk Mead, to whom I spoke yesterday and this morning, tells me that the survey shows that there is a shortfall of £1·4 million. I listened carefully to the Minister when he talked about rising standards. I would like to see rising standards, of course, but the financial arrangements seem to mean that local authorities will be obliged to try to force down fees. Many people believe that that will reduce standards and could lead to the financial collapse of some private care homes.

The proposed settlement does not reflect what has been happening in recent years. It seems that it allows for no increase in numbers. Nor does it allow for an increase in fees. When the Minister responds, I hope that he will tell the House how many people the Government estimate will enter care this year, bearing in mind the rapid increase in numbers over the past 10 years.

If local authorities have to find additional moneys for fees, there will be no funds to improve day care, respite care or home help. We have heard the views of the ADSS and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about underfunding. I heard the Minister say that, if councils want to spend more on community care, they can draw on their own funds. Many local authorities, including Gloucestershire county council, wish to spend more on that form of care. That is why last night Gloucestershire's county councillors unanimously approved a budget—it was proposed by Conservative councillors—to exceed the capping limit by £10·3 million.

I ask the Minister to reflect on the figures that are set out in the report. I ask him and his right hon. Friends to ensure that when local authority representatives speak to the Ministers who are responsible for their expenditure after they have exceeded their capping limit, Ministers will respond to the needs of the local community and to the councillors who have listened to the people whom they represent. I ask them to allow local authorities to spend what is needed to provide proper and decent high-level services in those areas.

5.54 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): This is a rather exciting day. I strongly approve of the policy that has been presented to us. As it is set out—in theory—it is excellent. Everything will depend, of course, on how it works out in practice. We all know that. If those who are in need of help from social services are assessed on the basis of their needs and the needs of their carers, we are taking a huge step forward.

It took a long time to complete the sterile debates in which we engaged during the health service reforms. We spent much time arguing about whether resources were adequate. I declare now that resources will never be adequate. There is no possibility of meeting all the needs that it would be so easy to define.

I spent an extraordinarily uncomfortable but pro[illegible]le morning today as a participant in the Kilroy prog[illegible]e. I feel like a new form of graffiti—"Kilroy, I was there." He had brought together a remarkable collection of people who were carers and some of those for whom they were caring. As I was the only representative of the governing party, it was predictable that any pretensions that I may have had in the past to be a supporter of carers in a wide variety of different ways vanished like snow off a dyke. I was instantly and continuously pilloried throughout the programme.

Nevertheless, the extraordinary courage, devotion and strength of purpose that carers of all ages and stages of life display in looking after others is remarkably clear. I feel that it is not within the scope of any Government to create at public expense the sort of total support system that is delivered for about 85 per cent. of people in receipt of care by individual carers. I feel, however, that they are entitled, and will increasingly expect and demand, the relatively minor support that makes it possible for them to continue. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say how much he valued the provision of respite care, to take but one example.

A recent report—it was the basis of the Kilroy programme this morning—makes it clear that the preference of many carers is that support should be based on their own homes. They feel that the people for whom they are caring should not be sent away. I am sure that there are occasions, however, when the client, as it were, wants to be sent away. I have examples in my extended family where people have been going for several years on what they regard as a holiday. That works well, but we need to take tremendous note of the fact that carers look for respite within their own homes. I hope that the imaginative provision of the new community care legislation which states that the needs of the carer must be taken into account will prove to be a spur to imaginative and creative provision.

I have a huge regard for the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe). For a brief time only, before he was translated to higher things, he was chairman of the parliamentary panel for the personal social services, and his concern and devotion to the provision of social services is well known. However, I did not altogether recognise the scene that he painted, and in one respect in particular.

I may be wrong, but my understanding is that the Government intend to provide financial stability for those who are already in care and that gradually, as local authorities make new care plans, the automatic, or virtually automatic, sending of large numbers of people into residential care will stop, as it has already begun to cease in Kent.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments, although I expected something to follow on from them. Let me clarify my concern and that of the Labour party on the issue that he is addressing. The 85 per cent. requirement in respect of the independent sector will, because of the lack of independent alternatives to residential and nursing care, lead to people going into care, not on the basis of their assessed needs but because of the requirement to spend that money. If there are no domiciliary alternatives and their development is prevented, there is no choice but to continue placing people in care, often away from where they live.

Mr. Rowe: That is what I understood the hon. Gentleman to say, but it is nonsense. There is no reason why social services departments, through contracts with the independent sector, should not summon into being alternative provision. That is what is happening in my local authority.

My local authority is not typical because it has spent the past two years developing care and it is fair to say that it has been thinking about the development of community care for much longer than that. Much of the pre-thinking that went into the legislation was based on what was happening in Kent. One consequence is that it is busily engaged in inventing contracts of a sort which will summon into being different ways of delivering different kinds of care.

I take one example. I think that I am right in saying that Kent no longer has any long-term residential homes. They are now linked service centres which are used as a basis for a wide variety of provision including day and respite care. People go there for the management of their domicilliary services, and so on. Such a wide and imaginative variety of resources will grow, and so they should. That is the way forward.

It is true that at the moment Kent has some 835 homes providing 17,000 places with a budget of £268 million and employing 20,000 people. Many of them are shaking in their shoes because they see that the emergence of community care will put a number of them at risk, and so it should. But instead of sitting back and going out of business because they cannot think what to do, the more imaginative home owners are already beginning to create other ways of delivering services.

For example, homes are becoming resource centres for carers and people use them on a daily basis for the provision of specialist teams to work in the community, whether to carry out simple carpentry tasks, which is often one of the things that people living on their own need——

Ms Jowell: My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) was referring to the fact that, while there is nothing to stop the private sector developing domiciliary care—some have already developed what were loss leaders which have had to be closed because of the impact of the recession on residential care homes—many local authorities are having to cut their home care services to meet the Government's spending limits while having to maintain existing patterns of spend on the independent residential care sector for the next year.

Therefore, although there is no reason in theory why the private domiciliary sector should not grow and

flourish, the Government have created specific obstacles to its development in the short term, while forcing many local authorities to cut their existing home care services. Domiciliary care is severely at risk, certainly in the short term.

Mr. Rowe: I understand that local authorities vary greatly in the way in which they run their affairs and in the demographic and other distributions with which they have to cope. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister said at the beginning, the amount of money in real terms being spent on social services has rocketed in recent years. In some cases, the turnover—that is hardly the right word—in residential homes is rapid. People may die fairly swiftly or have to move into nursing homes or into other forms of disposition. When that happens, it will be the end of that perverse incentive which Griffiths was so anxious to remove and we shall see a new generation of forms of care and support. Certainly that is what I hope to see.

An area that I believe to be of central significance to the satisfactory delivery of community care is the liaison between the health service and the social services. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) made an important contribution on that point which I wish to underline.

In that provision there are two elements, the first of which is general practice. It is fundamental that general practitioners should collaborate in every possible way with the social services. In Kent, the chances of that happening have been enormously improved by the development of a sophisticated computer package developed by the social services so that every care manager in Kent should have access to the database for his clients. What is more, a simplified version is being made available to every general practitioner in Kent so that they can summon up, using a carefully guarded confidential password, that part of the assessment and database which refers to their patients and to which they should have access.

Nothing ever works on machinery alone, but there is no doubt that equipment is enormously helpful. If that newly pioneered programme works as it is intended to work, it should enormously improve the liaison between the general practitioner and the social services manager. One of the most encouraging features of the NHS reforms has been the astonishing increase in the number of staff being deployed from doctors' surgeries. I do not have the figures for later than 1990, but they have gone up from 37,000 in 1980 to 78,000 in 1990. Many of those——

Mr. McCartney: Consultants and tax consultants.

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, shouts, "Consultants and tax consultants." If he cares to look at the figures for nurses, for therapists and even, in a growing number of general practice surgeries, social workers, he will see that the general practice surgery is becoming a central point for the delivery of care based in the community.

I want not rivalry between services and GPs but collaboration on that basis. May I say to the Minister, in passing and in public, what I have said to him before in private: that when we can get away from the constriction of a one-year contract on which it is extraordinarily difficult to plan, we should develop free-standing consortia of therapists, whether they be physiotherapists, occupational or speech therapists. Such consortia would be able to deliver services to the four purchasers which have now come into the market: schools, fund-holding practices, the health service and the social services. If they do not create a strong free-standing organisation of their own, therapists are liable to find themselves at the bottom of everybody's expenditure queue. For a whole range of people in the community, it is very often the services of therapists which are the most cost-effective way of helping them.

The document makes no reference to volunteers, of course, but I believe passionately that we underestimate and under-use volunteers and the potential for them. It has to be remembered that one of the biggest single demographic changes in the country will result, in the next 10 years, in literally millions of people retiring from their principal occupations with 30 or more years of active life ahead of them. Someone who retires from his principal occupation between the ages of 55 and 60 will be active for another 30 years. What is he going to do? Unless those people are enabled and encouraged, in large numbers, to do things for other people, they will themselves become clients of the social services because they will be bored and will find themselves falling heir to a variety of different ills.

The Prime Minister says that we need to release the tremendous resources in our people; this is one area in which we need a serious, well-designed and effective way of organising volunteers. Volunteers are one of the best ways of monitoring the quality of services. Volunteers going in and out of homes, going in and out of individuals' homes, reading to people and doing their shopping, are as good a check on the way in which the statutory services are delivering community care as any other mechanism of which we can think. It is important that we should do that.

I say to the Minister that community care will inevitably require some residential care. That residential care, which has so often been the scene of hideous scandals and which the Warner report has identified as extraordinarily under-trained, requires a substantial improvement in training, recruitment, monitoring and promotion of residential staff. There has to be a much greater interchange between residential and non-residential staff. There have to be ways for staff to be encouraged to move from one residential post to another so they do not get stale and dug into various Chinese or other practices.

In that fight, the national vocational qualification is a huge card to play. I am extremely pleased at the way in which forward-looking social services departments, like that of Kent, are making use of the national vocational qualification as a way of authenticating or accrediting the skills that many middle-aged people bring, perhaps from the experience of caring for their own people, to residential care. I hope that the Minister will give every possible boost to the expansion of that programme.

6.15 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I join other hon. Members who have talked about the popularity of a policy of community care. It makes sense—and by and large it is what people want as they grow older or experience disability—to live at home and for those friends and relatives who provide most of our community care to be properly supported in the job that they do in caring for them. However, users of community care services and their carers also emphasise other aspects of community care beyond just social care and health services.

[Ms. Tessa Jowell]

They stress the importance of being properly housed. Too often, community care is seen only in terms of what the social services department or voluntary social care organisations can provide. The fact that a person has a home is taken for granted, yet housing is an integral part of proper community care. So, too, is an adequate income. Given that so many disabled people rely on social security benefits as their major source of income, proper information about their entitlement to benefits and maximising the take-up of benefits to which they are entitled is critical. So, too, is the issue of transport and mobility. Being able to get around and to make choices about what one does each day depends on being physically able to leave home. That is what community care means, as described by disabled people and their carers.

In considering community care policy and its funding, it is also worth considering what makes good community care for disabled people and their carers. Often, it is not the volume of service, or who provides it. What matters is that the service is delivered with certainty, is flexible and takes account of the vast array of changing and different needs, that it is reliable and that people come when they say they will come.

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Lady is making a very powerful point, with which I wholly agree. Will she recall that there is at present before the House the Disabled Persons (Services) Bill, the purpose of which is to enable those who are particularly severely disabled but who wish to hire and fire some of their own staff to be able to have the cash to do that, rather than to have to get staff through some third party such as a local authority?

Ms. Jowell: Certainly disabled people and the organisations representing them will welcome the opportunity to have the cash to buy the care and support that they need. When I visited the centre for independent living in Boston some years ago, I was struck by the different approach to disability. That centre ran what was, essentially, a consultancy on the employment and management of teams of staff who supported disabled people, who then determined how the staff could be deployed so that they could go about their daily business in the way that they chose. That really represents freedom and freedom of choice for disabled people. The principles addressed by the hon. Gentleman are absolutely right and will be welcomed by disabled people.

This is also, perhaps, the moment at which to emphasise the great distress and anger among disabled people at the Government's decision to wind up the independent living fund, and their failure so far to provide any adequate explanation of how the alternative arrangements will be made. The independent living fund was probably the most popular benefit available to disabled people, precisely because it offered, on the basis of assessment, a degree of choice as to the nature of the care that people received and the support that they purchased for themselves, so that they could make their own choices about how they lived in their community.

It is very much to the Government's shame that they have chosen to wind up the fund in the context of the introduction of legislation which is about choice for disabled people, and it flies in the face of the choices which disabled people would themselves make. If disabled people were asked whether they wanted retention of the independent living fund or replacement along the lines that the Government propose, I guarantee that they would give the fund an overwhelming vote of confidence.

Returning briefly to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, of course we want to see an end to the loophole whereby well-intentioned local authorities have cash available to disabled people but have had to use a voluntary organisation or a third party as a conduit.

The essential tests against which we should be judging the provisions before the House today are that services are reliable—that the promised bus actually arrives—and that people have the opportunity to use services of high quality which they do not feel demean them as users. It is to our eternal shame as a country that so many disabled people and elderly people are being cared for in residential and other settings which none of us would choose for our families and which none of us who manage the services would choose. They are services for people who are unable to exercise any choice. If the implementation of this policy achieves the eradication of any stigma associated with using community care services, it will be a great tribute to those throughout the country who have worked to make the policy succeed. That is the important test.

It is extraordinarily difficult to achieve the complex objectives of the policy in practice. Described simply as the desirability of looking after elderly people in their own homes, providing support to carers, and responding to need rather than just delivering services, it all sounds incredibly straightforward. However, the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and other hon. Members have sat with me on the Select Committee during recent deliberations, and we have heard from local authority associations, regional health authorities and the social services inspectorate about the complexity of turning local authorities inside out and getting them to change course from being providers of services to developing the capacity to respond to people's needs.

I well remember a recent conversation with an elderly lady who was being assessed for community care services and whose needs were therefore being judged. She said, "I know that I am coping if my windows are clean." It is being able to meet sensitively that kind of very personal test of competence which is so terribly important to so many elderly people. The capacity to do that is one proof of how far local authorities can shift from being Henry Ford-like providers of services—on any terms so long as it is meals on wheels or a bit of residential care—to addressing the complex task of meeting the multiplicity of individual needs, which may include a preference for having clean windows.

Behind the general consensus on the desirability of community care, there are enormous tensions and the fault lines are beginning to open. It is around the opening of these fault lines that the consensus which saw this policy, which is now being implemented, through the last Session of Parliament is breaking down. It is very hard to reconcile the Government's protestations about the importance of choice and their determination to meet people's needs rather than simply deliver services with the increasing debate about the adequacy of the money being made available, and the glaring discrepancies which have been revealed between the estimates of the local authority associations representing both political persuasions and the calculations made by the Government.

We must ensure not necessarily that agreement is reached at this stage on the precise figures, but that the Government's mind and, perhaps more importantly, their cheque book remains open, so that they can come to the rescue not just of local authorities, but of those elderly people who may be caught towards the end of this financial year with a local authority which cannot buy any more residential care for them, regardless of their need. We want an assurance from the Minister today that the Government's mind is open and that they will accept the evidence of underfunding as the first, very tricky year of implementation proceeds.

The second area of great concern, to which I have already referred briefly, is that of the loss of the independent living fund. Again, we look forward to hearing from the Minister just how the promise of choice is reconciled with the decision to withdraw a fund which for so many disabled people has represented what might be the only, rather limited, opportunity to exercise choice.

We must also address the real risk that an imperfect and inadequate system, led by social security, within which people's entitlement was clear, is being replaced by a system which relies very heavily on discretion and in relation to which individual service users and carers will have no redress and no right of appeal. I am terribly concerned that elderly and disabled people throughout the country may become prey to the discretionary judgments of social workers rather than having an explicit statement of their entitlement.

We also have to take account of the other pressures that local authorities are facing and which will impact on their ability to deliver properly what this policy promises. The Association of Directors of Social Services has provided compelling evidence of the cuts in social services which are likely to be implemented as a result of the requirement to meet Government spending targets over the next year. We know that the consequences of cuts in those services will be a betrayal of the promise to carers of improved and increased care and support. Ultimately, the one source of support that is always there is the carer—the friend or relative who provides most of the care and support for a disabled person.

On the basis of what we have heard and seen, local authorities are taking on the new lead responsibility for community care with great enthusiasm. In so doing, we and they want to ensure that they are not being set up to fail. There are grave risks of fragmentation in their critical lead role. As Sir Roy Griffiths rightly said in his report some years ago, it is through that lead role that the fragmentation which has so bedevilled the proper and seamless development of community care in the past will end.

Fragmentation remains a danger in two ways. The first is the lack of definition between social and health care to which other hon. Members have referred. It is still possible that an elderly person can leave hospital and, on the grounds of his continuing need for nursing care, be referred directly to a nursing home with which the health authority has a contract. That person will receive the nursing care free of charge. However, another elderly person who is placed in the same nursing home through the local authority assessment route may be required to top up or make a personal contribution to the cost of his care because his social rather than nursing needs were deemed to be paramount. Studies which have tried to establish the distinction between nursing care need and social care need have proved what a difficult boundary that is, but it is terribly important that it does not become a source of fragmentation and inequity in the new system.

The second risk is that general practitioners will not be sufficiently co-operative with the lead role of local authorities and, especially, that after 1 April this year GP fund holders may use their enhanced ability to purchase community health services on behalf of their patients so as to circumvent the local authority assessment procedure. Even before 1 April, we must anticipate some of the problems which may arise and which could defeat the policy. We must be assured of the Government's open-mindedness and their willingness to take action to avoid fragmentation.

As I represent the constituency of Dulwich in London, I wish to deal specifically with some of the problems facing London. A major problem was identified in the mid-year population estimates published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. It showed a substantial loss of population in London, especially among elderly people aged 85 and over. My borough of Southwark shows a staggering loss of 32 per cent. in its population of those elderly people. Clearly, that has severe knock-on consequences for the grant that Southwark will receive.

At a recent meeting which I, the hon. Member for Chislehurst and the London local authority associations attended, the Minister accepted that such a loss of population could not be accounted for merely by the fact that elderly people from London boroughs who need residential care have to be referred to private homes on the Essex or south coast. He said that we had to look for other reasons. We are grateful to the Minister for the undertakings that he made in that respect.

I hope that the Minister will also keep an open mind about the inequity of the distribution formula and its impact on London authorities. My own authority of Southwark stands to lose about £800,000 as a result of that formula.

Those problems must be dealt with as a matter of urgency. If not, the old lady from Dulwich to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) referred will not have the choice of living in her own home in my constituency but will surely be shipped off to the Essex coast or the south coast, perhaps against her will. She will have to go because she has no choice and it is the only place where the residential care is provided. We want the Government to deal with those problems with an open mind as the policy unfolds, so that the good principles behind the policy will be safeguarded in practice.

6.36 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): This has been an interesting debate on an important subject. Most hon. Members are fully committed to care in the community and what it involves, although, as the date of implementation comes closer, some concerns are inevitably raised.

However, community care is nothing new. It has been practised by many social services departments for many years. I do not believe that there will be a dramatic change on 1 April except in the critical aspect of the assessment process to which the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) referred.

I agree with the hon. Lady about care in the community and the sensitivity with which services should be delivered.

[Mr. David Congdon]

In some ways, residential care is very easy to provide: it is usually provided in one building and, regrettably, people can be put into residential homes and forgotten because one knows that, broadly speaking, they will be cared for reasonably well.

However, under care in the community there is a much greater risk of services not being delivered sensitively and, certainly, not always being delivered at the right time, especially when a large number of agencies are involved. It will be a challenge for all the agencies to ensure that they deliver care in the way that it needs to be delivered to the people who need it, when they need it.

Reference has been made to the residents of Dulwich, a constituency that I have the privilege of knowing very well. As some hon. Members will know, in a former incarnation I was chairman of the Young Conservatives in Dulwich. I suspect that, far from being shipped off to the south coast, many elderly residents of Dulwich come to the many excellent independent homes in the borough of Croydon. Croydon has many such homes, which is why it is the only London borough that appears to benefit from the distribution of grant that we are debating.

I deal now with the independent sector in general. I thought that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) was rather unfair when he referred to the growth in the private sector as a free market experiment. We should not forget that many elderly people up and down the country have received excellent care as a result of the growth in the independent sector. We are very well aware of the fact that many of those people could have benefited from care in the community. Equally, however, there is a strong case for the independent sector.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Hon. Members who are present have heard me describe cases involving constituents who have ended up in private institutional care many miles from my constituency, at a cost to the state twice as high as would have been the cost of supplying the services needed to enable those people to remain at home. That is my objection to what the Government have done to encourage the explosive expansion of private sector care.

Mr. Congdon: I understand and appreciate that objection. The important point that I am making is that people with money can afford to buy residential care, wherever they want it, without any assessment, whereas people without money cannot afford to do so. The provision of income support has enabled the latter to secure residential care. However, there is a downside. If community care had been properly provided by the social services departments to which the hon. Member for Wakefield referred, people could have benefited from it. I readily concede that point. In fact, many social services departments have properly expanded their services to meet that very demand.

Equally, however, many local authorities have used their planning powers responsibly and sensibly to ensure that obstacles are not placed in the path of those wishing to set up independent homes. I make that point as someone from a borough which has an enormous number of independent homes and which came in for much criticism for giving planning permission for them. But the result is that many residents of my borough have been able to secure the required residential provision within their localities.

I take issue with the remark of the hon. Member for Wakefield that community care has become a byword for neglect. I certainly concede that in some areas there has been a shortfall in the provision of services for the mentally ill. In general, however, it is something of a disservice to those involved in community care to use such terms.

In this context, we must bear in mind the enormous growth in funding for health and personal social services. I was intrigued by the comment of the hon. Member for Wakefield about funds going back to the Exchequer. If funds have gone back to the Exchequer, I do not know where they have ended up. Over the past 13 years, there has been a growth of 60 per cent., in real terms, in NHS expenditure and an increase of two thirds in real terms in social services expenditure. I do not think that there has been a bonanza in this respect.

I understand the concern about the ability of social services departments to cope, given the amounts of money being allocated to them. Reference has been made to the fact that many social services departments are saying that, following the rate support grant settlement, they will have to cut their budgets in the forthcoming year. That point was made by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). I regard that argument as a little odd. Everyone says that community care is very important. Certainly, those involved in local government say so. However, when it comes to the crunch, some authorities do not seem to be prepared to put their money where their mouths are. They should look at all their services and decide their priorities.

I am pleased to say that the council of which I was a member for 16 years was able continually to put growth money into social services. In the year beginning 1 April 1993, excluding the money for care in the community, there will be an extra £500,000 for the social services budget. If local authorities regard community care as a priority, they should do likewise in respect of their social services budget and should look to other services with a view to cutting out waste. Thus they could protect a valuable personal social service.

There are two issues before us: the scale of the funds being made available by the Government and their distribution. It is always possible to argue, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) did, that there will never be sufficient funds to meet all needs. However, we have a responsibility continually to put extra resources into health and social services. That has indeed been done.

I had a particular interest in the discussion in the Select Committee on Health on the question of the appropriate level of funds to be allocated to social services. In broad terms, I was satisfied that the level and the basis of the calculation were reasonable. One can always argue for more, but one is dealing with a projection of the number of people who, under the previous rules, would present themselves as being in need of, and would secure, care in residential homes, and of what will happen after 1 April. That is an important point.

Also important is the fact that the Department of Health and its Ministers must review at the strategic level the numbers being provided for in the coming year, to determine whether the amount of money transferred is at the right level for future years. It seems to me that that

must be done. No one can guarantee that the right amount of money is being transferred. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

An equally important issue is that of distribution. It is not surprising that a fair number of local authorities are protesting about the amount of money that they are receiving. In fact, I should have been very surprised if they had not done so. I should probably have wondered whether the Government, in their allocations, had been too generous.

It is difficult to make a fair allocation. I fully understand the arguments about basing allocation on standard spending assessments. I equally understand the argument about the need to avoid decimating the existing independent sector and pattern of provision. It is not for any ideological reason, for the purpose of protecting the private sector, that I say so; it is because many of those homes are providing good care.

At a time of great change—and there will indeed be great change over the next few years—it is important to avoid being too disruptive on day one. We do not know in detail how what is being introduced will work in practice. That is why I am very much in favour of an evolutionary approach. I might draw a comparison with the NHS reforms, in which case, although the purchasers enter into contracts with providers, the contracts, in general, have been in a steady state in year one.

That approach is rightly being adopted, in broad terms, in the case of care in the community. I say so with some caution, as we all wish to see resources switched, over a period, from residential care to community care. I realise how difficult it is to achieve that. Even when one sets out with such an aim, one has to be very careful to ensure that, over a period, resources are switched.

On allocations, there is concern that some London boroughs are losing—many would argue that that is the case. However, it is important to bear in mind the fact that the split between SSAs and income support is being treated in such a way as to ensure that an increasing proportion of the money allocated will be based on SSAs. That is an important point.

If we take the other money in the revenue support grant, these proposals should be seen in the context of representing an increase of 15 per cent. in SSAs for social services for local authorities. That is a significant increase. I hope that that will give local authorities the opportunity to get to grips with the job and successfully implement community care.

It is ironic that for many years local authorities have criticised the Government for taking responsibilities from them. Much play has been made of that. Local authorities put in a very strong bid to be given responsibility for care in the community. Many did not think that the Government would have the courage to give them that responsibility. The Government have had the courage to do so, and it is now up to the local authorities to get on with the job and do the best they can to implement the community care proposals sensibly and sensitively. Over the next year they should have a lively dialogue with Government about reviewing the amounts of money if they believe they have not got the necessary funding to implement their policies. At least they should get on with implementing the proposals for the benefit of the people in their communities.

6.50 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): It is a great pleasure to speak in the debate because it concerns one of the most important issues facing the country. The timing is good, because it is a pleasure for me to follow the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon). It means that at least the north of Croydon has been well represented in the debate. I thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My colleague talked about Croydon. I too should like to start my speech by talking about Croydon, but rather differently. In my judgment, formed from talking to many people in Croydon, the dawn of the new community care age is opening darkly. The social services authority, Croydon council, is already making cuts in preparation for the new regime.

Yesterday I visited Bensham lodge, an old people's home in my constituency, which is facing the axe. Another home in the constituency of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) is also facing the axe. Why? I remember experts telling us that old people's homes were not institutions but the homes of the old people; we were told that they were places where the old people lived and that the residents should be treated like other people who were living in their own homes.

What did Croydon council do? The council marched in one day and said to the residents, many of whom are frail, "The home will be closed. Here is the timetable." Many people were distressed. To that they were tearful is an understatement. The carers and relatives were concerned. They telephoned and asked me to go to the home to find out what was happening.

I visited the home yesterday and I was appalled. I tried not to raise the issue of closure with the old people because I knew how upset they were. I wanted to find out about the atmosphere, but the old folk themselves said to me, "Look at what is going on. The home is going to close, is it not? Why do we have to go?" It is a splendid home in very good grounds in the heart of Croydon and it is much loved by the residents and their relatives.

Now the council has had to think again briefly because properly a court elsewhere has said recently that councils cannot treat people in that way. The court decided that the councils could not close homes without consultation. Croydon council is now going through a consultation process. Cynically, people on the committee are saying that it is a process which they have to go through because the court has said so. As I understand it, it is not a proper process of consultation whereby old people will be listened to.

If there was proper consultation, there might be a change of heart and the home might be safeguarded. Instead, I fear that the residents will be shunted out to the private sector, not the independent sector. The provision of accommodation will be put out to tender and people who have lived in the same home as friends for many years will be split up. I take this public opportunity to urge the director of social services in Croydon and the chairman of the social services committee to visit the home, as I did, not to talk but to listen to what the old people in Bensham lodge have to say.

The fact that Crossfields, an excellent sheltered workshop in Croydon, for people with disabilities also faces the axe is another cause for concern. That workshop showed how employment can be a key factor in

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community care. The people were doing good work making windows and other things. Because of the recession, and because Croydon council wishes to withdraw a grant, the workshop faces closure. The people may be offered a day centre, but they do not want that. They want to work, like the rest of us: it gives some meaning to their lives. Work is an important aspect of community care for those with learning difficulties or severe mental handicap.

Because of the proposed closure of the old people's home and the sheltered workshop, I am not as confident as the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East about the prospects for community care in our borough.

The trends are clear, and I think we all agree on them. We see a reduction in public sector residential provision for old people. That is happening in the national health service and the public sector too. By contrast, there is a huge increase in the private sector. When he kindly let me intervene in his speech earlier, the Minister quarrelled with me and said that the independent sector was not the private sector but included the voluntary sector as well. I conceded that in my intervention, but I said that it was essentially the private sector.

Since the Minister finished his speech, I have looked at the figures to see what has happened to residential places in the public sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector between 1980 and 1990. I quote the data from Laing and Buisson, consultants of whom the Minister will know. That shows that, between 1980 and 1990, the local authority residential sector has declined by 3 per cent.; the voluntary sector has declined, not increased, by 7 per cent.; only the private sector has increased, by 416 per cent., if my calculator has not let me down; the private nursing home sector has increased by 457 per cent. Therefore, the growth in the so-called independent sector has been in the private, commercial sector, so let us have no nonsense on that score.

I do not know about the domiciliary sector in Croydon, but if the Minister thinks that there is a huge difference which makes his statement valid, no doubt he will remind me of that in his reply to the debate. I am talking about the private commercial sector, some of it good, some of it excellent, some of it shabby and awful where none of us would want to live or want our elders to live.

I focus briefly on an issue not referred to much on the Government Benches—the carers. The distortion of the community care policy into a residential care policy is extraordinary. The whole philosophy of community care was, strangely enough, about community care and not residential care. Because of the expenditure fix and the ideological concern of Government, regardless of need, to boost the private commercial, for-profit sector, we are now talking about residential care.

Sadly, when we should be talking about community care and the needs of carers, we are discussing the finances of residential care. We are doing it narrowly. We are not talking about employment, housing and the other dimensions of community care. What should have been a wide debate has become remarkably narrow. I think I know why the Government do not talk about carers any more. Of course, in speeches, they pat them on the back and say how wonderful and important they are, but we do not hear so much now about a brave new era after 1 April for the carer and those being cared for genuinely in the community. I wonder why.

I am struck by the evidence from the new Office of Population Censuses and Surveys general household survey. In 1990, it updated a survey of carers first done in 1985. The data were published a few months ago. The information has not received the attention is deserved. It showed that 15 per cent. of the people are carers, looking after elderly relatives or people with handicaps or disabilities; 13 per cent. of men and 17 per cent. of women are carers. That adds up to a huge army of carers, 6·8 million—an army of health and social service carers far greater than we find in social services departments of the formal national health service. It is the most important army, but the forgotten army of the welfare state. Some are under enormous burdens; one in 10 provide care for 50 hours or more a week. Without that enormous exertion of care, community care would totally collapse.

A problem with the House is that we are unrepresentative. Given the numbers of carers in the community, we would, if we were truly representative, number among us about 90 carers. I am sure that there are some who are doing excellent work, but if 90 Members were carers our debates would contain a greater sense of experience, expertise and passion. That would certainly be so if we were more representative in terms of gender and therefore in terms of care.

Imagine the difference if 90 Members were carers. The President of the Board of Trade, if a carer, would have to phone the Prime Minister and say, "I regret that I cannot close down the coal mines today because an elderly relative needs my care. I must take her to hospital. The home help has not turned up, so I cannot come to work today. Please look after the mines until I return." The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food might have to phone to say that he could not attend an official lunch or dinner. Or the Secretary of State for Transport would have to phone the office to say, " I regret that I cannot come in this week because there is a crisis of care in my family. I fear that I cannot play with my railway trains this week."

If a representative number of hon. Members were carers, the whole debate would be changed. I am not being frivolous. I give those examples to show how serious I am. If we had a better understanding of what is going on, we would have genuine community care in Britain, especially if more men and politicians were involved in caring.

The general household survey review of carers for 1990 makes interesting reading, especially when the figures are compared with the situation in 1985. For example, during those five years, there was a greater recognition by Ministers of the needs of carers. That recognition manifested itself in speeches and rhetoric, although it did not appear in reality and resources.

Carers were asked, in effect, "How often does the person for whom you are caring receive regular visits from the health and social services—the doctor, district nurse, home help, social worker and so on?" In 1985, 22 per cent. of those being cared for by carers had a regular visit from the doctor. By 1990, the number had declined to 16 per cent. For district nurses, the position was steady—only 15 per cent. received regular visits from a district nurse in both 1985 and 1990. For health visitors, there was a slight decline, from 6 to 4 per cent.

Ministers may say that community care, domiciliary care and support for carers is moving in the right direction,

but they should accept that, while my hon. Friends and I say that that is nonsense and Conservative Members say it is true, the facts do not support their claim. I appreciate that in this place some people do not like the facts to get in the way of a good argument, but in this matter the facts speak more loudly than our speeches, and the facts show that we were providing less care for carers at the end of the 1980s than we were five years previously. In other words, all the talk about supporting carers is only talk. It is not happening in reality because we are providing less care.

If the Minister has evidence to prove that what I say is wrong, I shall be delighted to listen to him. I fear that I am right. Indeed, my fear about our neglect for the carer goes further. Because we are now emphasising residential care, hard-pressed social service authorities will have to use the domiciliary care that is available to them for those in the most acute need. Those authorities will say, "If you have a carer, you are not in acute need, so we will not provide more support for you and your carer." That will result in even more neglect of the carer.

When I spoke on the subject of community care shortly after coming to this place, I noted how often, in the sphere of child care or community care, a case of abuse or a tragedy had to occur to arouse public and parliamentary concern and, thank goodness, sometimes governmental concern. I asked then whether we had to continue along that road for ever, with a tragedy having to happen before action was taken.

Some months later, we began to take mental illness seriously, but only after an unfortunate citizen with schizophrenia jumped into a lion's den. What a sad commentary on society that was. It was also a sad commentary on the Government, because only after that incident did they start to bustle. I can imagine the meetings that took place behind closed doors as Ministers thought about the statements they would make. Ministers should walk around Westminster, go into the underground station or stroll up Victoria street and see what is happening. Why did somebody have to jump into a lion's den before action was taken?

There is already documentary evidence—there have been some excellent television programmes on the subject—to show that there is a danger that, out of frustration, after caring day after day, year after year, carers may sometimes hit out at those for whom they are caring. We must understand that situation. I appeal to the Government not to wait for tragedies and cases of abuse to occur in the sphere of true community care affecting the overstressed carer before a Minister appears before us and says, "I did not know it was happening. It is remarkable. I am setting up a committee of inquiry and we intend to take action."

I hope that, when replying to the debate, the Minister will talk about community care and not just about residential care. I urge him to spell out not just his ambitions for the carer but the reality of what is being provided. If he thinks that the evidence I have given about a lack of support for carers is wrong, I hope that he will say enough to prove me wrong. Let us hear about community care in this debate. After all, it is meant to be on the subject of community care.

7.5 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): This has been an excellent debate, with considered and constructive contributions from hon. Members in all parts of the House. It has reflected, particularly for hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), a long-term commitment to community care. I congratulate him on taking the opportunity to plunge a dagger between the Under-Secretary's shoulderblades in relation to the Minister's advocacy and assessment procedures.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks have also saved me having to make about half the speech that I had intended to make, because much of what he said represents Labour party policy. I invite him to sit on these Benches when we next debate the subject: that particularly applies to his remarks about advocacy and assessment.

The Minister introduced the debate in a rather blasé fashion. He appeared self-congratulatory as he set out his view of community care. He set himself up as a sort of Father Christmas, when in reality he is a bit of a Shylock. It is clear from the way in which the funding regimes have been constructed that a pound of flesh has been removed from virtually every social services sector. A dagger has been plunged into the heart of the concept of community care and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wickes) said, we are left with institutional and residential care as the way in which the Government are driving forward the concept of the market provision of care in the community.

The Minister also abdicated responsibility for the mental health services. Indeed, he neglected to refer to the subject, apart from a brief comment in answer to an intervention. He failed to identify any ring-fencing mechanism for resources for mental health services. He rejected the idea of the provision of financial regimes to achieve flexibility in providing employment projects, advocacy and assessment, permanent housing, non-clinical crisis houses and resources for residential care in appropriate settings, along with respite and crisis care for those with mental illnesses or learning disabilities.

It is tragic that, in a debate such as this, the Government should have abdicated responsibility in many other spheres. For example, they look to the Department of the Environment to set financial criteria, with the result that, from 1 April, about 80 per cent. of social services departments will cut their core services, even though those services are vital to assessing the level of facilities in the community, the standard of those facilities, and access to them by those with a mental illness or mental disability.

The Minister behaved disgracefully as he skated over the need to accept responsibility for the preparation of care strategies for offering choice and quality to clients and carers. He offered no protection for failed contractual arrangements, for protection for clients' rights and for standards of care in bankruptcy situations. He knows that such situations will arise because, in the privacy of discussions in the Department with various organisations, he has admitted to expecting a failure rate of between 30 and 40 per cent. in the next financial year in the private care sector.

That represents a phenomenal number of businesses in that sector likely to go out of business. Even so, only weeks before the introduction of community care, we do not know what protection arrangements have been made when contractual arrangements are broken. Local authorities

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will be left with the responsibility of clearing up the mess when, for various reasons, homes are unable to continue trading. Nor did the Minister show any sense of the need for a mental health service with a strategy, objectives, minimum requirements and some clarity of purpose to be developed.

I believe that the Minister should pay attention to six basic requirements for mental health services in connection with community care. They must be effective and challenging, created and fashioned by the experience of people involved in the system. They must be non-paternalistic and user-led, enabling and assessing choices and providing a real right of advocacy on behalf of client groups. They must be locally based and accountable and linked to a core of service providers, involving appropriate housing and primary care resources. Strategies must allow the full potential of people with a mental illness of disability to be realised. They must be well resourced and highly motivated and staff must be trained to the highest possible level.

That all requires resources at local authority level, yet, when the Government announced a £34 million fund for fighting mental illness last November, they operated a lock and key principle. Everybody welcomed the statement that additional resources were to be provided for mental illness services—but when we read the small print we realised that there were two major flaws in the proposed expenditure. First, local authorities would have to match payments on the grants pound for pound, at a time when the Department of the Environment is forcing local authorities to make real cuts in their budgets for social services and housing, and across the whole care spectrum. Authorities are also having to make real cuts in capital expenditure, as Environment Ministers told us in the debate on the revenue support grant settlement last week.

Furthermore, only 70 per cent. of the project funds will come from the Government; the remaining 30 per cent. will have to be met from local authorities' own resources. That was a simple and devious financial device which will mean that many local authorities will find it impossible to take up the resources and develop the strategies and objectives that I have outlined. It means that, after 1 April, there will be no real opportunity to develop core services for people with a mental illness.

It is not only Labour and Liberal party members in local government who complain about the way in which the Government have skewed the financial settlement towards the private sector, thus locking out choices and opportunities for other methods of community care. All those involved in community care who advocate on behalf of people suffering from a mental illness have expressed extreme concern because the transitional grant will not be spent on mental health services and because distribution and access to the grant will be arranged so that resources will be insufficient to provide the quality of care demanded in the White Paper.

There will be disarray in decision-making between what the Department of Health says will be the resource levels for local authorities and the reality. There will be a gap between the assessment and the requirement that local authorities provide services for individuals and collections of individuals suffering from a mental illness. There is a real conflict between assessment and advocacy.

There is plain dishonesty when the Department of Health tells local authorities that they must give the client an open and fair assessment that clearly shows his or her needs, and that the client must have an opportunity to advocate for himself or herself—or that others should have the opportunity to do so on their behalf—while in the background the same Department sends local authorities a notorious circular saying that that might not be quite the way in which they should proceed and that they should not provide the client or the advocate with the full assessment arrangements or allow clients access to information in their computer data banks which could determine whether the assessment was appropriate and whether the level of needs revealed by the assessment was to be met.

That is disgraceful. The Government are putting clients, professionals and carers into potential conflict. People should be working together in the community, yet the Government are introducing mistrust of the assessment procedures from the outset. That mistrust will provide opportunities for legal challenges and resources will be spent in the courts instead of delivering professional services and access to those services.

The circular is a cowardly attack by the Government on those least able to defend themselves. The Government have hidden behind the responsibility that they have given to councillors and staff, hoping that, when legal challenges are made, the blame will be pushed on to local authorities rather than on to the circular. At the last minute of the debate, they have introduced confusion, leaving local authorities unable to assess at this stage whether to follow the circular or the original Government advice.

Things are even worse than that. Many local authorities are already involved in assessment procedures and have had advice from their district auditors. For example, in Gloucestershire the district auditor has already met members and officers of the county council and issued the authority with written guidance on assessment. A letter describing the meeting says:

"When we met the District Auditor she was very explicit about her advice that *Members* should make decisions and not leave it to officers and . . . that we should be open to and honest about the assessment of need."

The district auditor has submitted a letter to the authority setting out the requirements. What are the councillors and officers to do now? Do they follow the written advice of the district auditor? Do they follow the circular? Do they leave it to the courts? Or do they leave it to the Under-Secretary of State for Health?

The position is intolerable. Only a few weeks before taking up their community care responsibilities, local authorities have been given one lot of advice by the district auditor and two different sets of advice by the Department of Health. The Minister must sort that out quickly and assist local authorities or provide them with the management letter sent by the district auditor to Gloucester county councillors.

Will the Minister give us some insight about contingency funds in the event of contractual obligations not being undertaken? In the transfer of resources from local authorities for the provision of individual care packages, it is vital that, when those packages cannot be delivered, there is financial provision for alternative facilities of at least the same quality, and in the same area, within days or hours of the breakdown of the contractual arrangements.

If a care home goes bankrupt, we cannot have local authorities scrabbling round at the last moment trying to find alternative placements for the elderly confused—people who, by the very fact that they have been committed to such institutions, must be frail and must suffer from a mental illness or from mental confusion. That cannot be countenanced in any circumstances. The Government should say now what contingency funds will be available if contractual arrangements are broken, as happens when a care home goes into liquidation. If they are not prepared to tell us now, they should prepare a circular at an early stage.

The Minister should also tell us the position on discharge plans. The Government made great play of discharge plans and talked of the need for discussions between local authorities, health authorities and trusts, but there should now be public honesty about the nature of the plans. Discharge plans should be public documents, so that not only the local authority and those involved in the delivery of the service, but the client groups and the clients themselves have access to the plans and information about them. Then they would know from the outset whether their interests were being met by the discharge plans and whether the assessments concerned allowed them the opportunity to object or to appeal.

The plans should not be excluded from the client's right to knowledge—both as an individual and because plans would be public documents. The community in the area concerned would know what the discharge plan was and what effect it would have. Perhaps the Minister can explain the effect of section 43 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act which deals with interventions.

Mr. Yeo: I shall not have enough time.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister says that he shall not have enough time, but he had plenty of time earlier. I hope that he is not making excuses, as we are all limited by time. He has had months to come to the House and has waited until there were only weeks to go before the implementation of his proposals to sneak in a three-hour debate on a Thursday night, whereas the House should have been allowed proper consideration of them. He should not object to Opposition Members asking for information. If he does not have time, perhaps he can give a commitment to offer me and my colleagues at the earliest opportunity a meeting at the Department or a debate in Government time about the consequences of the proposals.

Finally, perhaps the Minister can explain why yesterday the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security could give no commitment to the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments on which groups would be able to claim from their local authorities a top-up on income support from 1 April. It seems incredible that the Minister did not know the consequences of the proposals. There appears to be a bit of a shambles between his Department and the Department of Social Security. Will he state clearly, within seven days if possible, the categories affected, so that local authorities, client groups and those who advocate them, can reach reasonable conclusions on the level and quality of care in the community for those who require services under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

7.21 pm

Mr. Yeo: We have had a most useful debate, characterised by the high quality of the speeches of hon. Members who have spoken often with professional or local government expertise. I am sorry that as the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has used 16 of the available 26 minutes, it may not be possible for me to respond as fully as I would wish to all the points that have been raised, but I shall do my best in the time available.

I am glad to see the return to the Chamber of the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) whose attendance during the debate has been somewhat spasmodic. I advise her in good faith that, if she wishes her contributions to be taken seriously, it helps if she attends the bulk of the debate—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) has just walked in during the past minute or two and is not aware of the fact that the hon. Lady was not even here when the debate started.

Several hon. Members referred to cuts. We are talking about a policy which has experienced a two-thirds real increase in expenditure since 1979. The standard spending assessments for personal social services have risen by more than one fifth in real terms in the past three years. The increase in standard spending assessments for this particular local government function has been higher than for any other except the police. If one includes the special grant that we are now about to approve, the resources available for personal social services in 1993-94 are more than one third higher in real terms than they were only three years ago.

The record of commitment that the Government have shown in allocating resources seems to be unmatched. The transfer money from the Department of Social Security was calculated on the basis of an assumption that income support limits would rise by 4·25 per cent. In fact, they have risen by 3·6 per cent., so even the transfer money has been inflated by assumptions which were calculated to be as generous as possible to the authorities receiving them.

The president of the Association of Directors of Social Services said after the announcement last October:

"In the context of the present economic climate",

my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health

"has done well to get this money and to give us specific funds for the second and third year of implementation".

I began with some sympathy for the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), as he had a difficult task this afternoon. He had to try to find grounds on which to attack or criticise the policy or its implementation. I am only sorry that in doing so he seems to have turned to his sponsors, the National Union of Public Employees, for advice. That is the only explanation that I can think of for his hostility to the independent sector.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Yeo: I am sorry, but the hon. Member for Makerfield has taken up so much time, so I will not give way. The hon. Member for Wakefield has had a good chance to speak today.

The statutory direction on choice that we have issued, and which binds local authorities to recognise the preferences of individuals in terms of where they go to receive residential care, does not seem remotely consistent with the hon. Gentleman's allegation that the policy is provider-led. It is clearly user-led. What did seem to be provider-led was the hon. Gentleman's assertion that

[Mr. Yeo]

choice for local authorities on how to treat drug and alcohol abusers was somehow constrained by the decision not to ring fence funds for that purpose.

Ring fencing would restrict the freedom of local authorities. It would perpetuate exactly the emphasis on residential provision for that group that the hon. Gentleman quite rightly is keen to see ended for other groups. Nothing whatever prevents local authorities from purchasing the services that are needed.

The hon. Member for Wakefield, in a moment which must have been intended as humorous, suggested that we should wait for independent sector provision to emerge before imposing our 85 per cent. condition— *[Interruption.]* If he consults *Hansard* he will find it. I am not quite sure how long we would have to wait in the London boroughs of Lambeth and Hackney for such independent sector provision. I wonder whether independent sector providers would even be able to talk to such authorities if we had not required them to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) paid tribute, for which I am grateful, to the community care support force. Its future is under consideration and it certainly will not continue in its existing form. There will, of course, be other monitoring of the policy after April through the regional health authorities and the social services inspectorate. My hon. Friend referred to the lateness of the figures, but in terms of individual authorities they are very little changed since the publication at the end of November of the split by function of next year's revenue support grant. However, I recognise that local authorities are now drawing up their budgets.

The £100,000 change in Bromley to which the director of social services drew attention is the result of the withholding from the report of the £20 million pending the outcome of the judicial review, so I am confident that my hon. Friend will find the final figure closer to what was originally expected.

He made an interesting and important point about unmet need. It is my view that the local authorities themselves are best placed to assess the need in their areas. That is far better than someone sitting in Whitehall trying to second-guess at a distance what will be needed in each authority. It may save time if I write to my hon. Friend about migration adjustment as it is a rather technical point. I shall be happy to copy in the hon. Member for Wakefield if he wishes.

Local authority topping up is another important point. We cannot sensibly require local authorities automatically to top up the costs of residential accommodation for someone whose placement in that accommodation was not the decision of that local authority, or where there was no opportunity to carry out an assessment. However, we are about to clarify what the local authorities should be doing.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) referred to the Association of Directors of Social Services survey. In my judgment, that was largely an exercise in defending personal social services against the encroachments of other local authority expenditure areas. In Gloucestershire it is much needed. Social services spending there is substantially below the level set in the personal social services standard spending assessment. It is precisely for that reason that we felt it necessary to introduce ring fencing so that Gloucestershire county council could not remove for other purposes the funds that we wanted to go into community care.

As for the numbers that we are assuming for transfer, we have assumed, based on past trends, a growth of 30,000 a year in Great Britain. Of course, that does not take account of the fact that we believe that in the medium term the policy will result in some diversion from residential into more domiciliary care and improved day and respite care services. The hon. Member for Cheltenham may find that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) can provide some helpful advice about how priorities should be reflected locally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) apologised in advance for the fact that he could not stay until the end of the debate, so I shall deal with his points separately. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East made a constructive speech. I do not know whether funds for this policy will be adequate. As I said, they are certainly much more substantial than anything ever envisaged before and much more substantial than would have been available for this client group if we had not changed the policy.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) seems upset about the growth of the private sector. I can only imagine that he wants to return to the local authority monopoly, inspired perhaps by the example of neighbouring boroughs such as Lambeth, where large-scale fraud is now under investigation, and Sheffield, where charge payers' money is being diverted from providing services to provide accommodation for the local Labour Members of Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman wanted facts, and I have just mentioned one. Another fact which I mention is that there has been a substantial shift in local authority expenditure away from residential care and towards domiciliary care. In 1978-79, just over £1 billion was spent on residential care and domiciliary care.

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Yeo: I am sorry, I will not give way. On the same basis——

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Yeo: On the same basis, in real terms the increase in domiciliary expenditure has been 80 per cent. and in residential care it has been 40 per cent. I am sorry that time will not permit me to answer all of the points raised by the hon. Member for Makerfield, but that is due to something outside my control. I say simply that the Government's commitment to the success of the policy has been demonstrated by our role in the preparations to which local authorities and health authorities have also contributed——

It being three hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [5 February].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 6) (House of Commons Paper No. 404), which was laid before this House on 8th February, be approved.

Judges

7.32 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move,

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

The draft order is made under section 2(1) of the Supreme Court Act 1981. It relates to judges of the Court of Appeal. The court is served by the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls and the lords justices of appeal. The President of the Family Division and the Vice-Chancellor also sit there from time to time. The lords justices form the main judicial strength of the court, although High Court judges sit with them to hear criminal appeals and other cases.

It is a matter of natural public concern that there should be sufficient lords justices of appeal to hear cases which involve the liberty of the subject or to determine matters of law which affect the citizen and the state. Apart from the small number of cases which go to the other place in its judicial capacity, the Court of Appeal is the pinnacle of our judicial system. It is therefore vital that its status and efficiency be preserved.

The maximum number of lords justices of appeal was increased from 23 to 28 by the Maximum Number of Judges Order 1987, and 28 judges now hold appointment, one of them since 11 January. The proposed order will increase the maximum number to 29.

In considering the justification for a further increase in the number of lords justices in England and Wales, I hope that it may be helpful to set the matter in the context of demands on the Court of Appeal civil division and the resources that have been available to that court recently.

At the end of 1991, Lord Donaldson, the then Master of the Rolls, in his review of the legal year, drew attention to the need for a

"small increase in the judicial establishment of the Court of Appeal".

At that time the establishment stood at 27 lords justices, in addition to Lord Donaldson. In the following year, the new Master of the Rolls echoed the call by identifying an increase in the number of lords justices sitting in the Court of Appeal as one means of helping to reverse the trend of increasing backlogs of work in that court.

The number of final appeals received in the civil appeals office over the past seven years has remained roughly constant, at about 900 cases a year. Although interlocutory appeals over that period have increased from fewer than 700 receipts to almost 800 in 1992, it still seems unlikely that the rise in backlogs of about 25 per cent. can be accounted for by additional appeals. Rather, it seems likely to be the result of a fall in the rate at which cases are disposed of.

It is not easy to determine the exact causes lying behind that fall, but the increase in reserved judgment from 15 per cent. in 1986 to 31 per cent. in 1991 suggests that one reason is that cases are becoming more complex and are therefore taking longer to dispose of. That view is reinforced by an increase in the number of civil appeals which take more than a year to hear.

In the light of the increasing backlog and the call made by Lord Donaldson for a

"small increase in the judicial establishment",

which his successor echoed, an additional lord justice was appointed last month. That brought the complement up to the statutory limit, and the wish to add a further lord justice to the strength has necessitated this order.

I recognise that it may be argued that, given the current position in the civil division of the Court of Appeal, an increase of two lords justices is not in itself sufficient. I should explain to the House that the ability of the Court of Appeal to get through its business is not determined solely by the number of lords justices.

An internal report in 1989, which the then Master of the Rolls endorsed, made it clear that the need for lords justices could be lessened by employing more legal staff in the civil appeals office. In recognition of that fact, five new legal posts have since been provided for that office.

For completeness' sake, the House, in considering the justification for the proposed increase in the limit, will wish to bear in mind the fact that, the civil division of the Court of Appeal aside, lords justices also sit in its criminal division and the divisional court, as well as undertaking work outside the court, such as public inquiries and the chairmanship of such bodies as the Security Commission.

After careful consideration of the current and predicted work load of the Court of Appeal, it has been concluded that an additional appointment is necessary at this time and will assist in the more efficient dispatch of business of the courts, and that the House should further discharge its responsibility by approving the draft order. I commend the order to the House.

7.37 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The increase in the number of those appointed to the Court of Appeal is inadequate. The small increase in the complement which was envisaged by the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, could not have been smaller in terms of the Government's recognition of the need which he outlined. Lord Donaldson asked for a small increase. I doubt whether he expected that it would be as small as one. We argue that the Government have not, with this order, satisfied the requirements of the Court of Appeal.

We want to know whether the Lord Chancellor and his Department took the advice of the present Master of the Rolls and the Lord Chief Justice before determining the figure of one which is referred to in the order. Did the Master of the Rolls advise the Lord Chancellor that an increase in the complement by only one was required? I doubt whether that was the case. In the interests of open government, I hope that the Minister will tell us how he and his Department arrived at an increase of one, bearing in mind the current pressure of work in the Court of Appeal.

The Minister referred to the remarks of Lord Donaldson as the genesis of this provision. If his remarks have had that effect, and several months later the Government have come forward with this paltry increase of one, it is to be hoped that Lord Donaldson's remarks on his retirement with regard to the number of judges currently sitting in the High Court will also be taken into account. The Minister will know, or certainly should know, the words of Lord Donaldson on that occasion. He was supported by all the most senior judges in England and Wales, without exception, who had come to that place to pay him worthy and just tribute. He said:

"I have no doubt that it is my duty to inform and warn both the Government and the public if the level of resources

[Mr. Paul Boateng]

is such that the standard of service which the Court can offer is likely to decline or is in fact declining."

The Minister has pointed out that, in the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, it is necessary and it is common practice from time to time for High Court judges to sit alongside Lords Justices of Appeal.

Lord Donaldson warned that, unless the number of High Court judges was increased and extra resources were provided, there would inevitably be a further decline in standards when standards were already declining. He chose to make that point in his valedictory remarks. His remarks have been echoed time and time again by his brother judges. Time and time again the Government have set their face against increasing the complement of High Court judges.

Undoubtedly we shall hear from the Minister in reply that the Lord Chancellor has established a review. When will we hear the results of the review, if indeed they are to be published? Bizarrely, at a time when the Government parade themselves in the clothes of open government and purport to share with all their citizens the nature, responsibilities and, in so far as they can, the workings of government, we still do not know whether the findings and recommendations resulting from the review will be published so that all may read them.

As the Minister said in his opening remarks, the complement of judges in the Court of Appeal and the High Court is a matter of legitimate public concern. The matter has been aired in the other place on numerous occasions and we welcome the opportunity to explore it in this House. The number of judges who sit in the High court relates to the number of judges who sit in the Court of Appeal and affects the expeditious dispatch of work. The overwhelming burden of evidence is of a civil and criminal justice system in a state of crisis.

That crisis has been drawn to the attention of the Government repeatedly. As long as the Government fail to address it, and turn a deaf ear to those who provide and those who consume judicial services, we shall air anxieties about the administration of civil and criminal justice at every opportunity on the Floor of the House.

We are indebted to their Lordships for their contribution to the debate, and particularly to the Lord Chief Justice. He has been a shining example of the importance of making heard in the clearest and most effect terms the contribution to the public debate of the senior judiciary. It was interesting to note his words, which were widely reported at the weekend, about the number of judges appointed to the High Court. As I know that you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, judges in the Court of Appeal are ultimately drawn from High Court judges. You will appreciate the importance of ensuring that sufficient judges sit in the High Court, from whom the additional complement of judges may be drawn.

We are obviously anxious to ensure that the workings of the High Court and the Court of Appeal are not impaired by insufficient judges in the High Court. The Minister will recognise the importance of the fact that the quality of judges in the Court of Appeal is perhaps higher than it has ever been. The most recent appointment was a particularly welcome one. It was broadly and warmly welcomed not only in the legal profession generally but outside it. One wants to ensure that the complement of judges in the High Court is such as to provide the broadest possible pool of high-quality judges. Therefore, it is important to ensure that further appointments are made to the High Court. The importance of that and the Government's failure in that regard was ably demonstrated by the Lord Chief Justice's remarks at the weekend.

The Lord Chief Justice threatened a confrontation with the Government on the issue unless he was allowed to recruit more High Court Judges. Although it does not go far enough, we welcome the order to increase the complement of judges in the Court of Appeal. But our question for the Lord Chancellor—or his surrogate, who will pass it on to the Lord Chancellor—is: when will we hear that the long called for and much sought after appointments to the High Court will be made?

When will the Minister and the Lord Chancellor announce the appointment of more High Court judges? Why is their dilatoriness so great that the Lord Chief Justice was forced to the point of making a veiled threat of resignation? He said:

"I have no immediate intention of resignation. But I can't do the job unless I have the judges."

Tonight we know that he is to have at least one more judge in the Court of Appeal, but we have heard nothing that will give Lord Taylor any confidence that the Government take seriously the obvious need for more judges in the High Court.

Judges appointed to the Court of Appeal currently have a critical function, which is made more important by the increase in the amount and complexity of work with which the High Court generally must deal. As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in autumn last year the number of outstanding appeals had risen from 989 to 1,130 in 12 months. That led to a 12·5 per cent. increase in waiting times. Since then, the position has worsened, and it continues to deteriorate. We are not convinced that the addition of one judge to the Court of Appeal will make an appreciable difference to the current waiting times and the logjam in appeals.

One of Lord Donaldson's concerns was the fact that Appeal Court judges were increasingly being diverted to deal with criminal cases. He said that the

"civil division may be confined to hearing the more urgent appeals, leaving the rest to wait for very long periods of time".

That is all the more reason for increasing not only the number of judges in the Court of Appeal, but the number of High Court judges generally; such an increase would in turn affect the work load of the Court of Appeal.

A number of their Lordships, on both sides of the House and on the Cross Benches, pointed out forcefully the implications for civil liberties and the liberty of the subject, and the other potential constitutional dangers of failing to maintain the judiciary at its full complement. That would affect all the various divisions of the High Court; its most deleterious impact would not be confined to the expanding area of judicial review. It has become increasingly necessary to test in the courts an over-mighty state—a Government who have become too complacent and too accustomed to the exercise of unfettered power. The judiciary manage to ensure that some restraint is placed on the excesses of Government.

Of late, a number of Conservative Members have had their knuckles well and truly rapped—deservedly—by their Lordships, as a result of such excesses. A number of the mighty have been brought low and their golden locks have turned grey and hoary as a result of their experiences

at the hands of the judges. We want more of that, which is one reason why we welcome the increase in the complement of the Court of Appeal.

We want the Government to be subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny in terms of the exercise of their powers. It may be uncharitable, but we cannot help suspecting that their tardiness in regard to the appointment of judges—be it to the Court of Appeal or to the High Court—is linked to a disinclination to strengthen the hands of the judiciary. That is well demonstrated by their repeated failure to respond to the demand for an increase in numbers in the higher judiciary, and accounts for their presentation of an order that proposes an increase of only one to the complement of judges in the Court of Appeal.

We want the Minister to say that he will keep under constant review the number of judges in the Court of Appeal and the court's need for resources. We hope that the court will not have to wait for the valedictory utterances of the current Master of the Rolls to secure another increase of one.

The workings of the Lord Chancellor's Department should be made more public than they have been to date: the Department is a relatively new constitutional creation in its current form, with a House of Commons Minister having responsibility. We want to hear and see more of it; we want its workings to be more publicly revealed, in accordance with the spirit of the citizens charter. We are even happy to see more exposure for the Minister: indeed, the more he was exposed, the more I would welcome it, because the more we examine the Government's approach to the whole issue of civil and criminal justice, the less satisfactory it is revealed to be.

What is so disturbing is the fact that the Government seem to be immune to reasoned, objective criticism. It is worth referring, albeit briefly, to the debate in the other place, which was initiated by Lord Irvine of Lairg on 22 October last year. On that occasion, judge after judge, retired judge after retired judge, and noble and learned Lord after noble and learned Lord rose to refer to the insufficiency of the higher judiciary. At the end of the debate, after a series of distinguished contributions, the Lord Chancellor was asked a direct question by Lord Irvine of Lairg: did he or did he not

"accept that there is a clear and present need for more High Court judges?"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 22 October 1992: Vol. 539, c. 897.]

The Lord Chancellor replied at some length, saying that he believed that it was necessary to provide a basis for the answer to that question, and that he expected the review that was currently under way to do so.

We want the Minister to state unequivocally that that review will soon be completed, that its findings will be published in full and that all the resources needed by judges involved in the review will be provided. We also want to hear that the Government will accept the review's findings. Having prayed in aid the existence of the review for so long, for the Government then to say that once its findings are known, not only will they not be bound by them, but they do not intend to publish them, would result in their losing all credibility.

At a time of crisis in the judicial system, when there is open dissention between the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor about the sufficiency of judicial numbers, the public are entitled to a clear and unequivocal reassurance on the issue. We intend to ensure that they receive that reassurance.

8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I apologise to the Minister for my late arrival, but I was caught on the wrong foot because I thought that the debate was starting a little later. I am glad that the Minister is likely to reply as he will have an opportunity to consider the few remarks that I want to make.

It is a definite step in the right direction for a junior Minister to be present to answer such a debate. All too often in the past there has been no direct accountability in the House, and I gladly acknowledge that step tonight. However, the subject that we are debating—the adequacy of the establishment of judges in the Court of Appeal—is of great importance, and it is not wholly satisfactory that there is no Cabinet member to answer the debate. In saying that, I cast no reflection on the Minister, whose personal credentials are held in high regard.

However, the constitutional arrangements are unsatisfactory. They confine to another place the Minister of Justice, in this country. He has the anomalous role of presiding over debates in another place and, from that position, making the appointments to the Bench and overseeing what we have by way of a Ministry of Justice, with responsibility for the state of the statute book and the state of law reform in this country. That anomaly can be corrected only by the appointment of a Minister of Justice who is a politically accountable and fully fledged Cabinet Minister elected to the House of Commons. Until then, I fear that such issues such as the one that we are discussing tonight will not be given the attention that they deserve. In the eyes of judiciary, such issues are clearly of great importance.

It has not been common in the past to find senior members of the judiciary who are openly critical of the Government in terms of the manner in which they have discharged their responsibility for the administration of justice. However, on the issue of appointments to the Bench, judges have been speaking out with a clarity which betrays the urgency of the matter.

The proposal that we are discussing may seem modest —it augments the Court of Appeal by one appointment. Indeed, considered in the light of the remarks—to which the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) has already alluded—of Lord Chief Justice Taylor and others, about the under-provision in the higher reaches of the judiciary in this country, it is a modest development. The most notable speech was that made by Lord Chief Justice Taylor in the Dimbleby lecture, when he said that the judicial deficit was denying access to justice. The modest proposal before us does not meet that deficit.

The Court of Appeal is often augmented by judges from the High Court bench who sit for specific appointments and cases. That may be regarded as an inevitable and not wholly desirable illustration of the shortages, which the provision will by no means make good. The consequence of High Court judges augmenting the Court of Appeal in that ad hoc way ripples through the judicial system. Those judges have, in turn, to be replaced on the bench, thus contributing to the problems of the High Court. Therefore, in dealing with the proposal for one additional appointment, we must not overlook the fact that the issues are closely interrelated.

The evidence shows that expedition in the discharge of justice is being hampered by the shortage of senior judges. That is a matter of the greatest concern. I have no doubt

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

of the Lord Chancellor's interest in the appointment of judges. He has always made it plain that he attaches the highest importance to the appointment of judges of a suitable calibre. He devotes much personal attention to ensuring that that aspect of his duties is fully discharged, and there is general admiration for some of his more recent appointments to the higher roles. I am happy to acknowledge the distinction of those appointments to the Court of Appeal and other senior courts of the realm. However, the Lord Chancellor's job goes beyond choosing suitable men and women for those senior positions. The Lord Chancellor must also ensure that there are adequate numbers on the bench to discharge judicial functions.

It has not been uncommon for judges openly to comment on such matters. Perhaps the recognition of the separate nature of their role and their natural reluctance to enter the political cockpit is not only understandable, but desirable. The distinction between the judiciary, and the Executive and the legislature, although not reflected in a written constitution—as it might be, and indeed is, in most countries—is one that we would do well to retain. However, when the line is crossed by the judges themselves—as it has been recently—we must recognise that a penumbra of discontent and anxiety lies behind that action. We are entitled to ask exactly what representations have been made by the judiciary about the numbers that they would consider necessary to ensure that there is no backlog of cases and that justice is not being denied.

The issue of a review has already been mentioned in the debate. We want to know how speedily it will be concluded and what evidence has been presented. One of the great anxieties about the judicial system—it is germane to the order—is the evidence of a further escalation of the costs of the judicial system, particularly legal aid. We are not debating legal aid today, but there is no doubt that the escalation of unit costs—which has, in turn, caused a rise in legal aid costs—is due to the number of judges available to hear cases. Many cases have to be adjourned because there are not sufficient judges to hear them. That has resulted in gross inefficiencies as well as the denial of justice. That was led in evidence to the Public Accounts Committee as recently as last week.

We are not talking about something abstract. It is not a matter of plucking numbers out of the air and saying that a certain number of additional judges would be appropriate to meet the problem. These are serious and hard questions, which must be answered by the responsible Department of State. We are entitled to know what evidence it has, and why it has taken such an extraordinarily small step. The appointment of one more judge to the Court of Appeal will have only the most modest impact on the High Court, where it appears that the worst problem exists, and would appear to go only a small way to meeting the anxieties so openly expressed by the most senior judges in the realm.

8.11 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is gracious of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to acknowledge the ministerial post that I am doing my best to discharge. He merely addresses a truism when he says that the responsible Cabinet Minister is in the other place. My recent visits to that other place to listen to debates left me with the clear impression that there is no shortage of strongly held opinions on these matters in that House as well as in this.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is right to say that expedition is the friend of justice, just as delay is its enemy. I would not concede to him, however, that expedition in judicial matters resides exclusively in judge numbers. There are many other factors, and these are urgently exercising both the Lord Chancellor and his Department. There is a wish to improve the judicial process and to simplify it. Those matters are exercising the Runciman commission, which I understand is due to report later this year. It will note that its findings are to be most closely studied by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman will know this, I think, but I remind him that the hearing of criminal appeals has always fallen to High Court judges. Before the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1908, the Court of Crown Cases Reserved would consider appeals arising from points of law. That was done en bloc, with all High Court Queen's Bench division judges sitting. The Lord Chief Justice would preside. The Court of Criminal Appeal succeeded the Court of Crown Cases Reserved, and in 1966 the Court of Criminal Appeal was replaced by the Court of Appeal criminal division. It was felt that the Queen's Bench judges sitting therein would benefit from the chairmanship of the Lord Justice in each court. There is therefore no novelty in High Court judges participating in the affairs of the Court of Appeal.

I now direct my remarks more particularly to the speech of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

Mr. Maclennan: Before the Minister does that, I think that he will acknowledge that the Supreme Court Act 1981 makes specific and explicit provision for the appointment of judges and others to sit in courts on an ad hoc and temporary basis. It appears that that temporariness has been extended considerably to the point at which it is even being questioned whether what is being done is within the scope of the 1981 Act. It is extremely questionable whether appointments are any longer to be regarded as temporary.

Mr. Taylor: I shall have more to say about the strength of the appeal bench. Although all of us who have mentioned the matter may have risked the attentions of the Chair, I shall try to say in what I hope will be germane remarks a word or two about High Court judges, even though the order does not strictly relate to that section of the judiciary.

The Opposition's general concern to maintain our system of justice in good order is shared by the Government—hence the review of High Court judges' work, deployment and numbers. They are inevitably a scarce resource. We intend to ensure, however, that there are enough of them and that their skills are carefully husbanded. I think that we have the good will of all interested parties in taking that line.

I say, slightly reproachfully, that it would be improper to suggest that the Lord Chancellor would seek to weaken judicial manpower for political reasons. If pressed, I do not think that the hon. Member for Brent, South would subscribe to such a suggestion. I hope that he would not —indeed, I am sure he would not. To propose judicial review almost as a substitute for political opposition tells us much more about the Opposition than about judicial review.

Mr. Boateng: The Minister must face the fact that the number of applicants for judicial review has increased from 685 in 1982 to 2,437 last year. It is no coincidence that, in those 10 years, there has been only one Government in power—a Conservative Government. It is no coincidence also that it has been found that, with a Conservative Government in power, with a working majority, an effective way of challenging the abuses introduced by that Administration has been to use the divisional court. That is not to cast any reproach on the Opposition: it is to take the Government to task and to commend the vigour of the judiciary and the enterprise of the citizen.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman knows that judicial review has been a growth industry. The only interesting speculation is whether it would have grown even faster had we had a Labour Government during the relevant years. I say with some satisfaction that that is entirely hypothetical: it did not arise and it does not arise.

The hon. Member for Brent, South speaks rightly about the quality of the appeal bench. We have fine traditions and high standards. He asked me, as did the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, whether one additional lord justice was sufficient. One additional lord justice was appointed last month, which made a total of 28. If the order is agreed to, a further lord justice will be appointed soon. An internal report presented in June 1989 recommended that additional lawyers be made available to the civil appeal office. With the assistance of the judiciary, calculations showed that six lawyers could save the time of two lords justices. Five additional lawyers were recruited after April 1990.

The former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, said in his valedictory speech in July 1992, to which the hon. Member for Brent, South has referred, that he was sure that the predicted saving in judicial time would accrue. The overall result is that, once the further lord justice is appointed, in two years two extra lords justices will have been added to the strength and the time of almost two lords justices released to meet any new work load—in a sense, four net new lords justices.

Mr. Boateng: It is a novel and interesting formula that two lords justices a-sitting equals six lawyers a-scribbling. We must get to the bottom of this. Is the Minister seriously suggesting that the appointment of two Lords Justices is saved by the appointment of six lawyers to the servicing department? If the Minister maintains that that is the case, I hope—he can have nothing to fear from this—that he will put the basis of that formula and calculation in the Library of the House of Commons so that we can all share in it, inform our legal and judicial brethren as to how they might better organise their time and also reassure the public on that point.

Mr. Taylor: The answer is yes, I do mean what the hon. Gentleman asks whether I meant. I draw my guidance in those comments, which were made in completely good faith and with confidence, from—not least—the last two reports of the Masters of the Rolls on the workings of the Court of Appeal.

As the hon. Gentleman invites me to put some comment into the public domain, I shall do so. We live in a world of scarce resources in every sense and there are many who claim, with every possible best intention, that more resources must be deployed in this, that or the other direction. Meanwhile, the Lord Chancellor has the task. It stays with him. After all the urging, his is the decision. In this, he has responded to calls for more lords justices made by old and new Masters of the Rolls in their annual reviews.

I risk a bare trespass, as others have done, on High Court judges. That there should be sufficient High Court judges is a matter of natural public concern. In recognition of that concern, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice asked a group of officials and some senior judges to advise them on the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges. The only comment that I should properly make—I was challenged to make it by the hon. Member for Brent, South—is whether that report will be published. The answer is that the report was to the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice. It is a matter for them to decide between them and jointly whether it is to be published—and it will be.

Mr. Boateng: May I have the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to speak again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): No, not tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st January, be approved.

Judgments

8.24 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move,

That the draft Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 25th January, be approved.

The purpose of the draft order is to make some modifications to the rules which govern the allocation of jurisdiction to the courts of the different parts of the United Kingdom in civil cases. Article 2 deals with cases which have a connection with more than one part of the United Kingdom—for example, where the plaintiff is English and the defendant Scottish. Article 3 deals with the rules of jurisdiction in Scotland.

Our present rules allocating jurisdiction within the United Kingdom are contained in schedule 4 to the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 and are based on those in the 1968 Brussels convention. That convention is concerned with jurisdiction and the enforcement of judgments as between member states of the EC, and the main purpose of the 1982 Act was to give effect to the convention in the United Kingdom.

The rules on jurisdiction in the Brussels convention have now been modified in various respects—none of the changes is of the greatest significance—and we have decided that where our rules follow those in the convention they should follow suit with regard to the amendments as well. The power to do that is in section 14 of the 1982 Act.

The amendments are technical and we have consulted the legal profession about them. Both the Law Society and the Bar Council have confirmed that the amendments are sensible.

The order makes amendments to schedule 4 in three areas—contracts of employment, related claims concerning a contract, and real property and holiday lettings.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It may save my intervening again if the Minister could say whether the professional organisations in Scotland were consulted and whether the Scottish Law Officers gave their views. They are not represented here tonight.

Mr. Taylor: I invited the Scottish Law Officers to be present if they so wished. All those whom the hon. Gentleman's question implies he hopes were canvassed were so canvassed.

The basic rule of jurisdiction in the Brussels convention is that a defendant must be sued in the country where he is domiciled. In specific types of case, alternatives are offered. Thus, article 5(1) provides that, in contract cases, a defendant may instead be sued in the courts for the place of performance of the contract. The convention said nothing originally about individual contracts of employment. It now contains a provision that the place of performance of such a contract is the country in which the employee habitually carries out his work. If he does not habitually work in any one country, he may choose to sue the employer in the courts for the place of business through which he was engaged.

I see no reason why schedule 4 should not be amended to keep it in line with the Brussels convention in that respect, and the order provides accordingly. It will make it clear that someone from Glasgow, for instance, who works in Scotland for a company based in London will be able to bring proceedings against the company in a matter relating to his employment in Scotland.

The order also permits a further choice which is given to a plaintiff employee by a new fifth paragraph in article 17 of the Brussels convention. That paragraph invalidates a choice of court agreement in cases concerning a contract of employment unless the agreement was made after the dispute arose. However, it allows an employee, but not an employer, to take advantage of a pre-dispute agreement which confers jurisdiction on a court other than that of the defendant's domicile or that of the place and performance of the contract.

Secondly, new paragraph 4 of article 6 of the Brussels convention provides that where there is both a contract case and a case relating to rights in real property between the same parties, the plaintiff may bring both actions in the country where the property is situated, rather than having to take separate actions in different countries. That is clearly convenient for the parties, and a similar provision has therefore been added to schedule 4.

Finally, the general rule that cases relating to property must be heard in the country where the property is situated has been amended with respect to the particular case of short-term holiday lets. Article 16(1) now confers alternative jurisdiction in such cases on the courts of the defendant's domicile, provided that both the landlord and the tenant are natural persons—that is to say, not companies—and are domiciled in the same country. We agree that this special provision is jusitified. It would mean, for example, that a dispute between two English people over a holiday letting in Scotland would not have to be heard in Scotland if it was more convenient for it to be dealt with in England.

Article 3 of the order amends schedule 8 to the 1982 Act which contains the rules as to jurisdiction within Scotland. Those rules also follow those of the Brussels convention, for the most part, and it is proposed to make the same amendments to them as those which have been made to schedule 4. These amendments also have the support of the legal profession in Scotland.

The changes contained in this order are useful ones which reflect those that have been made to the Brussels convention in the light of experience of its working. As I have said, interested bodies within the legal professions have agreed that they are sensible, and I commend them to the House.

8.32 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The contents of this order are non-contentious. They have been the subject of consultation and are, as the Minister has outlined, broadly welcomed. Having said that, it is interesting to reflect in a little detail on the primary basis of jurisdiction under the convention and to relate that to the schedules referred to in the order.

The primary basis is the domicile of the defendant. Unless an alternative basis of jurisdiction applies, a defendant domiciled in a member state must be sued in the courts of that state. There are, however, several alternative bases of jurisdiction which provide what might be termed non-exorbitant bases of jurisdiction of the type which all courts have traditionally claimed, so that a defendant domiciled in another member state may be sued in the

English court if certain conditions apply. In a contract case, the condition would be that the contract was to be performed here.

The Minister has given an example of the impact of the order on contracts of employment and he gave an example of the relevance of the place of work and the place of performance of the contract.

Secondly, in a tort case, the defendant, albeit domiciled in another state, may be sued in the English courts if the damage was sustained or the tort was committed here.

Thirdly, and not unimportantly, subject to article 16 of the convention, the defendant has, in certain circumstances outlined in article 16, the option of voluntarily submitting to proceedings here. That is what I wish to speak about.

For many years, the courts of England have been developing a reputation and an area of expertise unparallelled in Europe or, I would go so far as to say, in the world. In 80 per cent. of the cases in the commercial court, one party is foreign; in 50 per cent. of cases both parties are foreign. The significance of this order to those figures will be obvious to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it will to the House—as will the concern that exists about the operation of the commercial court and therefore the context in which these orders will be applied.

The commercial court increasingly finds itself unable to operate as it should because of a shortage of High Court judges. That shows the relevance of an issue on which we have touched time and time again during this evening's work: the insufficiency of High Court judges. The importance of exploring this matter in full has dawned on Conservative Members, because leading City institutions are increasingly expressing their concern about the acute shortage of judges in the commercial court, a shortage which has an impact of the issues that are before the House tonight. Bodies such as the stock exchange, the Baltic Exchange, the British Bankers Association, the Grain and Feed Traders Association—not a body that normally comes to the attention of any but a highly specialised section of the public—have expressed their concern about the insufficiency of High Court judges in the commercial court.

I ask hon. Members to imagine what would occur when somebody was seeking to exercise his or her rights under this order. The Minister has referred to the schedule, which deals with holiday lets and with several other contractual cases that are likely to find their way into our courts. What will be the situation in the High Court and commercial court when this order is brought into effect?

Mr. Justice Saville gives some indication of that. He warns that the court's business is grinding to a halt. We are being invited by the Government to give effect to an order which will extend the jurisdiction in circumstances in which, already, the commercial court finds itself unable to deal with the business at present before it. Mr. Justice Saville says that the court's list

"is in complete disarray with no realistic prospect of being able to restore order. There is insufficient judicial manpower to deal with the cases stood out, let alone cope with the existing list as it comes forward. The carefully nurtured reputation of the commercial court is at risk of being lost."

The House is being asked to sanction an order which comes into effect at a time when the list of the commercial court is, to quote Mr. Justice Saville, "in complete disarray".

It is worth listening to the concerns expressed by the head of litigation at Lovell White Durrant, Mr. Anthony Pugh-Thomas. He said:

"We have clients raring to go the week after next, and we have to tell them that they won't be heard until next April." That was the situation on 8 December 1992 and it is even worse now.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The kinds of proceedings covered by this order are not suitable for, nor would they be covered by or litigated in, the commercial court.

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. This order is principally about the simplification of formalities. I can understand the hon. Gentleman developing that argument, but he seems to be developing it a little more widely. Perhaps he could come back to the order, which is pretty tightly drawn, as he, as a lawyer, will understand.

Mr. Boateng: I will, of course, accept your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and assistance in this matter.

I think that it is worth looking at section 2 of the order, if the Minister will turn his attention to that. It refers to article 5, which deals with matters relating to individual contracts of employment. It inserts additional words and says that we are to look at where the employee habitually carries out his work. It goes on to say:

"If the employee does not habitually carry out his work in any one country, the employer may also be sued in the courts for the place where the business which engaged the employee was or is now situated."

Inevitably, the business infrastructure, which always, of course, includes the court system of any jurisdiction, will act as a magnet to the establishment of businesses, where the jurisdiction permits it, and this order deals with the issue of jurisdiction and will act as a magnet to action. Therefore, it is highly pertinent to examine the state of our commercial court, and I do not see how the Minister can pretend otherwise.

If a senior partner in a major City law firm says that considerable inconvenience is being caused to clients and that the state of the commercial court is a matter of embarrassment to the profession, that is relevant. What happens in the commercial court is inevitably influenced by what is happening elsewhere within the parameters of the High Court. Let me give an example.

Mr. Justice Saville was promised two more commercial court judges. I intend to go back to the Government's failings time and time again until this issue is resolved—that is why we are here; that is why we are spending the time we are on the floor of the House on this issue—and until the Government address the issue of how the measures which they introduce impact on the work load of the court.

Has the Minister considered this issue? Is there, as we speak, someone somewhere in the Lord Chancellor's Department who knows what the impact of this measure will be on the court system? Will it lead—this is a legitimate question to which we are entitled to receive an answer—to more people choosing to litigate in this country? Will it lead to an increase in the number of actions brought in this country? If it will, it is relevant that, as a result of delays elsewhere in the system of justice, Mr. Justice Taylor is unable to provide Mr. Justice Saville with his two more commercial court judges. Mr. Justice Saville

[Mr. Boateng]

expects that, instead of six judges, there will be only four. Three of them will be tied up on long cases, so that leaves one judge to handle the work of six.

In an earlier debate, which was brought to a speedy end, the Minister sought to introduce the novel formula that two Lords Justices of Appeal equal six lawyers servicing a department. Here we have one judge required to do the work of six judges. The broad statement of fact made by Mr. Justice Saville is that unless something is done now —this was in December, two months ago—the commercial court will cease to operate next term. That inevitably has a bearing on matters which the order seeks to address.

May we have some answers on the points made in relation to the likely increase in the number of actions and the extent to which the impact of that increase on judicial manpower has been taken into account? Can we hope that when the review of appointments to the High Court is published—we warmly welcome its publication—the passing of measures such as this will have been taken into account when ensuring that there are enough judges in the High Court?

Unless we have those assurances, many more evenings will be taken up with debates such as these. That is a promise: the Minister can be sure that we intend to fulfil our responsibility to make sure that the administration of justice takes place in the interests of the citizens and consumers.

8.47 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) asked me with some force—his question brooked no sidestep—whether I would state to him, to the House and to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether the impact of the proposals contained in this order was measurable. My answer is that the impact will be benign. It will not increase the number of actions; it will merely affect the distribution of actions within the United Kingdom by conveniencing the parties and giving them better and easier choices of venue.

That is why I submit that the measure has no enemies. In the course of its formulation, all interested parties, court users and wider interests, were consulted to find out whether it was genuinely thought to be an improvement —not a slavish imitation of something worked out in Brussels, or, indeed, something eccentrically and particularly British, but something between the two, taking the best of the European practice and the best of our own experience, reaching a compromise, and conveniencing litigant and lawyer alike. I suppose that one always has some innocence to lose—perhaps that is part of the joy of life—but I honestly did not imagine that the provisions would lead to the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the commercial court. However, I can deal with them briefly.

On the commercial court, I have nothing to add to what I said on 19 January in an Adjournment debate secured by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottoway). The remarks that I made then post-date the hon. Gentleman's comments this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 25th January, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

DEFENCE RESEARCH AGENCY

That the draft Defence Research Agency Trading Fund Order 1993, which was laid before the House on 22nd January, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Rescue Helicopter (RAF Brawdy)

8.50 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): The petition has been signed by 19,676 people from Pembrokeshire and the rest of Wales. They are outraged because the Ministry of Defence intends to end search and rescue helicopter operations at RAF Brawdy in my constituency on 1 April 1994.

The petition states that the decision

> will cause unnecessary deaths due to the greatly increased response times to reach incidents on the cliffs and coastal waters of West Wales and the international waters of the Celtic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean

as well as on the mountains of west and south Wales. People are also outraged because the Ministry of Defence is putting the saving of money before the saving of lives.

The petition ends:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not proceed with these proposals. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

8.52 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): It is just 11 days since an announcement was made in the west midlands by the regional health authority and the South Birmingham district health authority. It was not made in the House. It was announced that the Secretary of State had decided that two hospitals in the South Birmingham district—the Woodlands Royal orthopaedic hospital and the accident hospital—were to close and that a third hospital—the general hospital—would lose its medical beds to make way for services transferred from the two closing hospitals.

The decision had been trailed for a long time. It had caused more controversy in my constituency and others than anything else that I can recall. People in Birmingham are asking why the hospitals are closing. I suspect that, when he replies, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), will tell us, as a subsequent statement told the people of Birmingham, that it has something to do with improving hospital and health care services for the people of Birmingham, and something to do with ensuring greater access to higher quality health care. If the debate runs true to form, that is what the Minister will tell us today.

Not many people in Birmingham or the west midlands as a whole will agree with the Minister. The South Birmingham community health council has roundly condemned the proposals and pointed out the effect that they will have on patient care. The Audit Commission undertook a study which showed that if the two hospitals were closed and many much needed beds were taken in the general hospital, it would ensure that other hospitals in north and east Birmingham were overstretched.

Consultants have warned of the danger of cross-infection if a burns unit from the accident hospital and all the orthopaedic cases from the Woodlands hospital are put together in the inadequate surroundings that will exist in the general hospital. Perhaps most importantly, the local people who use the services have said that they do not want the closures but that they want the two hospitals to remain open.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): May I remind my hon. Friend that it is not only the people of Birmingham but the majority of medical staff and consultants who are worried about the proposals? Only today I had a telephone conversation with a consultant worried about the relocation of the major injuries unit from the accident hospital to the general hospital. At present, the unit is located next to casualty on the ground floor. The new facilities will be on the second floor, requiring the use of a lift. That is for critically ill and multiply injured patients for whom every second counts. They will have to go up two floors, having got into the centre of the city at a time when major road projects will cause disruption. That is another example of how patient care will be affected.

Mr. Burden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who makes her point forcefully.

The argument that the closures will improve services does not stand up to close inspection, and if the closures are nothing to do with improving services, what are they for? It seems to me and to most people in Birmingham that the closures are to do with the lack of money. To put it simply, South Birmingham health authority is going broke under the Government's policies. Community services in South Birmingham are under strain.

A constituent has been told that her nine-year-old boy will have to wait six months merely to see about an appointment for occupational therapy. Another constituent is having to wait 91 weeks to see a consultant who will then decide whether he can go on a waiting list for treatment on an arthritic knee.

Mental health services are also being affected. Only the other day we heard that nurses who had trained in South Birmingham and who could have used their talents for the authority and given health care to the people there will not be able to get permanent employment in a Birmingham hospital.

Why are South Birmingham hospitals so short of money? Why is the South Birmingham health authority in such difficulty? At one level, the situation is a testimony to the underfunding that the Government have brought to the national health service. The latest waiting list figures were issued just the other day. Over the past few months, Ministers have alleged that they have been reducing waiting lists. This is something that they have trumpeted. It is true that, in the west midlands, there has been a reduction of 38 in the number of people waiting between one and two years for hospital treatment. On the other hand, there has been an increase of more than 5,000 in the number waiting less than one year—the second worst in the entire country. There are now more than 90,000 people awaiting treatment in west midlands hospitals. In other words, the good news is not quite as good as Ministers would have us believe.

But the problems in the west midlands do not arise just from underfunding. Some of us have severe reservations about the use to which the money that is available is being put. In the last few years, a series of financial scandals have gripped the West Midlands regional health authority.

There has been the scandal of Qa Business Services, formerly the computer division—full title, management services division—of the regional health authority. That service was privatised. How the decision was made nobody quite knows; who was involved in it nobody quite knows, but it happened. Qa Business Services went bust within 18 months of its formation. Its employees—people who had previously worked for the computer division—lost their jobs, and more than 130 of them will lose up to two thirds of their pension entitlement because, as they were informed just a few months ago, the pension fund that they had been told was secure cannot meet the liabilities.

Then there is a consultancy, known as URG, which was meant to bring value for money to the west midlands supplies organisation. In that case, millions and millions of pounds were squandered. There was not much value for money there. A system called Healthtrac—again connected with the west midlands supplies organisation, and meant to be an all-singing, all-dancing new computer system—is the subject of an Audit Commission investigation. All the signs are that the report will show that more millions of public money have been wasted. This was confirmed last night by the former chair of the regional health authority.

Financial Information Packages—another private firm set up through the West Midlands regional health

[Mr. Burden]

authority—has acted as a kind of siphon for public money. Apparently a proposed development on the land occupied by the Rubery hospital will fund the health care programme for Birmingham in the years to come, but nobody knows what the terms of that deal are; nobody knows whether it will bring much money in; nobody knows the exact terms of the deal between the health authority and the developers, or even whether the developers are really developers.

I come now to the South Birmingham health authority, whose formation involved a merger with the former Central Birmingham health authority. That merger was opposed by local people and by clinicians and others involved in the health service, but it was pushed through at the insistence of the region, with the collusion of Ministers. The result is a multi-million-pound deficit in South Birmingham. When one mixes into that equation the impact of the Government's so-called health reforms, one has a financial crisis such as that which now grips the health authority, whose managers are sending to staff circulars saying that it will not be possible to pay bills.

What has happened to those who are responsible for such financial crises? Just yesterday, the Public Accounts Committee of this House asked some pretty searching questions about that matter. The answers are quite instructive.

Mr. Chris Watney, the former director of regionally managed services of the West Midlands regional health authority, is the person who seems to have been most closely involved in the tie-up with the consultancy firm URG, which promised the people of the west midlands savings of up to £50 million but ended up costing them £4 million. Those costs included expenses running to about £350,000 for such items as leased houses in London for the firm's executives and their wives, the hire of aircraft to come to work, and lavish entertainment. What happened to Mr. Watney? Was he sacked? No. He received a redundancy pay-off of more than £80,000. It was subsequently discovered that he had been overpaid to the tune of more than £40,000. So much for Mr. Watney.

Then we have Mr. Martin Davies, the former director of finance of the West Midlands regional health authority, who, the former chair of the authority said, had signed the authorisation to go ahead with the URG contract without his approval. What happened to Mr. Davies? He resigned. Despite the fact that he had not been sacked, he received pay in lieu of notice. Then we have Mr. Ken Bales, the former chief executive of the West Midlands regional health authority. He too appears to have been well involved in a number of the major projects of that authority. No action was taken. He resigned, in the normal course of events, not very long ago.

Then we come to Sir James Ackers, who was the chair of the West Midlands regional health authority, the man whom the Secretary of State stood by through thick and thin. His name also crops up in the URG scandal. The Audit Commission had something to say about what it discovered about his involvement in that consultancy. He attended a dinner. I shall quote what the Audit Commission said about that dinner, at which the details of the contract, which lost the people of the west midlands £4 million, were apparently discussed:

"The details were . . . explained at a dinner (after the work had started) given for the Director (RMS), the RHA Chairman, the Director of Finance and the Chairman of the Members' Panel. The consultants said that this meeting was specifically to meet the RHA Chairman, to outline the cost and to ensure that the Director (RMS) had full authority to proceed. Afterwards the RHA Chairman said he did not realise that a firm agreement to do the work had been reached."

So he attended a dinner; the details were apparently explained; that led the next day to an authorisation being given, but he did not realise that a firm agreement had been reached.

What happened to him? There were calls for his resignation. Finally, he resigned just last month, in January. The Secretary of State accepted his resignation with these words:

"You have supported the reforms of the NHS and have overseen their successful implementation in the region. In addition, you recently initiated some important movements in the managerial structure of the region. Underpinning all this has been your personal commitment to the health service and its patients.

I should also acknowledge your valuable contributions as chairman of all the regional chairmen, and as a member of the NHS Policy Board which has advised successive Secretaries of State."

We discovered yesterday that what Sir James Ackers has contributed had been acknowledged by the Secretary of State, because we were told at the Public Accounts Committee that the Secretary of State had decided not to take action about the losses incurred under the stewardship of Sir James Ackers but to grant him a discretionary payment of an undisclosed sum.

So no action appears to have been taken against any of these people. We heard yesterday, however, of one person who is still employed by the West Midlands regional health authority who was given a telling off for what happened. That is the man who apparently was responsible for the overpayment of more than £40,000 to Mr. Watney. That man is the regional director of personnel, Mr. Mel Nock. He is an important man in the regional health authority to this day.

We have heard very little of Mr. Nock in the course of the story so far, but we need to know not just how he came to overpay Mr. Watney to the tune of £40,000 but what he knew of the other things that had been going on in the west midlands. He is the director of personnel, an important man. Apart from anyone else, the pensioners of Qa Business Services should know what the man responsible for personnel had to do with what happened in the regional health authority.

All this shows incredible double standards on the part of the Government. Let us imagine what would have happened if such financial scandals had involved not a health authority but an elected local authority. If a local authority had been involved, Ministers would have been screaming from the rooftops about surcharges and allegations about left-wing councils. What a difference we see when it is their boys who have been responsible for the scandals. When it is their boys who are involved, Ministers seem to take pride in avoiding answering questions from Members. There has been a series of reports on what has been going on, but very few of them have been published.

Just before Christmas, the district auditor sent a management letter to the senior management of the regional health authority. It detailed the stage which the district auditor had reached in his investigation. The letter was not confidential, but I have yet to see it; it has not been published. Indeed, in a question a short time ago, I asked whether the Minister would direct that the report be

published. I was told in reply that there was no such report. I checked again, knowing that the document had been sent, and discovered that it was known technically as a management letter. I tabled another question asking whether the management letter could be published. I received the inevitable response—the sort of answer I have received often in recent months—that it was a matter for the regional health authority.

The Secretary of State has power to direct the publication of such documents, but she has chosen not to exercise it. Instead, the people of the west midlands, including hon. Members, are being kept in the dark. When scandals come to light, Ministers sit on their hands, especially if their boys are involved.

The chief executive of the NHS, Sir Duncan Nichol, attended yesterday's meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. He was asked what action he had taken to improve matters, in view of what had come to light, in the west midlands. He said that he had sent a letter to the various health authorities.

The problems in the west midlands still exist. We have a new chair, Sir Donald Wilson, brought in from Mersey regional health authority. He has said that there would be a new regime in the west midlands, that an audit committee would be set up and that new auditors would be appointed. Since his appointment, no further reports have been published.

My requests for publication of the management letter were made both before and after Sir Donald's appointment. I am told that, while what was said at the last regional health authority meeting was not confidential and that the reports could be published, they could not be published just yet, not while a Public Accounts Committee hearing was coming up and its discussions might be prejudiced by the publication of such documents at this stage.

What a load of rubbish. Those reports are still under wraps, and Ministers owe it to the House and the people of the west midlands to publish them. We in South Birmingham still have our deficit, and there is disagreement over how much it is. We were told a couple of weeks ago that it was under control and was less than £1 million. A couple of days later, we were told that it was between £2 million and £2·5 million. We do not know the causes of the financial crisis, and the report by consultants KPMG Peat Marwick has not been published. It was finished last summer, and when we ask Ministers to publish it, they reply that it is a matter for the West Midlands regional health authority.

What has been done to solve the problems of the west midlands? The only action of substance to have been taken in recent weeks is the decision to shut the hospitals. The managers do not suffer; they appear to get glowing tributes and pay-offs. The patients and those who work in the NHS suffer. Nurses are told that after their training they will not receive jobs, not because they are not needed in the area —we in south Birmingham need more nurses—but because of a shortage of money.

As the problems of the west midlands still exist, I ask the Minister tonight to come clean and say exactly why our local hospitals are closing. When will the Secretary of State and others in the Government start listening and responding to what people in the west midlands are saying about the way in which their health services are being run? When will they respond to the three fundamental questions that we have been putting?

First, may we have a full, independent public inquiry into what has been going on, revealing all the facts, not just those that Ministers want published? Secondly, we want to know exactly who is to blame for the financial crisis. Whoever is to blame—the West Midlands regional health authority or South Birminham—it is not the fault of the patients, so they should not be forced to suffer. Therefore, South Birmingham should receive the financial injection it needs to maintain local services and to ensure that patients do not suffer.

Thirdly, why is it so difficult for Ministers to say that regional health authorities should be open and accountable to the people whom they are supposed to serve? The health service is meant to be a service for people free at the point of need, but we are not seeing very much of that in the west midlands at the moment. I hope that, if the Minister is serious about improving health services in this country, he will change direction today and provide us with the cash we need. I hope that he will insist on openness, insist that the reports be published, and insist that accountability and democracy return to the health service in the west midlands.

9.15 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) said, there is apparently a requirement that health authorities and trusts conduct their business in as open a manner as possible. However, as we have heard, the reports on the activities of West Midlands regional health authority and South Birmingham health authority remain unpublished. Elected Members of Parliament such as my hon. Friend and I have been unable to see the reports, while decisions have been taken against the wishes of the people of Birmingham.

In Birmingham, we have seen hospitals proposed for closure and campaigns against the closures. Hon. Members and elected councillors have expressed grave concern about what is happening in our health authority. On 25 November, I wrote to the Secretary of State expressing concern about the impact on patient care of the proposals to close the hospitals. I asked the right hon. Lady to intervene, because she had said that she was concerned about patient care. We hear a lot from the right hon. Lady about how much she cares, and I took her at her word—I thought that she did care.

On 5 January I wrote again, reminding the Secretary of State that I still had not received a reply to my letter of 25 November and explaining further concerns that had come to light, some of which have been described by my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield. Those concerns arise out of reports by the Audit Commission and by neighbouring health authorities, which are most concerned about the effect of the hospital closures on the people they are trying to serve. I still received no reply. I tabled a parliamentary question, but despite further reminders, including a conversation with the staff of the private office of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), and although I faxed a copy of my original letter, only today did I receive a reply.

It is too late. As my hon. Friend has said, the decision was taken last week. Neither the Secretary of State nor the Department of Health informed us of that decision, although they were polite and sensible enough to apologise

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to us a day later for the fact that they had not responded to our requests for a meeting with the Secretary of State and had not bothered to inform us before announcing publicly that they had decided to go ahead with the hospital closures.

My hon. Friend has explained the background to the decision—the financial deficit in South Birmingham health authority after the merger. We still cannot get to the bottom of exactly how big the deficit is; estimates vary dramatically. We know that letters went out to all members of staff informing them that, even now, bills presented after 28 December could not be paid. It seems that the financial crisis has still not been solved, yet the plans to solve it involve the closure of our hospitals. The rationale for these closures has always been that somehow it is an interim measure in the progress towards the grandiose plans with which we have been presented, entitled "Building a Healthy Birmingham". Like so many decisions from health authorities in the west midlands, those plans have been opposed by the majority of people for whom they are supposed to provide better services.

On Tuesday, Labour Members representing constituencies in the west midlands had a meeting with Sir Roy Griffiths. He confirmed that those plans have now hit the skids, as there are insufficient resources available. He told us that there was a capital moratorium and that, in his opinion, the health authority would get better value for money by tackling the maintenance backlog than by implementing the major new building programme that had been proposed.

Our hospitals are now being closed and facilities moved into the general hospital, on the basis that it will provide better services because the accident and emergencies services and the orthopaedic services would be better provided within a district general hospital. There is one problem with that argument and that is that all the services in the general hospital that give it its name—the general surgical and medical services—are moving out. The arguments about patient care do not stand up to examination.

At the last minute, in response to those valid criticisms, the health authority said that it would retain one consultant position and one consultant surgeon. Inquiries today reveal that the consultants being kept on are those who are due to retire, so, yet again, this is a temporary sop to attempt to justify an unjustifiable decision to decimate our services in Birmingham.

We are not opposed to changes in the configuration of our hospitals. For example, there is much support for the building of a new children's hospital and for the rebuilding of the elderly services block at Selly Oak hospital in my constituency which was condemned as long ago as 1978; yet it is still there and there are still no plans to replace it. Yes, there is scope for investment in our hospitals, but, for goodness' sake, why do not the Government intervene to ensure that the health authorities consult the city council and the elected representatives? Unelected, Government-appointed people have been riding roughshod over the views of elected representatives of the people of Birmingham, clinicians and others who know about our health services.

At the meeting with Sir Roy Griffiths, he accepted that there had been problems and that there was a need for greater consultation with the city of Birmingham and its elected representatives. He said that those responsible for problems in the past had now left the health authority. Sir Roy Griffiths and his adviser were somewhat embarrassed when they were asked under precisely what terms those people—Sir James Ackers, Mr. Ken Bales and Mr. Martin Davies—have left the authority.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield explained, the manner in which they left also causes great concern. They left not under a cloud, accepting responsibility for the manner in which they had run the health authority, but with very nice amounts of money, which I hope will be revealed. The people of Birmingham should know exactly what the financial arrangements were for the payouts to Sir James Ackers and the others who have been mentioned.

In the United Kingdom, we now have Government-appointed, non-elected representatives running our health authorities and health services. Obviously, that is the direction in which other public services are moving. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield said, if elected councillors had taken the same decisions as those non elected representatives took, they would have been rightly condemned.

I should like the Minister to respond in a way that gives the people of Birmingham and the west midlands confidence that people will be accountable for their actions and will intervene and listen to the views of the elected representatives and the people of Birmingham in future.

Our hospitals in Birmingham have not yet closed. There are still arguments about the effects of such closures on patient care. It is clear that the decisions were taken on financial grounds, not on the basis of improving facilities for the people of Birmingham. It is not too late for the Department of Health and Ministers to sit round the table and talk to the elected representatives to see whether they can find a way forward so that we can have confidence in the future and a pattern of hospitals which serves the people of Birmingham. They should ensure that decisions are not taken for short-term financial reasons.

9.26 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) and the Minister for allowing me to take part in this debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend on taking the initiative and managing to get this opportunity not only for himself but for other hon. Members from Birmingham to put to the Minister our serious concerns about the way in which the West Midlands health authority has behaved not just in recent weeks or months but in recent years.

My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) and for Northfield have referred to the session of the Public Accounts Committee yesterday. As a member of that Committee, I shall not comment on yesterday's proceedings, because, as my hon. Friends will appreciate, we are considering our report, which will come out in due course.

The Public Accounts Committee has asked for further information before we report. We have asked for copies of some of the secret reports to which my hon. Friends have referred, because one of the features of the West Midlands health authority recently has been the series of secret reports which have been prepared but not published. Those reports have not been made available to hon.

Members in the House and certainly not to the public. We know about the report of the National Audit Office on which the Committee took evidence yesterday, but that is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of reports.

We know that there is a series of reports from the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission told us that not only the contents but the subjects of the reports are confidential. We cannot even be told what the National Audit Office has reported on or found it necessary to investigate. There is a total shroud of secrecy. We have had some internal studies done. We have had the so-called Carver report which has not been made available to Members of Parliament or the public. I understand that we have had a report by Peat Marwick, which is secret.

I sometimes think that the West Midlands health authority is drawing up more reports than it is treating patients. As my hon. Friends have said, it is essential that we have a public inquiry so that all of us who live in and represent the west midlands, especially the city of Birmingham, can see exactly what is happening.

I shall not comment on the allegations and criticisms which have been made about Sir James Ackers and some of the former officers of the West Midlands health authority for the reasons which I have already explained. I expect that there will be some comments about those matters in the report which my colleagues and I will eventually publish on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee.

Other aspects of the affairs of the West Midlands health authority are already public knowledge. My hon. Friends have referred to the public report, endorsed by the West Midlands health authority and eventually approved by the Secretary of State for Health, ridiculously entitled "Building a Healthy Birmingham". My hon. Friends have described some of the proposals in that report, which, frankly, can be summarised as concentrating as many services as possible on one site—the Queen Elizabeth hospital.

When Sir James Ackers, as chairman of the health authority, was called upon to explain the reason for and motivation of the proposals, he used—in my hearing and more than once—a very revealing word. In describing the proposals to centralise services as much as possible on the Queen Elizabeth site, which is grossly inaccessible to most people in Birmingham except the middle-class people who live nearby, he used a most revealing word: he said that he would give us an excellent "campus". That is the only time I have ever heard anyone, or any Member of Parliament of any party, use the word "campus" in discussing hospitals. The proposal is not about treating sickness, disease and disability among the people of the city of Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands: it is about creating a university of Birmingham medical school. That was the motivation behind the scenes.

The health authority wanted to put as much as possible on one site near the university of Birmingham, so that students and consultants would not have to travel but the patients would travel to them. That is the wrong purpose behind the planning of hospitals. The people of Birmingham said so. Their elected representatives, city councillors as well as Members of Parliament, said so. Indeed, the local newspapers, which are not friends of the Labour movement, said that the strategy was appalling. I have yet to find anyone except the university of Birmingham medical school and the health authority who believes that the proposals in "Building a Healthy Birmingham" are good. I must add, of course, that the Secretary of State for Health approved the proposals.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the sad saga was the attempt to manipulate public opinion. I use that word deliberately. I am a resident of Birmingham. I live in my constituency, as my hon. Friends live in theirs. I was surprised to receive a glossy leaflet through the letter box urging us to support the proposals in "Building a Healthy Birmingham". It was signed by the chairman of the East Birmingham health authority. It did not surprise me that he was in cahoots with Sir James Ackers, but it surprised me that, when I went to see the chairman of the district health authority, at his invitation, to discuss the proposals, he criticised them.

I told the chairman of the district health authority that I found it difficult to understand why I had received through my letter box a leaflet saying that the proposals were good when he had said that they were bad. He said, "I had to do it—it was written for me." All he did was put his name on the leaflet. It was written for him by the West Midlands regional health authority, and we shall never know what threats were used to make him put his signature on that leaflet.

The leaflet boasted about the improvements to come, which had already been approved. For the purposes of political propaganda, they were attributed to "Building a Healthy Birmingham". The leaflet said that a new maternity unit would be built as a result of the report, but that proposal had already been approved, and the money was there. There were several other examples like that.

A clear attempt was made to manipulate public opinion, but the health authority failed to do so—just as it failed to persuade the local people in my constituency and neighbouring constituencies in the East Birmingham health authority area that the proposal to have the first opt-out or trust hospital in Birmingham was a good thing. It failed to persuade not only the Labour party, which organised petitions against the proposal. To my certain knowledge, those petitions were also signed by supporters of the Conservative party; they agreed with us that the proposal was a bad thing, and wanted to keep East Birmingham hospital as it was.

The consultants had a ballot about the proposal to opt out. They did not like it. They did not want a trust. Other doctors at the hospital had a ballot. They did not want a trust. The nurses and other staff had a secret ballot. They did not like the proposal, either. They were opposed to it. But the health authority said that it knew best. The local people were overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal to opt out. The community health council, which represents local people, unanimously opposed the proposal for a trust at East Birmingham hospital. I declare an interest because the chair of the council is my wife.

Most significantly, one group of people opposed the proposal who could not be accused of having vested interests or not understanding the issues. I respect the opinions of that group most of all. They are the local family doctors. They were not consulted by the regional health authority. They were consulted by the health authority, but they were consulted on the initiative of East Birmingham community health council, which found that the family doctors were overwhelmingly opposed to the trust as well.

I was not surprised, but I was very sad, when West Midlands regional health authority rejected all our

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propositions. "We know best," the authority said, and the Secretary of State for Health rubber-stamped the decision in her turn—or was it his turn? The right hon. Lady's predecessor may have been in office then, but it makes no difference: the policies do not change just because the bottom on the seat changes. Anyway, the trust went ahead despite the opposition of doctors, nurses, national health service staff, local people, family general practitioners and all their representatives—again, on the basis of secret reports.

When I said that I did not know whether it was a good idea, and that I wanted to look at the business plan, I was told that I could not do so, because the plan was financial and therefore secret—like so much to do with money in the West Midlands regional health authority. No one outside the inner circle is allowed to know the financial realities until it is too late and wards and hospitals start to be closed.

My hon. Friends have described the position vividly. The closure of Woodlands hospital and the accident hospital, and the proposed closure of Birmingham General hospital down the road, have been overwhelmingly opposed—not only by local people who depend on those hospitals, but by the people of Birmingham in general. Their opposition, however, has been to no avail. Whatever else may be said about the affairs of the West Midlands health authority, it does not care about the views of local people, and it certainly does not represent local people.

My hon. Friends are right to criticise the authority's lack of accountability, and I support their call for a public inquiry into what has been going on in the authority. If that is too embarrassing for all the people involved, why do they not simply resign? It is not enough for Sir James Ackers to go, although he has headed the authority—and bravely said yesterday that the buck stops with him. He has not been alone: what about all the other political appointments to the authority—the faceless men and women who have acted as rubber stamps for the Government's policies? They, too, should go—and until they do, the people of the west midlands will have no confidence in their regional health authority.

9.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). Not surprisingly, the hon. Gentleman has concentrated on the difficulties faced by the West Midlands health authority rather than on its considerable achievements. Perhaps he should consider how to convince his audience that he is interested in health, rather than being concerned merely with the political and media appeal of the series of supposed conspiracies with which he appears to be obsessed.

We are talking here about health services, and there are good stories to tell about the health service in the west midlands—let us not forget that. The regional health authority is the largest in the country, comprising 19 districts and covering a population of some 5 million. Its financial allocation for 1993-94 is very large compared with the regional average: this year's allocation represents a 5 per cent. increase in real terms over that of the previous year. That increase, together with the commitment and dedication of the authority's staff, has enabled the authority to deliver a continually improving service to the population of the region.

In the past 10 years, under the active leadership of Sir James Ackers, treatment levels have risen dramatically. The treatment of in-patients has risen by 25 per cent. and that of day cases by 141 per cent.

In the past year alone, the total number of patients waiting more than one year for treatment has been reduced by 42 per cent. There is no longer anyone waiting more than two years for treatment, and more than 60 capital schemes have been completed by the authority since 1979. In south Birmingham, a new cardiac unit was opened at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in 1991 at a cost of £2 million. This year, the £13 million Queen Elizabeth psychiatric hospital received its first patient. Birmingham also leads Europe in providing the first quick and early diagnostic centre—a purpose-built facility at the Queen Elizabeth medical centre for the rapid diagnosis of cancer. Those are a few of the many notable achievements of which the region can be justifiably proud.

However, we must not forget—I have not been able to forget it this evening—that a number of issues in the west midlands have required serious attention. I shall outline some of them, together with the action that has been taken to resolve them.

Hon. Members know that the financial position of the South Birmingham health authority was the subject of an earlier Adjournment debate in the summer. It is not worth repeating all the details of the deficit, as we have already spent much time doing so. However, I remind the House that, in response to the problems of the deficit in south Birmingham, plans were produced that centred on removing the signicant duplication of services between the five major hospitals in the district—Selly Oak, Queen Elizabeth, Birmingham accident, royal orthopaedic and Birmingham general. It was proposed that the overspending would be removed not by cutting services, but by removing the costs of duplication of services and providing services more efficiently.

The main point of the plan that the regional health authority agreed last June was that services currently provided by the royal orthopaedic and Birmingham accident hospitals should be transferred to the general hospital and that most of the acute medicine and general surgery provided by the general should move to the Queen Elizabeth hospital.

The regional health authority followed the procedures laid down when closure or change of use for health buildings are proposed. There was a consultation period of more than three months, when the plans were widely circulated and everyone had an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Burden: Is the Minister aware of the distinct unhappiness among staff at the Birmingham accident hospital—one of those scheduled for closure—at the fact that they were not directly consulted about the closure plan? Has he been misinformed about that? If he has, does he now feel that the closure plan should be reopened if it is proved that not everyone who should have been consulted was consulted directly?

Mr. Sackville: I have no doubt that all the proper consultation procedures were carried out. I cannot claim that everyone was, or will be, in agreement, but the procedures were carried out.

Ultimately, as in all cases when the local community health council cannot agree with the health authority's plans, the final decision rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. After careful consideration of all the evidence presented, I agreed, on behalf of the Secretary of State, the proposals put forward by South Birmingham health authority to close the Birmingham accident and royal orthopaedic hospitals and transfer the services to the general hospital in Birmingham. I notified the regional and district health authorities, as well as the hon. Members for Northfield and for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), and letters were sent to the House on the day of my decision. Hon. Members representing other Birmingham constituencies were notified the following day.

For the benefit of hon. Members, I shall outline my reasons for the decision.

First, I see the closures as the best option for the continued and improved provision of accident and emergency and orthopaedic services within the district until such time as the new facilities at the South Birmingham medical centre become available. Secondly, they are a necessary step along the path to securing financial balance within South Birmingham health authority. Another factor is the age, condition and layout of the buildings of both hospitals. The high costs of meeting clinical, statutory and safety standards all speak against the retention of the hospitals.

I fully appreciate the strength of feeling for well-loved hospitals and my Department has received many letters praising the work of the royal orthopaedic hospital in particular. We must, however, take this opportunity to ensure that buildings meet the needs of modern health care and match the quality of medical and nursing care that takes place within those buildings.

There has been talk of cross-infection. The concerns about it have been considered and have been fully taken into account. As the hon. Member for Northfield knows, the burns unit will be housed in a self-contained unit with dedicated theatres. It will be located in a separate block away from orthopaedics. I can reassure the hon. Gentleman about that.

Emergency cover at the Birmingham general hospital has been raised. I remind the hon. Members for Northfield and for Selly Oak that the South Birmingham acute unit has stated that 24-hour medical and surgical cover will be available at registrar level. It will be provided on a rota basis from the Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals. Additional consultant cover during normal working hours will be provided from the out-patient and day-case surgeries at the general hospital. Outside normal hours, dedicated consultant cover will be provided, and I am glad to be able to reassure the hon. Lady on that point.

Dr. Lynne Jones: We have been told that patient service could be improved by the relocation of the specialty hospitals in the district general hospital setting, yet the Minister is telling us that the relocation to the eneral hospital will result in cover being provided from the Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth hospitals, which are much further from the general hospital than they are from the present location. That does not square with the idea of an improvement in patient service.

Mr. Sackville: I can only seek to reassure the hon. Lady that adequate cover will be maintained. It is a matter that I have discussed with Sir Don Wilson. It is a point of considerable concern that must be considered, and I have received assurances. I shall personally monitor the continuing situation.

The hon. Member for Northfield concentrates very much on the problems that have occurred and he focused on the various doubts about the financial transactions that have been carried out by the region. Let him concentrate also on health services and on the efforts of all those who work for the health service in the west midlands so that he is able to take full account of the excellent work that is done.

I shall refer to some of the achievements within the west midlands. If we concentrate only on matters that are the subject of inquiries, a one-sided picture could be presented of health services in the west midlands. There are many positive features.

I point, first, to an interest of my own, which is the West Midlands ambulance service. It provides a good example. It is one of the largest ambulance services in the country. It has received accreditation to BS 5750 on the basis of a total quality service. It was the first ambulance service to introduce paramedic motor cyclists. It is currently leading the way in ensuring that all ambulance services have a trained paramedic included as part of their front-line teams.

This is one of the great success stories of the modern health service. Soon, the public in the west midlands and elsewhere will know that, every time an ambulance attends an emergency or accident, it will contain a paramedic as part of the crew, who will have been trained to a high level. The paramedic will have been trained specifically to resuscitate and support life in the pre-hospital period.

The West Midlands ambulance service has also just won the United Kingdom transplant support service contract, which commenced this month, for transporting teams and organs nationwide—an important and topical development.

Despite an 8 per cent. increase in emergency activity, the West Midlands ambulance service is an example of an efficient organisation with resources channelled towards patient care. All emergency vehicles are under six years old, and nearly all are now equipped with defibrillators.

Dr. Lynne Jones: I hesitate to intervene again, but the Minister has raised the issue of the ambulance service. I welcome his announcement about the involvement of paramedics, but information that I have received from a number of general practitioners in my constituency shows that all is not well with the West Midlands ambulance service.

For instance, the Minister should consider the case of the man who had to wait three hours for an ambulance which should have arrived within the hour, and who ended up having to have his leg amputated. I was also told of another two cases in which, in the end, patients took taxis and, if they had not done so, would have suffered a similar fate.

I have heard from other general practitioners that the ambulance service is not as fast as it used to be, so we have concern there as well. I am sorry to have to tell the Minister that, once again, he is out of touch with the reality on the ground.

Mr. Sackville: I have visited the ambulance service within the last two weeks, and I was extremely impressed

[Mr. Sackville]

with what I saw. I was aware of considerable dedication among staff, crews and management. It had one of the most impressive control centres that I have ever seen, and I have visited a large number in recent months. I am assured—I saw the figures to prove it—that response times are improving fast. In a large ambulance service—this is the second largest in the country—there will always be problems from time to time. All that I can say is that the quality of commitment and what has been achieved by the West Midlands ambulance service is striking.

Mr. Terry Davis: Did the Minister, during his visit to the west midlands, take the opportunity not only to visit the ambulance service but the head office of the West Midlands regional health authority in Hagley road to talk to its members? Was he impressed by that?

Mr. Sackville: I made a specific visit to the ambulance service, which is one of my particular interests. It is one of the success stories for which it should be given credit.

Mr. Davis: Has the Minister ever visited the office of the West Midlands regional health authority? Has he ever talked to its members? Does he not want to?

Mr. Sackville: I have not had the honour of visiting the offices of the West Midlands regional health authority. I have visited a number of hospitals and other health facilities in the West Midlands in recent months, and that is the important thing. It is what happens on the ground that matters.

The paramedic skills in the Staffordshire ambulance service should not be overlooked. Two members of the service were included recently in the team drawn mainly form the North Staffordshire trauma centre at the request of the Prime Minister to travel to what was Yugoslavia to provide help and paramedic advice to the people of that troubled country.

The West Midlands is making excellent progress on health promotion—the key theme of the White Paper "The Health of the Nation". I opened and addressed a conference on the health of the nation in Birmingham recently.

In Sandwell, a health fair and open day to promote healthy lifestyles has been organised by the family health services authority. Westminster now provides parents and children with regular health and safety advice. The priority health unit in Dudley is working with the FHSA and local GPs——

Mr. Burden: The Minister's comments are fascinating, but they are not the subject of this debate. Could I ask him to comment on this: Sir James Ackers, when he was the chair of the West Midlands regional health authority, stated that the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan, which, from what the Minister said, is still on the go, was not compatible with the creation of hospital trusts in the South Birmingham area. He said that until the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan was well down the road, the region would not support the creation of hospital trusts.

Since that time, expressions of interest have come in from the acute unit in South Birmingham. That is also a matter of some concern to my constituents. Will the Minister, in this review of the situation in the west midlands, tell us whether he looks with favour on those expressions of interest, or whether he agrees with Sir James Ackers that they are incompatible with the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan?

Mr. Sackville: I am absolutely in favour of the creation of trusts if the organisations and health facilities that wish to attain trust status are deemed suitable. There are some very successful health trusts in the west midlands. I had hoped that the hon. Member for Northfield had got past having to oppose trust status on political grounds, because the BMA and many other people have got past that stage. I think that he is living in the past.

I want now to mention the priority health unit in Dudley, which, working with the FHSA and local GPs, provides professional advice and care to patients requiring chiropody and audiology services through GPs' surgeries or in mobile units. Virtually all Coventry GPs are now involved in some form of positive health promotion, including well-woman clinics, heart disease prevention and advice on alcohol control and on how to stop smoking. Hereford, Worcester and North Worcester district health authorities have all appointed, for example, anti-smoking facilitators to work with GPs and to give advice to people who want to give up smoking.

For their own staff, West Midlands regional health authority recently held a health-at-work workshop to promote healthy lifestyles and to provide practical advice on how to achieve that.

That is what this debate is about; it is about health services in the west midlands, and if hon. Members are concerned only with what has gone wrong and what are the supposed scandals or problems in the financial management of the regional health authority, they are not interested in health.

Mr. Terry Davis: These are not "supposed" scandals. The Comptroller and Auditor General told the House that senior officials of the West Midlands regional health authority have shown a cavalier disregard for proper procedures and for proper standards of public life. Does he not understand that these are serious criticisms? Will he stop sheltering behind people working in the national health service? My hon. Friends and I have not criticised people working in the national health service. We have criticised the people running the service in the west midlands, the people appointed by this Minister and his Secretary of State. What has he to say to defend them?

Mr. Sackville: The net effect of the constant criticisms is to denigrate the efforts of all those who work in the health services in the west midlands. What the hon. Member and his hon. Friends need to do is spend a little more time seeing what is happening on the ground——

Mr. Terry Davis: Who spends more time on the ground —him or us?

Mr. Sackville: He will see that there are tens of thousands of dedicated people working for the health service in the west midlands who deserve a little praise and encouragement from time to time.

Mr. Burden: If the Minister agrees with me, as he seems to, that thousands of staff who work for West Midlands regional health authority, component hospitals and district health authorities are dedicated and need a fair deal, are not they entitled to know, as we are, the causes of the scandals in south Birmingham, to see the KPMG

Peat Marwick report, to read the auditors' report and to find out and be told why millions of pounds that could have gone into improving health care has gone down the drain because the people running the health authority have mismanaged it? If he believes that they have the right to know that, will he today direct the publication of the reports to which I and my hon. Friends have referred?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member is obsessed with publication of reports. The matters that have been referred to tonight have been properly investigated. Any action that is due will be taken. He has my assurance on that.

In conclusion——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mr. Sackville: In conclusion, I want to respond to what the hon. Member for Selly Oak said about giving people in the west midlands confidence about their health service. They can have the confidence of knowing that the things which have given rise to inquiries will be properly investigated and all the proper action will be taken. Where there are doubts as to finances and financial problems, such as in South Birmingham, action plans will be followed through which will bring those matters into balance.

I ask the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, as well as asking me for that assurance, to help to give that confidence to people in the west midlands and to ensure that financial problems are not the only things that they read about with regard to health in the west midlands; that they read also about the dedication and the work— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has twice received letters from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggesting that he come into the Department to discuss these matters. I had a very constructive meeting recently with the community health council, which he did not attend. He is welcome any time to come into the Department to discuss these matters with me; I hope that he will take me up on that.

I reiterate what I have been saying in the past few minutes. There have been great achievements in health in the west midlands which should not be ignored. They are achievements of which any region could be justly proud. They underline the region's enormous investment in and commitment to patient care and patient services.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 12 February 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Galina and Angelina Brew

9.34 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I wish to present a petition that has been signed by almost 1,000 residents in the area of Thamesmead and beyond. It has been supported by several right hon. and hon. Members of this place and of the other place, including a former Law Lord, a former Solicitor-General, several former Cabinet Ministers and a former Minister who had responsibility for immigration.

The petition stems from the fact that the Secretary of State for the Home Department has refused permission to Mrs. Galina Brew and her daughter, Angelina, to remain in the United Kingdom. Their application to remain was submitted out of time due to the professional negligence of Mrs. Brew's solicitor, who has since been struck off the roll of solicitors.

Angelina is approaching the age of 11 years and has been educated in this country since the age of seven. She has special education needs. She is happily settled in the Bishop John Robinson Church of England primary school in Thamesmead.

Galina's Ghanaian husband, Angelina's father, has abandoned them. They have no home or other relatives either in Ghana or in Galina's native Ukraine, which she left 24 years ago. The petition states:

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do urge the Right Honourable Kenneth Clarke QC MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department, to intervene in the proposal to remove Angelina and Galina Brew and allow them leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

I present the petition in the hope of averting a tragedy in the life of a young girl who is in the Public Gallery.

To lie upon the Table.

Disabled People

9.36 am

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I wish to present a petition from residents of the communities of Wick, Keiss, Halkirk, Spittal, Watten, Lyth, Dunnet, Castletown, Reay and Thurso in Caithness. Their concern is that disabled people must have the right to the same equality of opportunity in all aspects of their daily life as non-disabled people. The petition states:

"people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled (for whatever reason) are continually having to face widespread unjustifiable discrimination . . . legislation is necessary to outlaw this discrimination.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce legislation to outlaw unjustifiable discrimination against people with actual or perceived disabilities as soon as possible.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.37 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

The Bill has two main parts; the first deals with electoral registration and the second relates to physical access to polling stations. There is a third part and two schedules, but they are consequential to the material contained in the first two parts.

I shall deal with the provisions in respect of electoral registers, but I wish to talk, first, about the problem that the Bill seeks to address. I shall then analyse the consequences of the problem and look towards a remedy. The Bill is part of the remedy, but other measures may also need to be taken in conjunction with this proposed legislation.

The problem with electoral registration is that there is a considerable shortfall in the number of people who are on registers, compared with the numbers who are entitled to be on them. It is clear from official figures that have been published that there is a shortfall of more than 1.9 million. That is the gap between the eligible population and the numbers who are on registers.

In 1987, and in preceding years, there was a rough and ready balance between the numbers entitled to be on registers and the numbers on them. The problem has grown considerably since 1987. At present, there is a rough and ready balance in Northern Ireland, where there is no great problem. One difference between Northern Ireland and Britain is that Northern Ireland did not have the poll tax. It is reasonable to assume that the poll tax had some impact on electoral registration.

Certainly the shortfall in Britain coincided with the introduction of poll tax. It developed first in Scotland and then moved to England and Wales, and is particularly noticeable among those known as attainers, who appear on a register for the first time because they could not be checked with any previous register. I believe that the Home Office now acknowledges that the poll tax had an impact on electoral registration.

I do not rest my case on the poll tax alone. There are many other reasons for the shortfall. There is increasing rootlessness in society, with people moving around—getting on their bikes to look for work, and others living in bedsit land who move from place to place. Homelessness is increasing, and it is difficult to get on an electoral register if one is homeless or moving around the country. There is considerable alienation and deprivation in society, which does not add to registration.

There is also a new complexity in life, in that masses of material arrives through people's letter boxes, and many forms have to be filled in. Some are completed, but others are ignored because they are included with a host of material that is of no great significance. It may be that some people filled in a poll tax form thinking that they would automatically be included on the electoral register and failed to complete the separate registration form.

Inadequacies in standard spending assessments also have an impact on local government and on the services that it can provide. Many electoral returning officers try valiantly to do a good job, but find that they do not have sufficient funds.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a principal cause of the problem to which he refers is inefficiency in certain local authorities?

Mr. Barnes: There was certainly inefficiency in Brent, where legal action was threatened against the electoral returning officer to ensure the level of canvassing required under existing legislation. The result was that an extra 15,000 people or more were added to registers. There are excellent examples of electoral returning officers using imaginative techniques in the run-up to the last election, especially in Leeds and Plymouth. I encourage other returning officers to follow those examples, to which I shall refer again later.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want the moment to pass without pointing out to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) that Brent is a Conservative-controlled authority and that the action that he mentioned was initiated by Labour councillors, to allow people the right to exercise their vote.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): I remind my hon. Friend that the councillor mainly involved was Mrs. Peggy Quirke.

Mr. Allen: She deserves commendation from all parts of the House and I am sure that many hon. Members will sign an early-day motion that would do that.

Mr. Barnes: Best practice by electoral returning officers should be encouraged and the Bill makes provision for a code of practice that would enable that. Many returning officers are keen to be efficient, but discover that they do not have the resources to ensure the efficiency of the past.

The problem is not limited to the 1·9 million people missing from electoral registers in Britain. Another factor is hidden from view—masked by the fact that the names of many people are no longer entitled to be on a particular register. I refer to those who have died or moved to other areas. It is reasonable to assume that the latter will not exercise a postal vote or return to their previous area to vote. If they have registered in their new areas, that means that their names will appear on two registers, when one is allowed to vote only once. Redundant names must be removed.

That situation hides from view also the other 1·9 million people who are missing from registers. I am sure that many hon. and right hon. Members are aware of that situation from their own canvassing activities.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is not the practice of including non-eligible names on registers encouraged by local authorities whose grants depend on the size of their population, in respect of the distribution of business rates grant?

Mr. Barnes: That could certainly be true. Also, in some areas the shortfall of the 1·9 million people that I mentioned can have a serious impact on the funding available in some areas, because it is linked, for example, to calculations for standard spending assessments.

There is also an imbalance in the number of missing voters. The problem is serious in some areas, but is of less significance in others. Nevertheless, the impact of funding can be dramatic.

The masking problem was illustrated by a survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1981. It showed that at the end of a register's life it was, on average, 16 per cent. out of date. There is no way of knowing how many people are missing from electoral registers beyond the figure of 1·9 million that I mentioned, but it is reasonable to assume that if 5 per cent. are missing as a result of developments in recent years—including the poll tax—at least as many were traditionally missing and are still missing now. Electoral registers, therefore, are short by as much as 10 per cent. That seems a reasonable assumption, but if any hon. Members want to make alternative assumptions or arguments, I shall be interested to have them added to the debate.

One consequence of that serious shortfall is a democratic deficit, which should worry us all. Even if the missing voters are a replica of those having the franchise and would vote in exactly the same way, the fact that they are missing is still of significance. They should have the right to vote—and often they want that right and are disturbed to discover that their names do not appear on the register.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Has the hon. Gentleman considered that it may be a matter of democratic choice not to register? In a free society, people are entitled to decide that they do not want to take part in any of its democratic processes. We must surely retain for those people the right to express their opinions in that way.

Mr. Barnes: That is not the position in current law, which expects people to register. Action can be taken if an individual fails to complete a form or refuses to give the appropriate information to a canvasser who comes to the door. The hon. Gentleman's notion is very dangerous. It would lead to voluntary registration and to the type of situation that exists in the United States and which we had way in the past. We could end up with registration of only 60 per cent. of the franchise. We know where the biggest missing groups would be found—among the deprived and those living in depressed areas.

Mr. Boateng: I thank my Friend for giving way and for initiating today's important debate. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) made a novel—and sinister and dangerous—proposition when he suggested that a democratic contribution could be made by breaking the law. That is especially true coming from a Conservative Government and a Conservative Member, when there are signs that Conservative council members are happy for registration to become a voluntary activity. That happened in the London borough of Brent and, as a result, 15,000 people dropped off the register. Had it not been for Councillor Peggy Quirke and her heroic action, 15,000 people would never have been recovered and there would have been a truly democratic deficit—however convenient that might have been for Conservative Members.

Mr. Barnes: A voluntary register would be detrimental to the democratic process. I am not in favour of compulsory voting; I favour people having a choice of whether they vote. Someone may decide not to register and later, during the election, may change his mind about what he wants to do. He may want to vote or may decide to abstain.

Registration should be a duty on people and electoral returning officers should work hard to ensure that they obtain all the necessary details. At elections, people can choose how and whether they vote. The alternative is dangerous.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) argued powerfully against voluntary registration. However, is not the problem with the Bill that, by setting up a rolling register, it makes part of the registration process voluntary? It will, to some extent, be a voluntary register, as those people who want to get on the register in the intervening period will be able to do so. That will have the disadvantages that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has just outlined.

Mr. Barnes: I shall later explain what the Bill contains. I think that it will be seen that it contains a duty and reqirement to register, and that all sorts of action can be taken against those who do not.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam) *rose*——

Mr. Barnes: I shall take one more intervention and then I must make some progress.

Lady Olga Maitland: Am I not right in thinking that it is an offence, carrying a fine of up to £1,000, if a man or woman fails to register on the electoral roll?

Mr. Barnes: The fine is up to £400, but it is not an offence not to register—it is an offence not to respond to the inquiries made by the electoral returning officer. I am not keen that such action should frequently be taken against people, but it should provide a backdrop to encourage people to register.

Under-registration has various consequences. People who do not appear on the register do not constitute a random sample of society, but come from specific groups. That means that opinion poll surveys—which matter a great deal at elections in this country—are way out. Opinion pollsters investigate the population generally; they knock on doors and ask whether people are on the register, but they do not check the register. Therefore, opinion polls in this country are persistently out by a few per cent. Under-registration also causes boundary review problems. The maldistribution of the numbers of people missing causes a serious problem in some districts and means that the constituencies that are drawn up are much larger than they would otherwise be.

Under-registration is also likely to produce an electoral bias. I hope that I would make the same argument for full enfranchisement if the electoral bias were in another direction. I do not know whether I would, but it is fortunate for me that both the principle of the extension of democracy and the interests of those who do not support the Government begin to fall in line with each other.

A Warwick university survey done by Jeremy Smith and Professor Maclean found that Labour lost eight to 11 seats at the last general election because of the poll tax factor and the numbers missing from the register. The Conservatives took 22 seats at the last election with a majority of 1,000 or less in districts where the Conservatives would have been in danger had there been

[Mr. Barnes]

a full franchise. That could have made a dramatic difference to the make-up of the House. Therefore, I hope that Conservative Members will also be interested in that subject.

Mr. Stern *rose*——

Mr. Barnes: I shall not give way now.

If hon. Members look at the list of sponsors of my Bill they will see that it has cross-party support. The list includes a Conservative, a Liberal Democrat, a Scottish Nationalist and a Plaid Cymru Member. One Conservative Member is sufficiently altruistic to support my Bill.

What remedies are there for the electoral shortfall? We should encourage electoral returning officers to engage in best practice, and my Bill contains a code of practice. What happens in Leeds and Plymouth should provide the example, not Brent. The electoral officers in Plymouth found that the Home Office material advertising the register was woefully inadequate, so they printed their own material and undertook imaginative campaigns to gain publicity, using local figures on the radio. In that way they greatly increased the numbers on the register. I hope that such an example will be followed by all electoral returning officers.

Political parties should also canvass; they should be alive. The Labour party should be active, carry out door knocking at all times, and check to see whether its supporters have registered. The same should be done by other political parties. After the Reform Act 1832, Sir Robert Peel said that the Tories must "register, register, register." When the fledgling Labour party was established, Keir Hardie said that the party should look to the electoral register to bring Labour to victory. We must take positive action, but legal improvements can assist the process.

The Home Office is conducting five surveys that follow the last election. One covers electoral registration and the political parties are involved in discussions with the Home Office. My Bill will assist the process and the results of the Home Office surveys could be used in Committee.

The Bill does not deal with referendums, the ending of expatriate votes and the banning of sales of electoral registers—all of which I favour and should like to have included in the measure—because they would make it much easier to defeat the Bill and would direct us away from the issues that I want to consider.

The Bill is not about fancy franchises and proportional representation. Those who believe in proportional representation base their belief on the principle of one person, one vote, one value. We cannot have one value for everyone unless we have one vote for everyone, so my Bill provides a logical first step towards any provision to reform the electoral system. I hope that that will be recognised by Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has said. He talked about one-for-one value and the fact that there should be equity. How about the equity or inequity of constituencies such as the Isle of Wight, with 110,000 electors and Glasgow, Central, with about 40,000 electors? Is that not inequitable and should not that issue form part of the hon. Gentleman's brief?

Mr. Barnes: It follows on from the principle of one person, one vote that electoral districts should be as equal as possible. However, we have to remember that Scotland is a separate nation under the Act of Union and that different considerations might apply to Scotland. If hon. Members wish to tackle those problems, they must try to introduce a Bill to overcome them.

These provisions are not set in concrete. They ought to be considered seriously in Committee and developed within the framework of the Bill and the long title. Drafting inadequacies could be dealt with in Committee. It is impossible for me to introduce a Bill that is of constitutional significance and get it right in one fell swoop.

Under the provisions of the Bill, on 15 February 1995 or before, by order of the Home Office, the existing registers will be turned into rolling registers. Those registers will become the registers for the future. From then onwards, additions and deletions to the register can take place continuously. That is the rolling nature of the registers. In order to obtain additions and deletions, a duty will be placed on citizens to register and, when they move home, to tell the electoral registration officer that they are leaving the area and to inform the electoral registration officer into whose area they are moving. No great penalties are involved, apart from the serious penalty that if they refuse to provide full information to the electoral registration officer, he will enter the details in any case.

The electoral registration officers will still have certain duties to perform. Annual registration will continue, but that will be used to check the rolling register. Other information will be fed to the electoral registration officers. The registrar of births, deaths and marriages will supply information about deaths in the area. At the last election the Labour party in my constituency looked through the newspapers in advance for notices of deaths so that the names of those people were removed from the register. No leaflets canvassing for votes were therefore sent to the addresses of people who had died.

In addition, those with details of people's movements would be expected to send that information to the electoral registration officers. By that, I mean councils, housing associations and solicitors involved in conveyancing. Furthermore, if electoral registration officers believed that they needed to do so, they could seek information from public utilities that hold information about people.

Some would argue that worrying civil liberties considerations are involved. Therefore, the Bill provides for the protection of confidentiality. Any information that is sought by electoral registration officers will not be able to be used for any purpose other than the electoral register. Furthermore, they will only be able to pass that information to any other electoral registration officer to enable him to obtain fully up-to-date information. The Committee will have to consider carefully the protection of civil liberties and make sure that it has got it right.

The register will then roll on until an election is announced. After an election has been announced, the rolling register will be published within two days. There will also be annual publication of the register. However, it will be no more than a snapshot of the register at that time, because it will continue to roll. After the announcement of an election, those people in the area who are missing from the register can be added to it up to a week before the election. A supplementary list will be published of those names. However, no one will be able to be drafted on to

the register by having come into the area from outside during an election period. We do not intend to have masses of people coming from outside into bedsit territory so that their names can be added to the register. That was one of the concerns of the Liberal Democrats. They put that concern to me. I was more than pleased to make sure that their concern was met by the provisions of the Bill.

Once an election is over, the register will continue to roll. The names on the supplementary list will be incorporated on the register. No name will be deleted during an election period, in case the wrong name is deleted.

How will people know that their names are missing from the electoral register? Polling cards will be issued two days after the announcement of the election. There will be publicity, urging people to check their polling cards. They will not need to take their polling card with them when they go to vote. However, they will be urged to check their polling card to make sure that their names are on the register. If they are not, those people will have the opportunity, up to seven days before the election, to get their names on the register. No one, however, will be able to get on to the register, unless they qualify to be on it when the election is announced.

Money will be needed for these purposes. There will not be just local newspaper publicity. There will be Home Office publicity and television publicity. If we are to get hold of the people who are missing from the registers, the best time to do it is when an election takes place. Everything should be done in advance, of course, to get the electoral register right. The more we get it right, the smaller will be the number of people who will need to be on the supplementary list.

Mr. Stern: I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's proposals. Has he considered what will happen in those areas, often just outside towns, where there are few local papers and where the circulation is very restricted? How does he propose to deal with the need for individual notification, particularly of absence from the register? If only one local paper comes out on a Friday and that has a restricted circulation, most of the people in that area rely solely on national media for their news.

Mr. Barnes: Reliance on the national media is something which the Home Office is expected to pick up under the provisions of the Bill. Therefore, there would be national publicity. Local publicity is not limited, however, to advertisements in local newspapers. Electoral registration officers will be encouraged to look at other means of publicity. They should consider using local radio and other means. The code of practice should include these means. However, we shall have to work out our ideas. I hope that the Home Office review will be valuable.

None of my proposals is problem-free. We must be careful to protect civil liberties. We must also remember by-elections. Although the Bill prevents people from being drafted into an area for a general election, it is often known well in advance that there is to be a by-election and we must try to ensure that we can handle the bedsit problem, to which I referred earlier. Furthermore, the Bill does not include provision for women's refuges. They were put on a second register for poll tax purposes and information about them was not available generally. We shall have to consider the need to protect those people and perhaps others. I shall be more than happy if those issues are dealt with in Committee.

Mr. Thomason: I seek some clarification. I do not understand how clause 2(3) and clause 8(1) will work together. I understood the hon. Member to say that the register would include people who had registered more than seven days before a general election. From my reading of those clauses, it seems that people cannot be registered for seven days after they have applied and it therefore follows that, to be able to vote, they would have to register more than 14 days before an election. Can the hon. Gentleman explain?

Mr. Barnes: I hope that the Bill is technically correct. If I have not got it right, it will have to be changed in Committee.

I intend that people who are entitled to be on the register should be able to register during an election campaign. However, their registration will not become operational for seven days. Therefore, people who registered during the final seven days before an election would not be able to vote, although their names would be placed on the register. One must register before the last week.

The details need to be hammered out in Committee. The system is not perfect, but it is as rigorous as I have been able to achieve in the time available. Other hon. Members who have promoted private Member's Bills have claimed tht it has taken too long to reach this stage, but I would have found another few months helpful, as the issue is so complex.

On physical access to polling stations, it is not enough for a person with disabilities to be on the register, as they also want to be able to exercise their franchise rights. Many registered disabled or infirm people want to go to the polling station, rather than use proxy or postal votes. Many elderly people say that they have always voted in that way and should continue to do so. However, many of those people find it difficult to exercise their rights. Part II of the Bill deals with that problem. Returning officers must consult disabled organisations in their areas, designate accessible polling stations and publicise them.

An accessible polling station must have at least one polling booth that is accessible for people in wheelchairs and the ballot box must be placed at the correct level for them. Those are minimum requirements. Schedule 2 contains a host of provisions that should be taken into account by returning officers, together with disabled organisations, so that adequate facilities may be provided.

The Bill states that there must be at least one designated accessible polling station in a constituency, which sounds rather meagre. However, the Bill contains that provision for logical reasons. If I had not included it, there might be no accessible stations in an area. I hope that, because of the Bill, pressure will increase to ensure that many accessible polling stations are designated.

If registered disabled people live in areas where there are no designated accessible polling stations, they can make arrangements with returning officers before the election to use the nearest accessible polling station to their homes, so that they may exercise their rights.

Many disabled organisations wanted access to be included in the Bill. The Spastics Society produced an

[Mr. Barnes]

excellent report during the last election which demonstrated the seriousness of the problem. I think that part II of the Bill is easier for Members to pursue. It is short and schedule 2 is associated with it.

Mr. Milligan: It is true that part II of the Bill is easier to pursue and it is a worthy cause. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that it would be good if disabled people found it easier to vote. However, has the hon. Gentleman studied the cost of adapting polling stations? Might it not be better to spend the same money to provide postal votes more easily, as many people do not know about them or do not find out until too late? If more money were spent on advertising postal votes, perhaps using television commercials, it might be a better use of the money. Many disabled people might prefer to vote postally rather than face the difficulties and inconvenience of getting into a polling station that was not built to accommodate them.

Mr. Barnes: Many disabled people wish to operate in society in the same way that able-bodied people do and they want the same avenues of access. Efforts should be made to put that right. We are not talking about serious expense. I believe that the Government already provide 50 per cent. of the cost of temporary ramps and other provisions. The measure extends such provisions and, with the agreement of the owners of polling stations, would provide for permanent access, which is sometimes less expensive than the temporary provisions.

I have been struggling for five years in the House over electoral registration. I first noticed the problem as a member of the Standing Committee, during the introduction of the poll tax. I envisaged that a problem would arise and have noticed evidence of it in many bits of legislation, Home Office circulars to electoral returning officers and finally in the statistics. When I was lucky in the draw for private Members' Bills, I was keen for the House to consider the matter seriously. It is a failing of many hon. Members that we forget the importance of the issue.

John Stuart Mill used to distinguish between what he called "living truths" and "dead dogmas". Some aspects of democracy have become dead dogmas. We all say that we are democrats and that the Government have a mandate, but the arguments over why we should have democracy and how it should operate died with the chartists and the suffragettes. The discussion has moved on to referendums, proportional representation and other fancy measures and we are not thinking about the basics and about who is entitled to be enfranchised. That is what the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884 and later measures were about. There must not be any further degeneration of electoral registration and the Bill is an attempt to move in another direction.

I must thank a great many people who helped me with the Bill, such as electoral registration officers and the Association of London Authorities which organised a conference involving many academics. I am like the author of a book—I have received a great deal of information and many ideas from other people, but I have been responsible for drawing up the Bill.

People worry about different aspects of the Bill, but my general intention has widespread support and increasing support within political parties. I hope that the Government will accept the intention and that I shall be allowed to make progress with the measure today.

10.19 am

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): It gives me great pleasure to debate an issue of such fundamental importance to our democracy. Unfortunately, all too often, as Members of Parliament, we are caught up in examining the fine detail of policy and are not usually given the opportunity to stand back to view the larger picture. The Bill offers us the opportunity to do just that and, at least in that respect, it should be welcomed. However, that is the last good thing that I have to say about the Bill.

As is often the case, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has grabbed the wrong end of the stick. In fact, he must have more splinters in his hands than a transatlantic oarsman. I am a charitable man and could forgive him the Bill were it not motivated by what I can describe only as sinister intentions.

The Bill seeks to undermine some of the values at the very heart of our democracy and should therefore be opposed in the strongest terms. It is divided into two parts. The first deals with improving electoral registration and the second with improving access to polling stations for voters with a physical disability.

Things do not change. For the previous century and a half it has been left to Conservatives to resist damage to electoral reform and to promote far-sighted but practical alternatives. The year 1867 is rightly regarded as the watershed of the 19th century. After 1867 the liberty achieved through the great Reform Act was slowly but increasingly used to bring about a new social order, a process which continued into the 20th century. The period also saw—thank God—the decline of the Liberal party.

The Reform Act 1867 was a triumph for Disraeli, one of the great Conservative leaders. It was the crucial step in the adaptation of British institutions to rise to democracy. In short, it was Disraeli who turned the Conservative party and the country in the direction of universal adult suffrage which gave all men and women the opportunity to be represented by a democratically elected Member of Parliament.

The practice of representation in the United Kingdom is as old as the English Parliament itself. The great Tory Edmund Burke made the well-known distinction between representation and delegation: a delegate merely mirrors and records the views of his constituent, whereas a representative is elected to judge according to his own conscience. However, I am sure that everyone here will agree that if our conscience told us to disobey all petitions from constituents, we would not last long.

As representatives, we have a duty to listen to our constituents as well as a wider duty to obey the principles of this place and the constitution. In the same way, our constituents also have duties, and it is that aspect of our democracy which the Bill undermines.

Let us consider the background to the current policy. We have never left it solely to the individual to register his or her interest in voting, unlike the United States of America where the turnout in presidential elections is substantially lower than the turnout here for general elections. The Government impose a duty on citizens to provide the information requested by electoral registration

officers. In effect, registration is compulsory. Those who receive the annual canvassing document, form A, have a duty to return it with accurate information and can be fined £1,000 for not complying.

There is a statutory duty on electoral registration officers to maximise registration and to publish an annual register of all those who appear to be eligible to vote. There are facilities for the public to check and correct the register.

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. A few moments ago he referreed to the United States. Does he agree that many commentators on this side of the Atlantic often fall into the habit of assuming that a low turnout in an Amercian presidential election is a reflection of low registration? Fifty-six per cent. of people voted in the presidential election, but they were 56 per cent. of those entitled to register, which is a comment on the culture of voting in the United States compared with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend makes his point very well.

The Government estimate levels of registration at about 95 per cent. of the potential electorate and they also estimate that, every year, £40 million is spent in England and Wales on the process of electoral registration. The Government also launch each year a nationwide advertising campaign to encourage people to complete and return their electoral registration forms. In 1992 we spent £617,000 on that campaign.

I deal now with the community charge. We all know where the sympathies of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East lie in that respect—not with the millions of law-abiding people who have paid in full, but with those who stuck two fingers up to the rest of us and did not contribute a penny to their local services. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman was a sponsor of the National Action Conference Against the Poll Tax, which co-ordinated civil disobedience and mass non-payment of the community charge. They are hardly the best credentials of a so-called saviour of democracy.

Mr. Barnes: When I argued against the poll tax, I took the line that I would not pay it, but I never advocated that others should not do so. I argued that as an elected representative of the people I had a particular duty, because the poll tax was undermining electoral registration. Acts should never be introduced that undermine electoral registration because such registration is part of our unwritten constitution. It is part of statute and has a higher legal priority according to people such as Blackstone, a past authority on the constitution. The line that I took was associated with my current argument that the register must be accurate. If we have a complete register, the argument that we should not disobey the law as a way of changing things begins to have much more relevance.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman may say that or he may say something else. All that I can say is that he welcomed the statement by Labour councillors backing illegal mass non-payment of poll tax, in addition to expressing his admiration and respect for the principled stand of someone who was imprisoned for refusing to pay the community charge. Not content to egg on such degenerate tax dodgers, he is now trying to introduce a system that would not penalise those who refused to pay their community charge or council tax. Why should people who avoid paying taxes such as the community charge be allowed the opportunity to remain on the electoral register until they die? That is what the rolling register would do.

It should be remembered that there was no conspiracy by the Government to have poll tax dodgers removed. The dodgers chose to withdraw their names so that, like outlaws, they could not be traced. They are down-and-outs in terms of civic responsibility. They are the democratically unwashed and I say good riddance to them. If they are not willing to pay, they should not have a say.

Everyone has heard of the old adage "No taxation without representation". What about "No representation without taxation"? As there can be no rule of law without the Government to sustain it, taxation becomes a crucial element in sustaining our society and way of life. Those who have the means to contribute but will not should be gagged.

What has the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East offered us? He offers a magna carta for delinquents. It is not surprising that a Labour Member of Parliament should seek to introduce such legislation because, having lost in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992, Labour needs the support of everyone possible, criminals or not.

Labour believes that it has been cheated. The hon. Gentleman says that the Conservatives won seats because some people were not on the electoral register or did not vote. I shall tell them why they lost. They had an awful leader. Down in Nottingham they were singing, "We are the champions", and fireworks were going off like a load of damp squibs—but they were all Roman candles. There was not a banger among them. Now they have this fool of a leader. What is he up to? He wrote a shadow budget for the nation. No wonder the people never gave him the chance to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman's reference to the present leader of the Labour party and draft budgets is was beyond the realm of the Bill.

Mr. Evans: I withdraw my remarks about the current leader of the Labour party, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that he is called the wriggler from Monklands, East.

What I have described is the motive behind the Labour party's move towards proportional representation—the bolthole of minority parties throughout the world. It is typical of the Labour party to pick up an idea just when everyone else is discarding it. Even the Italians, who are fond of loony ideas, are thinking again about the issue.

The result of PR—and the Labour party knows it—would be to deliver to this country the sort of Government that we get locally in Derbyshire, Lambeth and Sheffield, in which extreme minorities run roughshod over people's lives. Furthermore, a representative is more likely to respond to the interests of those who appoint him if they are identified with a specific place—yet PR undermines the very idea of a constituency. If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East really wants to enhance representation he should tell his comrades to drop PR as quickly as they dropped CND. If they want to win an election they will have to convince the electorate that beer and sandwiches at No. 10 is no substitute for sound policies.

When we look at this ridiculous Bill we see that the lesson still has not been learnt. The Labour party believes

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that some of its voters are being stopped from voting. It is right—but why has that happened? They have been stopped because they are cheats and have been caught out not paying their taxes.

If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East really wanted to improve our representative system he should have dealt with the sums paid as deposits by candidates. Candidates in all public elections automatically acquire certain rights, privileges and advantages—the right to free post for their election addresses and the free use of publicly maintained buildings for meetings and the right to veto broadcast transmission of material related to the constituency election. In addition, they receive considerable publicity. Is it right that such benefits should be conferred on a candidate whose views are held by only a tiny minority of the electorate?

We need a deterrent to ward off the proliferation of fringe candidates who are now undermining the effectiveness with which the campaigns of candidates with significant support can be conducted. A deposit of £5,000 would certainly make fringe candidates think twice. The Bill would be even better if it required a non-refundable deposit of £15,000 from each representative of the Labour party. The money could be passed over to the Exchequer to pay it back for some of the damage done to this country when the Labour party was in power.

Part II of the Bill deals with physical access to polling stations. Let us examine Government policy on that subject before we go haring off into making expensive changes. In 1985 we made it a statutory duty for local authorities to choose polling stations that offer facilities for the disabled in preference to those that do not, where there is a choice. Admittedly, choice can be limited. Where the only building available does not provide good access for disabled voters, we provide a grant of 50 per cent. towards the cost of temporary ramps. Nevertheless, our long-term aim is for all polling stations to be accessible to disabled people. That is why we remind returning officers of their duty to choose accessible polling stations where possible.

The suggestion that disabled people should be allowed to vote at a more suitable polling station if their local station does not provide good access is being considered in the context of our post-election review. That suggestion has received a mixed reception from local authority representatives and in practice it might not be helpful to many disabled people, for whom travel to a more distant polling station would also be difficult.

There have been consultations with groups representing disabled people. Shortly before the general election the Royal National Institute for the Blind wrote to the Government with suggestions for making it easier for blind and partially sighted people to take part in the electoral process. The Government circulated to acting returning officers guidance provided by the RNIB on the layout of polling stations, the lighting, and the typeface to use on notices and ballot papers. Following more recent consultations with the RNIB, we have invited its representatives to attend a meeting of one of the post-election working groups to explain their concerns.

After the general election, the Spastics Society produced a report entitled, "Polls Apart", about disabled people and the election. It was critical of the standards of access to polling stations, claiming that 88 per cent. of those surveyed had one or more problems which would prevent disabled people from voting there independently. We wrote to the Spastics Society suggesting that if it provided material on mobility issues similar to that provided by the RNIB, we should be happy to circulate it to returning officers. There has been no response to that offer.

The Bill is unnecessary and it addresses no obvious problem. Most people understand their civic responsibilities and freely exercise their rights. Indeed, at the general election voter turnout increased. If there is a problem, it is a problem of individuals' own choosing. Democracy is not ideal. There will always be people who refuse to participate —on the grounds of conscience or because they want to dodge their responsibilities to the state. Why spend valuable time and money altering a system that works perfectly fairly? If we want to change things for the better we should outlaw those such as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, who encourage law breaking and civil disobedience. It is they who undermine our representative democracy and, as outlaws, they should be barred from office.

10.37 am

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The House has been entertained to hear the hon. Member —the Rab C. Nesbitt of Welwyn Hatfield—voicing his prejudices again. There were a number of rather remarkable contradictions in his speech—not least of which was his extolling of the virtues of Disraeli, while seeking to reintroduce a property qualification for the vote. His speech will not have convinced many people who are interested in democracy as opposed to the more atavistic impulses from the wilder shores of Conservatism.

The Bill is a useful, important and timely measure. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is to be congratulated on having introduced it with the support of hon. Members from so many parties. For several years he has carried on a personal crusade to rectify the deficiencies of our system of registration. As he rightly says, that system is fundamental to the effectiveness of our democratic system of parliamentary government. If we do not have a proper register, we cannot have a proper outcome and whatever the consequences of registration may be, it will be flawed if there are, as is the case today, such apparent discrepancies between the number of people who are entitled to vote and the number who have the opportunity to do so.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has not made a partisan point. He has made a point that must appeal to all who are concerned about the efficacy of our deomocratic system. From the example of other countries where registration is worse than it is here, it is clear that a good registration system is the key to producing representative government.

We must ask why there has been a deterioration in registration in this country over the past decade. It is a subject on which the Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government, a non-partisan body, focused in its publication of September 1991 entitled "Agenda for Change". The society took evidence from many sources and produced an authoritative report. Some of its recommendations are embodied in the Bill. We look

forward with interest to hearing the Government's response to the Hansard Society's proposals for improving the system.

It is right to get the matter into proportion. The defects of registration are neither uniform nor universal. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East referred to two local authorities, Plymouth and Leeds, and there are other areas where there is high accuracy because local authorities have made great efforts to ensure that the register is a true reflection of those who are entitled to vote.

However, there has been a deterioration throughout the country as a whole. The Hansard Society report showed that whereas between 1951 and 1966 electoral registers were thought to be between 96 and 97 per cent. accurate, by 1981 the error rate had almost doubled. That was before the introduction of the poll tax. Whatever view one takes of the poll tax on the ground of equity, no one can seriously argue that it has not seriously exacerbated the problem of registration. The electoral registration lists were undoubtedly used by local authorities in the compilation of community charge registers. That fact was widely known and was widely seen by those who were opposed to the poll tax or who felt unable to pay it as a reason for not registering for elections.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The hon. Gentleman touches on an important point which involves a number of complex arguments. He took up the reference to Leeds made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and said that it had a commendably high registration rate. I believe that one of the reasons why it achieved that rate was that it used the community charge list, which it had taken great trouble to get full and up to date, to check who had been left off the electoral register. The argument about the community charge cuts at least two ways. If electoral registration is efficiently carried out in a district, the community charge list can be positively helpful.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister has linked the two lists together, although at all times during the passage of the community charge legislation the Government said that the lists would be kept separate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I shall just finish the point and I shall then happily give way.

I do not dispute the fact—indeed I made the point—that it was certainly the case that those who compiled the community charge lists referred to the electoral registers. The Minister has informed the House—I am sure that he did so on good authority—that in Leeds the system operated the other way round and I am sure that he is right. That shoots out entirely the argument deployed by Ministers during the passage of the community charge legislation that the community charge would have no effect on voting. That argument was always suspect and the Minister has finally nailed it in his intervention.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I do not want to labour the point. The Government have recommended many times that electoral registration officers should use the community charge list to check that the electoral registers are up to date. The Government have given that advice. It is good advice and some electoral registration officers have used it very well.

Mr. Maclennan: I pointed out that I did not wish to dwell on the impact of the community charge on registration. Any fair-minded person who looks at what has happened will share the view of the Hansard Society that the community charge had an adverse effect on the level of registration across the country as a whole. However, that is an historical issue to some extent, as, not before time, we are seeing the demise of that tax.

We must concern ourselves more with the underlying reasons that pre-date the poll tax. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East made it plain that he was not resting his case solely on the poll tax. It is clear that there are variations throughout the country and we must ask the reason for that.

The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) wanted to place the blame entirely on ne'er-do-wells who had not taken the trouble to get themselves registered. The matter is not as straightforward as that. The window of opportunity for registration is narrow and it may require a considerable effort by someone who has been left off the register to discover how to go about getting himself on to the register again. People with language difficulties in some communities may find it even more difficult, which may account for some of the discrepancies in registration.

It is clear that local authorities that have made great efforts to improve the register have had success. They have achieved that success not only by campaigning and advertising widely, but by carrying out follow-up surveys in the community after the returns have been made. There is no doubt that that course must be followed.

We should look with favour at the core proposal of the Bill, which is that there should be a rolling electoral register. I understand that such a system has been introduced with success in Australia. No argument of principle can be deployed against it. The haphazard circumstances of the dates chosen for elections——

Mr. Stern: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a bit dangerous to make comparisons between this country and Australia because the fact that there is compulsory voting in Australia must devalue the importance of the timing of the register? Whether there is a rolling register or a fixed register in Australia, people still have to vote. We are talking about giving people the right to vote so we must consider the idea of a rolling register, which, like the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) I largely welcome, with rather more caution.

Mr. Maclennan: I view with caution any matters involving a change in our electoral law, but the example of Australia is certainly worth considering, because the new system appears to have worked well there. As the hon. Gentleman says, the circumstances of its introduction may have been different from those pertaining here, but that does not necessarily mean that it is not transferable. I hope that the Government will express their willingness to look favourably on that principle, because, whatever difficulties there may be in its operation, it certainly has a great deal to recommend it.

The funding of registration is also important. There is a great discrepancy in the extent to which local authorities fund registration and I am not altogether sure that that is desirable. We have a national interest in ensuring a high level of registration and that should not really turn on local choice. I believe in the principle of subsidiarity, and that effectiveness and efficiency should be the test of the

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level of government at which decisions are taken. But given that there are extraordinary discrepancies—several percentage points between the best and least good—we must ask ourselves whether the intervention of central Government is required to achieve better results. We cannot be satisfied that our national interests are being adequately protected at present.

Following advice from the electoral registration officers about the differences to which I have alluded, the Hansard Society report said that there was a case for increasing the resources devoted to canvassing and advertising for registration, preferably through a system of central funding of electoral registration. At present, only the cost of administering elections is paid centrally. I should be interested to hear the Government's view of that recommendation.

The Bill highlights the widespread concern that there is a deterioration in registration, which it would not be wise of the Government to shrug off. The position varies across the country. I have not had access to the most recent figures, but I note that, over a decade ago, in 1981, Wales had a non-registration rate of 9·2 per cent; England, of 6·5 per cent; and Scotland, of 5·4 per cent. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys annual reports suggest that there has been an increase in the number of registration officers reporting lower response rates to their surveys.

The Bill will do a great deal of good. Although details remain to be worked out and there are certain problems —the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East fairly drew attention to them as Committee points—I support the thrust of the Bill and I am delighted to have the opportunity to support the hon. Gentleman today.

Part II of the Bill deals with the problems of disabled voters—a matter which is not insignificant. It was not only severely disabled electors in the royal borough of Wick in my constituency who felt angry when, at the last general election, they discovered that they were required to vote in polling booths on the second floor of a Victorian town hall with no lift access. Elderly, as well as disabled people, were inadequately cared for as a result of that serious oversight.

Such matters are important and cannot be dealt with exclusively by postal vote arrangments, because, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, many people want to participate fully in the electoral process. They are entitled to have their needs taken care of. I hope, therefore, that the measures in part II of the Bill, which covers physical access to polling stations, will be given a fair wind by the House so that we may tackle the problem at root.

10.55 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful to you for calling me at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, for constituency reasons, I may be unable to stay until the end of the debate. I apologise in advance to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and my hon. Friend the Minister.

In following the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and in welcoming the Bill, let me start with a note of caution. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland referred to a number of difficulties in the Bill as Committee points. I think that he underestimates some of the difficulties to which the Bill gives rise.

I welcome the Bill because, if it receives its Second Reading today, it will enable us to consider, in Committee and on Report, a number of detailed questions. I must say, however, that I have little faith that, in the context of the private Member's Bill procedure, it will be possible to resolve those points so as to allow effective legislation to be passed. I welcome the Bill as part of the discussion process that will inform the studies currently taking place in the Home Office, which will, in due course, lead us to the necessary revision of electoral law. I am sure that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is realistic enough to know that that is the likely outcome and that he, like me, has no great expectation that the Bill in its present form or in a similar form will eventually become law.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has rightly introduced a Bill which would make it easier for people to register and so minimise involuntary non-registration. That is wholly to be applauded. In a democracy, there is no excuse for people who wish to vote, and who comply with the law in their wish to vote, having barriers put in their way. I entirely accept that. In drafting the Bill in its present form, however, the hon. Gentleman has accepted the principle that there should be some form of legal compulsion, if not in respect of registration itself, certainly in respect of an aspect of registration—the provision of information to enable someone to be registered.

I am a little worried about that principle. If we accept in a democracy that someone is entitled to be registered but not to vote—a point that the hon. Gentleman made in his opening remarks—I can see no justification for not going a stage further. If someone who lives in a democracy is sufficiently unenamoured of the democratic process that he wishes to declare publicly that he will take no part in it, I see no reason why there should be a legal barrier to prevent that person from making such a declaration.

Mr. Dunn: It is not simply a matter of those who may be disaffected by the democratic process or the choice of available parties. Some people do not wish to register on religious grounds. We are all aware of people in our constituencies who would not vote because their strong beliefs tell them not to. They should have an opportunity to say that they wish to have no part in the process because they want their futures to remain in hands higher than the Government or democracy.

Mr. Stern: I entirely accept that point and I was about to consider that issue.

Mr. Maclennan: The duties of citizenship and the relationship of the electoral register to those duties do not simply relate to voting. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) should bear in mind the fact that jury service depends on registration. Whatever may be one's religious beliefs, one may not opt out of all the civic duties associated with the electoral register.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Gentleman is right, although his example of jury service depends on several factors other than entry on the electoral register. Indeed, I am always somewhat embarrassed when I argue about the duty of jury service in the House, which has exempted itself from that duty.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My hon. Friend has made an interesting observation. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has made a proper point. Citizens have duties which, to some extent, flow from electoral registration. A number of people in my constituency belong to the Exclusive Brethren or are Jehovah's Witnesses. They choose not to vote. However, they come to see me as their Member of Parliament when they want me to lobby Ministers on their behalf, and naturally, I do that. However, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is right. There is a duty to register. If individuals choose not to exercise their vote having registered, that is a matter for them.

Mr. Stern: I have a similar constituency background, but I am forced to disagree with my hon. Friend. Like him, I consider that I represent members of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Exclusive sects although they do not vote. They come to see me from time to time when they feel that their beliefs are affected by legislation, proposed legislation or by administrative actions of the Government. Quite rightly, they expect me to take up their concerns on their behalf.

The people to whom I have just referred accept that although they are in an anomalous position in that they take on many of the duties of citizens, in so far as being registered is considered a duty, they do not like that duty. They would be considerably more at ease in our society if they could declare that they were not part of the process in which people expect them to take part. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) would find that a religious exemption from the duty to register would make such sects more at ease in our society.

There is a philosophical difficulty about the thrust of the Bill in respect of whether we should be reinforcing a legal duty, under pain of monetary penalty, to register in the first place. The main point of the Bill is to encourage by all means the registration to vote. Although I accept the principle and am interested in some of the proposals, I foresee some difficulties. Those points must be considered in Committee and on Report and will, in due course, form part of the Home Office deliberations.

I want first to consider the Bill's resource implications. Although it is often parroted from the Opposition Benches that the first thing that Government supporters consider in respect of any measure is the cost, the fact is that the cost is important. It is even more important when central Government impose additional costs on local government.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has, like me, on many occasions been told by his local representatives, "Look, you expect us to do these things, but you don't provide us with the resources. How on earth do you expect to continue to increase the responsibilities of local government without providing the resources?"

With respect to any new measure, we have a duty to consider what we would like local government to do and also exectly what it will cost local government to do it. There is then the separate argument of whether we give that area of expenditure a sufficiently high priority that we would wish to provide the extra funds to enable local authorities at least to have a chance to act properly.

The resource implications of the Bill are considerable. At the moment, the electoral registration system, for which I have a very high regard, works on the basis of an annual register. There is a clear calendar and clear staffing implications during the year in respect of the duties of the electoral registration officer and his assistants.

A rolling register would destroy that timetable. The basic timetable might still exist, but the duties that can now be slotted into different times in the year by the electoral registration officer would be continuous. Clearly, the resource implications are bound to be considerable.

In addition, the Bill requires electoral registration officers to look much wider for sources of information for the register and, in particular, for the rolling register. That must also have resource implications. I do not necessarily say that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is wrong to extend the work of the electoral registration officer in that way. However, I do not believe that it would be proper for the House to approve measures of this potentially expensive nature without having greater regard to the additional costs that we would place on local authorities.

Mr. Barnes: There are resource implications in clauses 10, 17 and 20 which, essentially, fall on the Home Office. Those resource implications would have to be taken into account. Therefore, if the Bill receives a Second Reading, it would require a money resolution at a later stage. There are not necessarily resource implications for local authorities in addition to the moneys that would begin to become available from elsewhere. In so far as there are resource implications, some of the computer hardware and software already exists with regard to the community charge register. As that register will no longer exist, the computer hardware and software could be used for electoral registration purposes.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. It is unusual to hear praise from Opposition Benches for the community charge collection machinery. However, I must offer the hon. Gentleman a word of caution. I represent the city of Bristol, which is notorious for not collecting the community charge. It has one of the best records of not collecting the community charge of any local authority in the country. The horrific thought that that creaking, outdated, antiquated and unused machinery was to be transferred to electoral registration would be the greatest reversal of democracy that this country has seen for a hundred years. As the hon. Gentleman has admitted, there are resource implications. He said that they might be overcome, but I have some doubt about that.

I am also a little troubled by the frequency of alteration to the register that the hon. Gentleman's proposals would require. Again, I am a little troubled by some implications. There are, of course, resource implications in more frequent amendments to the register, which the hon. Gentleman and I have just discussed. In addition, the fact that we currently have an annual register, albeit one with an annual programme for correction, builds into the system certain checks and balances which would be rather more difficult under the rolling register.

I have always represented an urban seat. Before I represented that seat, I stood as a candidate in another urban seat, Derby, South—very close to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. One problem that is observed in any urban election—it is extremely difficult to pin down, but it is at least suspected in almost every election in which I have ever been involved—is that of impersonation.

[Mr. Stern]

Electoral registration officers have suggested to me that, to check the possibility of false registration, they need time to make adequate checks within the electoral registration system to enable them to decide for themselves whether a registration at a house in a particularly mobile neighbourhood is justified.

I am worried that if we move towards forcing the electoral registration officer to take much speedier decisions on a person's entitlement to registration, we might be reducing that officer's ability to ensure to his own satisfaction that the entry or the removal of an entry is correct.

Mr. Dunn: Surely there is another point to consider in the context of the rolling register, not just the valid point that my hon. Friend is making. If it were known that a Member of Parliament was ill or was liable to give up to go to the European Commission on some appointment or other, what is to stop any party gradually moving in some of its more determined zealots to form part of that rolling register for the by-election that might take place?

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend is slightly unfair to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East; he referred to that point as a problem. Like my hon. Friend, I am not sure whether the problem can easily be resolved. It is certainly one for which no resolution appears in the Bill, although I accept that the hon. Gentleman said that that point would need to be considered in Committee. I am not sure whether the problem can be resolved so easily when there is often a three-month delay between the need for a by-election and the date of the by-election and when the actual need for a by-election is often predated by a period of increasing certainty that a by-election will take place. That is a problem, particularly in towns with mobile populations and in which the addition of a few extra voters to the electoral rolls could easily go unnoticed until the names are published in the up-to-date rolling register.

Another problem in connection with the frequency of updating, which is inherent in the Bill, is in the clause relating to publication of the final list of amendments seven days before an election. In terms of postal votes, canvassing, the organisation of transport, particularly for the disabled, and all the other processes in a normal general election in particular, and even more so in a by-election, a seven-day notification of a list of new names is an impossible target for an adequate electoral process as we know it.

If our tradition in this country were like the German tradition in which there is very little mass canvassing and great general publicity, that process might be accommodated. The hon. Gentleman is saying that our traditional methods of contacting voters during a general election will no longer apply to a significant number of the electorate. I am not sure whether the House should lightly change that.

Mr. Barnes: We are talking about a significant number only if other measures in the Bill are not working very well. It is a final check. Some areas would undoubtedly have large supplementary lists and others would have small supplementary lists. A large supplementary list would be a sign that extra action might be needed by the returning officers to correct the shortfall. We are talking not about extensive lists but about short additions as a backstop.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Only time will tell. We are dealing with probably more of an urban problem than a rural problem. Nevertheless, I can foresee areas of my constituency—I shall refer to this point later—which would be seriously affected by a rolling register. I am talking about areas in which, in any normal year, there could be a turnover of about 20 per cent. of the register. Therefore, any political organisation needs considerable time and effort to be able to contact that continually changing electorate.

Another matter in respect of which I have some concerns is the criteria for registration. Again, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East was right to highlight the fact that our existing criteria might be looking somewhat dated in the light of the mobility of modern life. For example, where people consider their homes to be, where they consider they would normally be, and where they actually lay their heads on the night of 15 October are concepts which, in a settled and less mobile society——

Mr. Dunn: Or September when the forms come out.

Mr. Stern: Or September when the forms come out, as my hon. Friend says.

Those aspects might be appropriate to a settled society in which people move infrequently, but they are increasingly difficult for electoral registration officers to enforce, when, again particularly in urban areas, people move more frequently. What is the position, for example, in relation to people who are moving house at about the time of electoral registration and are genuinely between two houses? They could be living in a hotel or temporarily in a third house. Those problems can be resolved, but they cause difficulty for an electoral registration officer. The Bill, by providing for a rolling list, would increase the difficulty of that officer's work.

My final concern about the Bill relates to the almost draconian provisions for the obtaining of information by the returning officer and the sources of that information. It seems that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is giving greatly increased powers under penalty to the returning officer. Such powers are given to almost no other department of local government and the Labour party was critical when similar powers were given to community charge registration officers.

The hon. Gentleman is relying on confidentiality within local authorities. With the best will in the world, and having the highest regard for electoral registration officers, ordinary citizens would be concerned if the information for which returning officers were entitled to ask was readily available to those returning officers. We have all had recent examples of how easy it is for information that we all consider to be private to be leaked into the public domain and made much of by the media. The House has not yet found an answer to increasing the privacy of such information. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's measures would contribute greatly to the privacy of individuals. I think that they would detract from such privacy for purposes that the individual might resent.

In addition, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has appreciated the extent to which it would be necessary for the electoral registration officer fully to enforce the powers given under the Bill to the officer. I shall give an example from my constituency. I represent two thirds of a new town called Bradley Stoke, which was being built in the years up to and including the last general election, and is

still being built. With a fixed date for the register, the electoral registration officer still had the greatest difficulty in establishing who was entitled to be on the register at a specific date. Streets were appearing where they had never appeared before and people were moving into empty houses in a steady stream around the night specified for electoral registration.

Many streets were discovered only a few months after 15 October. The electoral registration officer had to decide whether the streets existed on 15 October and whether people were living there. To get that information, he had to go not simply to the people who wished to go on the register and to those who had taken no action to go on the register because it did not concern them that much, but to the individual developers—about 20 different ones were involved—and to individual estate agents to find out when houses had been sold. In many cases, he approached local solicitors to find out when completions had taken place. At a time of rapid development in a constituency, one can imagine the additional work if it had to be done not simply once a year but continually and then have to be challenged continually. It would mean that, in the case of a developing new town such as Bradley Stoke, the electoral registration officer would need a line to almost every solicitor in the country to find out whether a completion had taken place on or around the day of entitlement so that he could check any incomplete information that was given to him.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Stern: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. Frankly, the proposals of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East would be incapable of producing a reliable register in any major development.

Mr. Corbyn: I am sorry that I did not hear the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I think that the electoral registration officer in his constituency is a remarkably assiduous person and tribute should be paid to him for doing that sort of work. I cannot imagine many other electoral registration officers who would go to that degree of detailed investigation without a lot of pressure being put on them to do it.

Parts of the constituency that I represent have an annual turnover of population of up to 25 per cent., so a register compiled in October is out of date by the time it comes into force in February. If there is an October election, the register is often as much as 20 per cent. inaccurate in some places. A rolling register would certainly help us.

Clearly, electoral registration officers would need much more resources than they have at present to do the work. I recognise that there is a cost involved, but it is a cost well worth paying to enable people to have the right to cast their votes.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Gentleman is right. He underlined a number of points that I made earlier. There is a cost involved. Like him, I represent some areas of high mobility where the electoral registration officer has some difficulty. The hon. Gentleman underlined my point that the task is difficult enough when it has to be done on the basis of an annual register. It would be much more difficult on the basis of a rolling register.

Since the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East referred to the report from Warwick university, I must make one final comment. He said that the justification for his Bill—or at least part of it—was that increasing the accuracy of the register might be favoured more by the Labour party than the Conservative party. He called in evidence the report by Warwick university, "The UK Poll Tax and the Declining Electoral Roll", which refers to my constituency, among others. It is an example of academic research, through a lack of knowledge of the terrain, coming to a totally incorrect conclusion. Studies in my constituency during the last election campaign showed that the inaccuracies in the register were largely in the faster-developing areas such as Bradley Stoke, where a local town council election at the start of the election campaign proved that the vote was almost entirely divided between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats with the Labour party coming nowhere. If that area of my constituency had a more accurate register at the time, it certainly would not have benefited the Labour party and would undoubtedly have increased by majority.

Mr. Barnes: In the end, the question of who benefits should not matter. I have a transcript of a television interview with the Minister. When this matter was raised, the Minister said:

> "I don't think Labour had any disadvantage over the registers in the last general election. Quite the reverse. It was the sort of Conservative voter areas that were under-represented, because the constituency boundaries there were based on electoral registers many years ago, and in those times the inner-cities were much more highly populated,".

The Minister has an argument about why the Conservatives suffered from under-registration. Whether it is the Conservatives or Labour, we should get the registration right.

Mr. Stern: On that point of agreement, I am happy to conclude my remarks.

11.28 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I wish to support the Bill. Fortunately, the week in which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) introduces his Bill is the time of the year when the new register is published. We all know that in a few days the electoral registers published in our constituencies will already be four months out of date, because the qualifying date was in October 1992.

The register that is now being published will have to run for 12 months. We all know that there are already a number of errors in the register, for a number of reasons. A number of people will have died or moved, which will make the register out of date on the first day on which it can possibly be used. That will eliminate the ability of certain people to exercise their right to vote.

As the year passes, the margin of error increases. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East referred to an average error of 16 per cent., but we all know that the error in some constituencies is much greater than that. My hon. Friend was referring to the error at the end of a register's life. In many constituencies—for example, those in inner London, and inner city constituencies generally—the error increases to 30 or 35 per cent. when the life of the registers comes to an end. That will be the position in 1993-94. It is an extremely wide margin of error.

I was a full-time agent and a voluntary agent for over 20 years before I became a Member. I know that the register that we use now is nowhere near as accurate as the

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

registers that were used in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Financial pressures on local government have become greater and, regrettably, local authorities have sought to save money in undertaking their responsibility to ensure that registers are as full and accurate as possible.

We have all seen changes in the method of registration. When I was a local government candidate in the early 1960s—I was an agent at the time—there could be only one change to the register each year. The Y voters, as they used to be, were able to exercise their vote on a date halfway through the life of the register. Dates of birth are now shown on registers, which means that when a person becomes 18 years of age—it used to be the 21st birthday, of course—he or she immediately becomes qualified to vote. People can claim that their names should be added to a register if there has been an official error or because they fail to register. That facility is not much used and it relates to the place where they would have been qualified to vote in October of the previous year. People are not allowed to put their names on the registers that are being used in the places to which they have moved. They can claim only that their names should be added to the register at the place where they were in residence, in the previous October.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East proposes that we should have a moving and changing register. He has said that the provisions that are set out in the Bill need to be debated fully in Committee, and he is right. Conservative Members have highlighted some flaws. However, the Bill focuses our attention on faults with the present system. If we have a democracy, we have a duty to ensure that the maximum number of people are able to exercise their right to vote at local elections, county council elections, borough elections, regional elections—I hope—in the years to come, parliamentary elections and elections to the European Parliament. The key, of course, to the exercise of that right is registration. If the register is inaccurate, the present system prevents people from expressing their voice in a democracy.

I often criticise the percentage of the poll in local elections. I am sure that we should all like to see much higher percentages. Sadly, there has been a slight downward drift of the percentage poll in general elections over the past 40 years or so. It must be said, however, that the percentage of polls here is higher than that which caused the Americans to express delight after the presidential campaign, which was one of the highest polls that they have seen.

We are in an age of computers and we should recognise that it is now more feasible to update registers regularly. I recognise, of course, that there are problems and that there could be abuse. Those are the issues which should be debated in Committee. We have a responsibility, however, to examine the system and ask ourselves whether we should change it and ensure that we have registers that enable the maximum number of people possible living in a constituency to have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote for the party of the candidate of their choice in an election. The Bill gives us the opportunity to discuss some of these opportunities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East has said that there are other issues that he believes should be debated. He rightly said that the arrangements for overseas voters need to be examined. There is also the issue of postal votes. He told us that he deliberately excluded such matters from the Bill, although he believes that they should be examined in the long run. He has deliberately confined the Bill to two fairly simple issues—registers and disabled voters—because he wants to see progress made on those fronts.

I hope that the Minister will respond positively and say that the Government, especially the Home Office, are prepared to examine changes that will meet the objectives of my hon. Friend. I believe that the time has come to move in that direction. The present system is wrong. I am sure that during the general election campaign there were people in every constituency who complained to every candidate that they had not received voting papers or that their names had not been included on the register. For whatever reason, they were unable to exercise their vote on 9 April. In a democracy, that must be wrong. The Bill highlights the defects in the system that is now operated. I accept that details need to be considered in Committee, but we must move a long way in the direction that has been signposted by my hon. Friend to ensure that people have a voice in our democracy, which is an essential part of the democratic process.

I have always believed in democracy. At local government level and in Parliament, the role of the opposition—all those who are against the party in power—is important. If there is no opposition, we shall move rapidly towards dictatorship. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have a responsibility to ensure that the key to democracy is preserved, and I believe that that is the register.

I think that it is generally accepted that the postal vote system needs to be analysed. Further development of it is needed. I support the idea that more publicity should be given to the availability of postal votes. My hon. Friend was right, however, when he said that there are many disabled people and many elderly people who, by choice, do not have a postal vote. They regard it as important that they are able to get to the polling station to express their voice in a democratic way for the candidate of the party of their choice, and to be seen to be doing that. That is vital. the disabled often find it offensive to have to go to the back doors of buildings to gain access—to use a second-class entrance—and to be considered as not having the same rights as non-disabled voters.

Those of us fortunate enough not to be disabled tend to overlook the stigma and difficulties that often attach to someone who is disabled. My hon. Friend, in a modest way, is trying to make the point that we should look positively at polling stations and question whether they are accessible to the disabled and the elderly and, if not, to consider more suitable premises.

That is not to say that I oppose the extension of the postal vote and encouraging people to make use of that facility, because it offers considerable advantages. However, many elderly and disabled people regard going to vote at a polling station as an important part of their democratic rights.

My hon. Friend admits that his Bill has some defects, but it focuses attention on two issues of great importance in a democracy. We have a duty to ensure that people have the right to use their vote, which means ensuring that the register is correct. We are also obliged to ensure that everyone can use polling stations.

If the Bill receives a Second Reading today, I hope that it will be positively improved in Committee. If the Home

Office accepts the spirit and the concept of my hon. Friend's Bill, and takes a positive attitude to the aspects I mention, it could improve the Bill in a way that is acceptable to my hon. Friend and meets his objectives, and meets the provisions of our democratic society in ensuring that all have the right to vote—whichever way they choose.

11.42 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I congratulate the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on his good fortune in the ballot and on providing the House with an opportunity to debate a matter of considerable interest to all right hon. and hon. Members and their constituents. I am pleased to participate because, as the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) pointed out, there cannot be any right hon. and hon. Member who, during the last election, was not approached by a constituent asking, "Why am I not on the register? Why didn't you put me on the register?" They all think that Members of Parliament are responsible, when we all know that is the duty of registration officers.

I represent the 61,744 constituents of the Uxbridge parliamentary constituency. That number has been broadly constant since 1979, but it dropped by about 1,400 in the last general election. It is important to consider the reduction in electorates that prompted the hon. Gentleman's Bill.

There are several reasons why electorates throughout the country have fallen by various amounts during the past few years. One is that, because of the current recession and difficulties in the housing market, those who inherit empty property after the death of its previous occupant have encountered considerable difficulty selling it. When I canvassed in the last general election, I frequently came across properties on the register identified as having no elector. I began to investigate and canvassed such houses. In almost every case, the properties were shut up, empty, and gave the appearance that the occupants had left for one reason or another.

Another small but significant factor is that many people in this country have homes elsewhere in Europe. With the tendency to take early retirement, there is an increasing propensity to buy homes abroad and for people to spend part of their retirement living in France, Spain or another country. That means that on 10 October each year, many are not at home to fill up form A, so their names do not appear on the register. Another factor is the deliberate avoidance of registration, to evade liability for the community charge. There may be other reasons, and no doubt other right hon. and hon. Members will refer to them.

Waiting to be called to speak, I took the opportunity to research the constituency of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who represents only 30,905 electors, compared with my 61,000. That hon. Gentleman represents a large and beautiful constituency, which I have had the pleasure of visiting—but even there, 1 per cent. of the electorate was lost between the last two general elections.

We all know that it is never left solely to the individual to register his or her interest in voting—unlike in the United States, where the turnout for presidential elections is substantially lower than for general elections in our country. Our Government and Parliament impose a duty on citizens to provide information requested by electoral registration officers. In effect, registration is compulsory. Those who receive a copy of the annual canvassing document that we know as form A have a duty to return it with accurate information, and they can be fined for not complying with that request. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I shall be interested to know how many prosecutions there have been in recent years for failing to comply with the form A request.

Mr. Corbyn: I bet that there has been none.

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) gives the impression that the number of prosecutions is zero. I am interested to know whether that is the case. If it is, what is Home Office policy in that regard?

There is a statutory duty on electoral registration officers to maximise registration and to publish an annual register of all those who appear to them to be eligible to vote. I shall concentrate for a few moments on that statutory duty. Having exercised that duty, the officer must take account of the facilities available to the general public to check that the register is accurate each year and that their names are included. It is possible, for example, for electors to check that information at their local public library, and many political parties—certainly the Conservative party and the principal Opposition party—have offices in or near constituencies where their supporters can also check that their names are on the register. That has always been a valuable part of the work done by the political parties locally, as it complements the statutory duties of the electoral registration officers.

I have made inquiries about the level of registration, and understand from Government estimates that it is about 95 per cent. of the potential electorate. Every year, about £40 million is spent in England and Wales on the process of electoral registration. As we all know, there is an annual nationwide advertising campaign that encourages people to register, and complete and return their electoral registration forms. In 1992, a total of £617,000 was spent on that advertising campaign.

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, electoral registration officers are required to

"have a house to house or other sufficient inquiry made as to the persons entitled to be registered"

as electors. The 1983 Act has one deficiency to which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East may care to turn his attention if his Bill is given a Second Reading.

Unfortunately, the 1983 Act does not define "sufficient inquiry". Therefore, electoral registration officers are free to the method of conducting the canvass return according to local circumstances and the finances available to them. That is different from what used to happen in the 1950s and 1960s when, to my certain knowledge, electoral registration officers—certainly in London—made sure that households were canvassed by local government staff if an individual or household failed to return form A. I understand that that does not always happen today. If a return has not been made to the electoral registration officer, the most likely step is to send the household more forms. I believe that it is not uncommon for some electoral registration officers to make two or three attempts to attain the names of people living in a household by sending more forms.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East made an important point when he said that the forms were in addition to the already large amounts of mail that come

[Mr. Shersby]

through our letter boxes every week, and that people probably do not pay sufficient regard to them and throw them away with much of the other unsolicited mail. The definition of "sufficient inquiry" is loose and should be tightened up. We should return to the former position, whereby the electoral registration officers made sure that households were called on and did not simply rely on written methods of canvassing and sending other forms.

We have talked today about the way in which the rolling register would work. The present registration procedure relies on the system whereby, in August or September each year, the electoral registration officers send or deliver an electoral registration form to each household in the district. We know that it is an offence not to complete the form or to give false information. I think that most of us would agree that people who commit an offence by not sending in the form are unlikely to be penalised. However, people who submit false information should perhaps be chased up more vigorously than they have been.

Under the present procedure, a draft register is compiled from the electoral forms returned by householders and is published on 28 November each year. It contains the names of all those resident in the district on the qualifying date of 10 October who appear to the electoral registration officer to be eligible for inclusion. What sort of inquiry is made by electoral registration officers when the draft register is published about the absence of people who have previously been on the register for a considerable period?

During last year's general election, I was approached by people who said, "Mr. Shersby, I have lived here for about 20 years and have always been on the electoral register. Why has my name disappeared?" The probably explanation is that the individual did not fill the form A and was away when the subsequent forms arrived. Should not electoral registration officers make inquiries when they find that an established name has disappeared from the register for no good reason? I think that they should, and I hope that we shall act to deal with that problem.

There is a claims procedure—both the draft register and the final register, published on 15 February, are open to inspection by the public. The claims procedure enables people who are eligible, but not included on the register, to apply to have their names added. However, there is no procedure for adding to the register the names of people who move into the district after the qualifying date. The Bill gives careful consideration to that matter.

I think that the claims procedure is lengthy. For example, it includes a procedure for objecting to proposed entries in the register. Should that facility to object be removed? I do not think so. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said, there are occasionally circumstances in which people should not be registered—for example, when a deliberate attempt has been made to move people into a specific district to register them for a forthcoming election. Therefore, it is important for the objection procedure to remain, so that political parties, which make a point of studying such matters, can object if they believe that registrations are false. However, there may be other ways in which the claims procedure can be speeded up. The Bill contains one such method.

One of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention is that it is impossible for names to be added to the register after nominations have closed. He suggested a sensible arrangement whereby people can register up to a date shortly before an election. It would be unwise for the date to be too close to the election, for the obvious reason that electoral registration officers would be busy at that time and would find it difficult to handle that extra responsibility.

Some people only become aware for the first time during an election that their names are missing from the register. They usually become aware of that because they have not received any election material from the candidates; all of a sudden, it dawns on them that something is wrong and that they are likely to lose their right to vote.

What are the reasons for the loss of electors? If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, study "The Times Guide to the House of Commons"—as I am sure you do in your leisure hours, so that you know the faces of all hon. Members, whom you call with tremendous accuracy—you will be aware of the changing levels of electoral registration between the past two general elections.

I believe that the reasons for those changing levels—in addition to those that I have already given—are as follows. The first involves the change in the administrative practice of electoral registration officers over the past decade and the lack of canvassing. Secondly, there tends to be a blip in the electoral registration figures when a general election is known to be on the horizon; people have a greater incentive to register at that time. Thirdly, there are changes in people's propensity to register when they move to another district.

Some people say that the introduction of the community charge had an effect on electoral registration, but that is difficult to prove or quantify. All that Members of Parliament can do is to go by their gut feelings. They use their judgment when dealing with constituency cases and may arrive at the conclusion that some people have failed to register because they wish to avoid the charge.

One of the points that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-West made which particularly interests me concerns the sale of registers. There is evidence, I believe, that the sale of registers is objectionable to many people. Some people have asked me why they cannot be registered anonymously, as they can be for community charge purposes, if there is good reason.

The problem is that copies of the electoral register are provided free of charge not only to Members of Parliament, local councillors, election candidates and local political parties, all of whom have an absolute right to that information, but to others who wish to have access to a comprehensive list of local residents. Among those who make use of electoral registers are mail order companies, credit reference agencies, market research organisations and charities. The electoral register can be purchased on a computer tape or disc from electoral registration officers who are data users. The current fee for non-electoral users is £2·50 per 1,000 names on the register for printed copies and £18 per 1,000 names on the register in data form. Since the sale of electoral registers is unpopular with the public, that matter should be looked into again.

Mr. Barnes: The sale of electoral registers is also very unpopular with electoral registration officers. I had a meeting with the London electoral registration officers, at

which I outlined my ideas for the Bill. They wanted the Bill to include a provision regarding the non-commercial sale of registers, for the reasons that have just been outlined by the hon. Gentleman. I did not include such a provision in the Bill, because there is considerable support on the Conservative Benches for the sale of registers. That would more readily and easily have led to the defeat of the Bill. The measure would, however, make more sense if it included a provision regarding the sale of electoral registers. The powers that electoral registration officers have to collect information would then be less of a blight on civil liberties. I hope that the Minister is listening carefully to the points that are being made by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

Mr. Shersby: I am glad to be in agreement with the hon. Gentleman on those points. It is valuable for the House to know that he has taken the trouble, as is so evident from everything else that he has said about the Bill, to consult electoral registration officers. If it is Government policy to encourage the sale of electoral registers to mail order companies and market research organisations, I have to tell the Minister that I disagree with the Government. All hon. Members receive many complaints from constituents about junk mail and about canvassing. There is a general worry about security.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is important to point out that the electoral register is a public document. It would be difficult to conduct elections if political parties and various other organisations did not have access to it. It is impossible, therefore, to keep it out of the hands of anybody who wants to see it. It would be wrong to try to do so. Therefore, it makes very much more sense for electoral registration officers to charge for the document, except political parties and one or two other organisations that have a particular need for it, as that helps to defray some of the cost. It is not just commercial firms that find electoral registers useful. Charities do as well.

Mr. Shersby: Friday is a marvellous day in the House of Commons for Back Benchers. They have the great pleasure and privilege of being able to disagree with the Treasury Bench on matters such as this without there being undue recrimination afterwards. This is a somewhat questionable matter. The principal purpose of the electoral register is to register people's entitlement to vote at elections. As far as I am aware, it was never introduced to enable mail order companies, credit reference agencies and market research organisations to pester people with their attentions. There may be a case for making electoral registers available to charities. They are in a different category.

I agree with my hon. Friend that if electoral registers are to be made available, there should be a charge for that service and that that charge should be realistic, for it would help to defray the cost of compiling and publishing the registers. However, it is rather like the curate's egg—good in parts.

The electoral register can also be used either to trace or identify elderly people, particularly women living alone. Among those who consider themselves to be at risk are elderly people. There are others at risk, including some Members of Parliament in a sensitive situation; members of the judiciary; police officers; prison officers; scientists engaged in research using animals; even battered wives. I mention those categories of people because they are sensitive to the fact that the name that they have registered on the electoral register for the purpose of exercising their democratic rights is being sold to people who want to use it for quite different purposes.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point about the harassment of individuals by the use of the electoral register. He must surely accept that it is not possible and proper for the register to be kept private, but he might care to consider the point that local authorities are being increasingly encouraged by the Department of the Environment and others to maximise their income and to sell electoral registers to all sorts of companies. Although they are quite expensive to buy, their value to mail order companies is very considerable.

Does the hon. Gentleman not think there is a case for making electoral registers freely available to be checked in libraries, post offices and so on and also for making them freely available to political parties, councillors, Members of Parliament and so on, but not selling them to mail order companies?

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Gentleman has made a valuable suggestion which ought to be considered. I am grateful to him for making it.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East proposes that Parliament should approve a code of practice for electoral registration officers to follow when compiling their registers. I do not believe that that code should be unduly rigid. Some discretion should be given to electoral registration officers so to arrange matters as to be able to deliver the best possible service to the people of this country in a way that fits local circumstances.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Gentleman referred earlier to the fact that canvassing does not always take place and that something less than that is accepted as a sufficient search. A minimum level of search could be provided by the code.

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I accept that that is a valid point.

As for the post-electoral review on electoral law and procedure that was established after the last election, I have looked into the matter and I understand that that review is under way and that it is considering various questions, including the availability of absent votes for those who cannot go to the polling station, methods of counting, including automated counting, and the design of the electoral forms. On that question, I hope that the commission will get it right this time. All of us have had reason to complain about the electoral forms and certainly about other matters—for example, the complicated nature of the forms used to apply for an absent vote, which many people find difficult to understand.

One working group—which should report, I understand, in the summer—is examining electoral registration and, in particular, the question of a rolling register. It seems, therefore, that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has considerable support for his proposals not only on both sides of the House but from the commission.

I have no doubt that the commission will attend to other matters, such as the resource implications of rolling registration, the frequency with which alterations should be made, the criteria for registration and sources of information from which to make amendments. It would be

[Mr. Shersby]

unwise to pre-empt the commission's work, but I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East for raising the matter today.

I completely support the provisions in part II of the Bill. Disabled people should be able to go to polling stations and should not be confined to voting by post from their homes. They should be able to exercise their democratic voting rights in the same way as able-bodied people.

I cannot help wondering whether, if the House is debating how we vote in one hundred years' time, Members of Parliament will worry about electoral registers, canvassing and all the other aspects of compiling the list that is so familiar to us today. Perhaps we shall then vote by pressing a button. With interactive television, I imagine that one will give a pin number which will enable one to vote in an election and the results could be determined in about an hour. None of us will be here to see that.

Reform and improvement continue from year to year and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East for stimulating this discussion, which I hope will result in further improvements to our system.

12.11 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I shall try to make my comments brief because I wish the Bill well and I want it to receive a Second Reading today and not to be talked out. Some Conservative Members seem intent on talking it out and the measure is too serious and sensible to receive that fate.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) commented on the sale of registers and objected to the publicity given to them. I disagree with his approach, as there is a too great a passion for secrecy in some matters. Next week a Bill on the right to know will be introduced. I believe that that right extends to registers. There can be no serious objections to the publication of electoral registers. If one does not like junk mail, one can use a bin. All hon. Members are familiar with tremendous volumes of junk mail and use our bins regularly, so I do not understand why anyone else should have valid grounds for complaint on the subject.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge also referred to the post-electoral review that is under way. I hope that the review and the study groups to which he referred will be completed quickly and that we shall get the results. I know that the register and the forms are being considered—expecially the multiplicity of forms for absent voting, which is one area where reform is very necessary.

I support the general principle of the Bill because registration is important and it is desirable that everyone who is entitled to vote is given the opportunity to cast their vote. That principle is important and the Bill should be welcomed for that reason, even if it contains some flaws.

Hon. Members have drawn attention to the fact that, for some years, the percentage of persons included on the register has steadily declined and is now down to between 95 and 97 per cent. in Great Britain. Until the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) receives his written answer, we shall not have equivalent figures for Northern Ireland.

A post-election review regularly takes place in Great Britain, to which representatives of political parties are invited. That is a sensible procedure, but it has not hitherto been followed in Northern Ireland, although this year the Minister, who is apparently responsible for elections there, decided to invite political parties to give him their views for the first time. During that meeting, which took place a few months ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland claimed that the equivalent registration figure for Northern Ireland was 98 per cent. He was not in a position to give the basis for that figure and although he promised to communicate with us in writing he has regrettably failed to do so.

Mr. Barnes: I received the following answer on 5 February, which compares the figure for the percentage of population eligible to vote on 30 June 1991 with the figure on the subsequent register, which shows that 99·6 per cent. of those eligible to vote in Upper Bann are registered. Nearly all the figures for Northern Ireland are in the 98 to 100 per cent. range, which emphasises my argument that Northern Ireland does not have the same problem because it did not have the poll tax, although it still has the problem of people who are on the register, but should not be, masking others who are not on the register.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I am not entirely satisfied that the registers are as accurate as they could be. Until that written answer, there were no published studies for Northern Ireland. Consequently I must express some concern about the accuracy of the register because we do not know the basis of any claims made for its accuracy.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that the new register, which will be published during the next few days, will be four months out of date as soon as it is published. The Northern Ireland register will be five months out of date because the relevant date is 15 September. The hon. Member for Uxbridge commented on people having second homes on the continent who might well be out of the country on 10 October. I think that it is more likely that they will be out of the country on 15 September, and I wonder why there is such a variation.

Clause 2 of the Bill states:

"The rolling registers of parliamentary and local government electors or, in Northern Ireland, of parliamentary electors, shall be published".

That reflects the confusion which exists in the legislation, as European and local government elections are handled differently in Northern Ireland and are subject to different legislation.

I have a general observation which I hope that the Minister will consider. Legislation on elections and, the right to vote is complex and spread over many Acts of Parliament, but in Northern Ireland the confusion is even greater and the legislation is spread over even more Acts. Consolidation of the legislation is necessary, especially in Northern Ireland. That would greatly assist anyone working in the area. We need an enormous bundle of legislation to find out about electoral law. Some time ago the general secretary of our party decided to get up to date on the subject and asked the Government bookshop in Belfast for all the legislation on elections. The person on the other side of the counter said, "You're mad." There are scores of Acts that deal with elections in Northern Ireland and we need consolidation. Then people might read the legislation.

An election petition is under way and it has been made clear that one of the election agents did not even bother to

read the legislation. I have some sympathy for him in view of the state of the statute book, but that matter gives rise to genuine concern although it is slightly off the subject of the Bill.

As I have said, I welcome the principle behind the Bill, but there are several problems. One problem that several hon. Members have mentioned is the cut-off date and how close it should be to the election. I believe that the Bill brings the cut-off date too close to the election. We should perhaps have a procedure under which the register is frozen on the announcement of an election so that there would be no change from then until polling day.

It is important for political parties to know exactly who is on the register. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East might say that only a handful of people will be added in the last few days up to the seven days before the election, but I believe that the register should be frozen.

In addition to the general arguments for freezing the register on the announcement of an election, I draw attention to the problem of personation, which was mentioned by one Conservative Member. To have a register and to know that it is accurate is very important from the point of view of checking personation. I do not want to discuss the issue at length, but there are some general observations to be made.

Many people assume that personation is a problem only in Northern Ireland, but that is not true. There is probably a greater problem with personation on this side of the Irish sea than people generally recognise. Tammany hall type politics exist in parts of Great Britain, and personation is very much a feature of such politics.

Many people assume—the telling of funny stories perpetuates the belief—that personation is widespread in Northern Ireland and that everyone is at it. That is not so. Whatever may have happened before my time, during 20 years of electioneering in Northern Ireland I can say with my hand on my heart that I have not been aware of any significant level of personation being committed by any of the Unionist parties or by the major nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour party. However, I am aware of extensive personation committed by some of the smaller parties. There was a time when the Workers party was very much into personation, but that party has changed its shape and is a new party, although I am not sure that I can accurately give the name that it is using now.

The main problem with personation in Northern Ireland comes from Sinn Fein, which organises personation on a substantial scale. Special measures have been adopted to try to restrain personation with the use of identity requirements, but it does not work because there are half a dozen different identity documents that might be used, one of which is a medical card which is extremely easy to forge.

Electoral officers know that during a recent election in West Belfast—the main scene of personation by Sinn Fein because it is a seat which it has won in the past—Sinn Fein forged medical cards. The officers discovered a fault in the forgeries and were able to check the personation. Sinn Fein realised the mistake and printed a new set of forged cards during the election itself. Therefore, Sinn Fein printed two sets of forged medical cards—it changed its print run twice. We do not know how many votes were stolen in that way, whether it was hundreds or thousands, but it seems that it was in the thousands.

After the recent general election, the defeated Sinn Fein candidate, Mr. Adams, accused the SDLP of stealing the seat from him. In fact, Mr. Adams had stolen the seat every time he had been elected with personated votes. To enable people to combat the serious problem of personation we must freeze the register earlier.

Personation is not only a matter of masquerading as a real person on the register. It also takes the form of putting persons on the register who do not exist—in other words, persuading registration officers to include persons who do not live in a specific place. There have been stories in Northern Ireland of little country lanes where there are many people on the register although in fact no one lives there. I do not know how widespread the problem is, but it needs to be checked. However, I do not think that the Bill offers an effective measure to do so.

We need a requirement for registration officers to serve notice or publish their intention to include persons on the register some weeks before the person is actually included on it. That would enable interested parties to have a look. When draft registers are published, political parties in Northern Ireland are fairly active in checking to ensure that no phantom voters have been included, as well as ensuring that people have not been left off. We need an equivalent procedure under rolling registration when the registration officer is putting someone on the register. If the Bill goes into Committee, that idea could be considered there.

Another aspect of the Bill with which I am not very happy is clause 13, which proposes to amend section 7 of the principal Act. It affects voluntary mental patients. Voluntary mental patients are required to make a declaration so that their capacity to vote can be checked. As I understand the proposed amendments, the requirement to make a declaration will be operative only if a patient has been a voluntary mental patient

"for two years or less".

Is two years the right length of time? Is it not too long? I can understand the thinking behind the provision, but a shorter period of months rather than years might be appropriate.

Another problem with which the Bill does not deal is the analogous situation of nursing and residential homes. There may be problems involving the capacity of persons in them to vote, and the Minister may be familiar with them. Before the previous general election in Northern Ireland, the chief electoral officer took it on himself to exclude from the register persons in nursing and residential homes who did not have some requisite mental capacity. There is no legislative basis for doing that. Even if a person is senile, he or she is entitled to be on the register. Such a person may or may not be entitled to vote, but as the law stands that is a decision to be taken by the presiding officer at the polling station.

Not only was the chief electoral officer of Northern Ireland operating without a legislative basis, but the form that he sent out asked persons in residential nursing homes —including, possibly, secretaries and other people without medical knowledge—to state whether someone in the home had the requisite mental capacity. That was an improper practice. We had the difficulty that before the election the chief electoral officer decided to introduce a practice which excluded a substantial number of persons from the register.

We complained, of course, both at the time and subsequently. During the post-electoral review we were

[Mr. Trimble]

told that the Home Office, in association with the Northern Ireland Office, was drawing up guidelines and would issue a circular or some other form of guidance. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge that guidance has not yet been issued. Apparently it is still in preparation. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us an idea of when it will be published, because it needs to be hurried on.

I see that the Bill provides for a code of practice to be drawn up. That is good. To a certain extent the Home Office does that at the moment, in that it has issued circulars, guidance practice notes or whatever they are called. Those are useful and I wish that there was an equivalent in Northern Ireland, but there is none. The chief electoral officer does not publish material. Technically, under the legislation, he is the only registration officer. He issues letters to his deputies in the constituencies, as he did with regard to nursing and residential homes. Some of the deputies observed his instructions and others, because they were aware that the instructions were unlawful, did not. I should like to see that matter settled as soon as possible.

I have been critical of the chief electoral officer, but I admit that he had a reason for adopting that practice. He was concerned about the potential for abuse involving absent voting, in which the votes of infirm elderly people in nursing and residential homes could have been stolen through postal voting. Such potential for abuse is a problem. I believe that the chief electoral officer adopted the wrong means of dealing with the problem, but the problem exists and it needs to be checked by the introduction of some safeguard covering absent voting.

Because of our experience of the behaviour of the chief electoral officer in Northern Ireland in that respect, I am glad that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has not adopted the Hansard Society report's recommendation that an electoral commission independent of local or central government should be created. That is the curse of the chief electoral officer's post in Northern Ireland: it was established as independent of government, so there is no accountability and no way of getting the chief electoral officer to change when he has adopted the wrong approach.

My hon. Friends and I have often said that in Northern Ireland we have electoral law and Bradley law—that is, the practice of the chief electoral officer, which sometimes varies from electoral law. People are not always willing or able to go to court to deal with the examples of what we call Bradley law.

I welcome clause 11, which deals with the notification of boundary changes. I mention that because, purely by coincidence, I received a telephone call this morning from one of our councillors who was involved in a nice situation over boundary change. He has found that a small rural estate of 11 houses which he believes should be in his area has suddenly appeared in somebody else's area—although the roads that serve the estate are still in his area. There appears to have been confusion between two Tullymurrays, one of which is a townland and the other of which is the postal address of the estate. As a result, the 11 houses have gone into the wrong area. Such things happen as a result of the registration process being overcentralised. The persons who recently carried out the boundary revision did not have the requisite local knowledge. We shall pursue that matter in a different context.

I welcome the principle behind the Bill, subject to the reservations that I have mentioned. A number of its provisions simply legislate for existing best practice. I am thinking especially of the provision for registrars of births, marriages and deaths to inform registration officers about persons who have died. Several other provisions also put the present practice of the better registration officers on a statutory basis. That is good.

I also welcome the provisions for access to polling stations for physically disabled persons. Those are very desirable. I may add that we should like there to be easy access to polling stations for all persons. In Northern Ireland, we suffer from not having enough polling stations. The excuse given is security considerations. I was rather amused when listening to discussions at the Home Office post-electoral review to hear someone suggest having guidelines, such as not having to walk more than 10 minutes to get to a polling station—would that we had such a situation in Northern Ireland.

The villagers of one small village in my constituency have to go two miles to another village to vote, and no bus runs between them. That is ridiculous. The ward is too large and has only one polling station. The authorities will not locate a second polling station in the village in question, allegedly for security reasons, although there is no serious security problem in that village. By all means, let us have easy access to polling stations for the disabled, but let us also have easy access for everyone else.

Some provisions in the Bill involve expenditure. I very much hope that the Minister will not use money as an argument for sidelining the Bill. I am sure that other hon. Members will comment on the noticeable difference between the level of expenditure involved in maintaining the poll tax registers and the level of expenditure involved in maintaining the electoral registers. If the amount that the Government laid out for the poll tax generally—and for the poll tax registers in particular, were made available for electoral registration, we could carry out all the provisions in the Bill and still have a lot of money to spare, so I hope that we shall not hear that money is the problem. Money should be made available, because voting is a basic right. Everyone who is entitled to vote should be enabled to do so by being placed on the register. A system that will improve the register is welcome in principle, whatever minor criticisms one may have.

12.36 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on winning a high place in the ballot and on using it to further his long-standing interest in electoral registration. The hon. Gentleman has tabled many parliamentary questions on the matter, many of which have been for me. He has tabled early-day motions on the subject and has raised it in other ways as well. I understand that the question for oral answer that he tabled yesterday was his 25th in recent times. It is an issue which he and the Government take equally seriously.

The Bill in its final form was published only yesterday and I have not had the opportunity to study every detail in it. However, I had an informative meeting with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East when he visited me at

the Home Office recently. I say again to him here what I said to him then. The Government do not disagree with his basic objectives, although I am afraid that I cannot give Government support to the Bill at this time. My position is not a result of the passionate oratory of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) who has, no doubt, gone to recover in the Tea Room with a cup of tea. I shall explain again to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East some of the reasons for my position.

In case I forget later, it is sensible to answer now a specific question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). He made some good points and one point with which I disagreed. He asked how many prosecutions there had been for not returning form A. No figures are available generally. However, I agree with the tenor of the intervention by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) who said that there were very few or none. I think that the answer is none or very few. The working group on electoral registration is trying to obtain figures that will show the position more clearly.

I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and misled him, the House and myself on one point. I said that political parties were entitled to free registers. They are not; it is their candidates. That makes a difference, because it means that independent candidates with no party are entitled to free registers. That opens the loophole—and could give rise to the problems—referred to by my hon. Friend, who expressed concern that a lot of independent candidates employed by various organisations would stand in order to get the register. That is why I explained that, whatever the merits or otherwise of the case, the proposals for keeping this public document in limited circulation are quite impracticable.

I understand my hon. Friend's worry—and I note from the sympathetic response that his remarks received that it is shared by other hon. Members—about the amount of unwanted mail that people receive through their doors. I suspect, however, that even if no electoral register ever fell into the hands of any mail order company, such companies would find a way to get mail through people's front doors. There is no doubt about that.

I should add, however, that reputable mailing services will refrain from sending mail to people who specifically ask not to receive it. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge said that his constituents complain to him. I hope that he will mention to them the Mailing Preference Service, which can be written to at Freepost 22, London W1. Because I have said that clearly, I have no doubt that the address will appear in *Hansard*. A letter to the mailing preference service from an individual asking not to receive through the post circulars addressed to him will have a beneficial effect—although my own experience is that most of what comes through my door is not specifically addressed to me but is clearly put round on spec by the Post Office or other companies.

The Bill falls into two parts. The first deals with electoral registration and the second with improving access to polling stations for voters suffering from a physical disability. Those are worthy and meritorious aims, and they are aims which the Government share.

The overall objectives of our electoral registration procedures are to have as accurate a list of electors as possible; to ensure that those who wish to vote can do so with minimum inconvenience; and to ensure that the votes cast are accurately counted as quickly as possible. It has, therefore, been the practice in recent times to conduct a review of electoral law and procedures after every general election, in order to see what, if any, changes might be required. We established such a review after the 1992 general election and it is under way at present.

Let me pause for a moment to describe to the House the wide-ranging nature of that review. After the last general election, Home Office officials canvassed all the political parties and the representative groups of the local authorities, asking them for proposals to improve any aspects of the electoral system that they felt were capable of improvement. We received more than 250 separate suggestions. We then met the political parties and the local authorities and established how to handle the work that arose from these suggestions. We set up five working groups to examine the broad subjects into which most of the suggestions could be grouped. The working groups consist of Home Office officials and a small number of experienced electoral registration officers. Their remit is to make recommendations, if possible by the summer of this year, for changes in the system, which will be considered by the original organsiations we consulted—the political parties and local authorities. At that point, we shall be ready to consider which changes we can make by administrative actions and which will need legislation.

One working group is examining the question of absent voting, which has been mentioned several times this morning, including the criteria for qualification for an absent vote, either for an indefinite period or for a particular election—the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) mentioned that very point—and the closing date for applications and how near to an election it can reasonably fall. All of us who have fought elections know only too well how aggrieved people feel when they are unable to vote in an election in which they thought they would be able to vote because they missed the application deadline for an absent vote.

Mr. Pike: When those aspects are considered, will the Minister ensure that any changes will remove the anomaly whereby there are different qualifiations for local and parliamentary elections? Would it not be better to have a standard qualification so that everyone is aware of the position?

Mr. Lloyd: Of course it would be better to have a standard qualification. So long as there are no other reasons in particular cases why there should be a difference, that is what I would expect to emerge from the consultations. There are difficult technical points to be overcome. However, I agree with the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) that the more we can simplify the rules and make them the same, the better.

Another working group is examining all aspects of the forms that are used in electoral registration for absent voting and for other electoral matters. We are considering whether there is anything more that we can do to simplify the procedures and make the rules much clearer and less forbidding for the people who wish to use an absent vote on a particular occasion or permanently. That is precisely the point that the hon. Member for Burnley just made.

A third working group is considering whether the current level of fees and allowances for returning officers is adequate and whether any changes are required in current categories of expenditure. The remaining two working

[Mr. Lloyd]

groups are particularly relevant to the Bill and form one of the principal reasons why, alas, I cannot support the Bill today.

One working group is dedicated to questions relating to electoral registration. It is covering matters such as the definition of residence used in determining eligibility, the role of the residence qualifying date and the procedures for claims and objections—that is, claims to be added to the register or objections to names included in it. Most of those questions lead into examining the desirability of a rolling register. I should like to return to that subject, which is central to the Bill, a little later.

The Government want people to be registered to vote. That is the objective of the system and the expenditure. As several hon. Members have said, it is fundamental for the health of our democracy that all eligible voters should be permitted and, indeed, encouraged to exercise their right. That requires two things to happen: first, they need to be recognised as eligible voters by being included in the official lists drawn up by electoral registration officers. Secondly, they need to be able to cast their votes with the minimum of physical and bureaucratic difficulty. The Bill addresses both those problems.

Successive Governments have taken very seriously the need to maximise participation. We have never left it solely to the individual to register his or her interest in voting. In that, we share the assumption of most other western democracies. I hesitate to criticise the practices of the United States of America, but, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East rightly noted, the United States leaves the question of registering for a vote solely to the individual. That may give some kind of subliminal message to the citizens. Perhaps it means that they need officialdom to make it easier and provide encouragement. However, registration in the United States is low and the turnout in elections matches that correspondingly.

I believe that it is unhealthy for a democracy not to bring home to all voters the vital importance of registering for a vote. I do not doubt that all hon. Members would deplore a less rigorous approach being allowed to develop here.

Mr. Allen: Given the Minister's remarks about what is called positive registration in the United States, whereby people must go out to register instead of having the assistance of local or national government, will he take this opportunity to condemn the Conservative-controlled London borough of Brent which introduced precisely that system in Brent which led to a shortfall of 15,000 people on its register?

Mr. Lloyd: The register in Brent has dropped for some years. Whether that is due to a reduction in population or a diminishing enthusiasm to register, I do not know. Certainly, the electoral registration officer and the authorities in Brent have sought to provide the encouragement to vote that they are required to provide under the law and under guidance from the Home Office. There are plenty of other areas—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will be able to quote them—in which there have been sharp reductions in the number of people on the register. The reasons for that are not clear.

One of the major points of the exercise that is being undertaken, using the skills and knowledge of electoral registration officers, is to try to draw together the most helpful programme that can be adapted to suit the particular needs of certain areas. I am sure that we shall have some surprises when the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report is published. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, the census in 1981 revealed disparities between registers and actual populations. We shall again hear the charge that electoral registration has been inefficient or has been misplaced in some districts, and that in other districts there has been a disparity where nobody suspected it. Over 10 years, with vast moves in population, it is difficult to tell where the mismatches are. I accept the suggestion that there are considerable mismatches.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has twice intervened to make a rather petty party political point about the borough of Brent. If 15,000 persons in the London borough of Brent failed to register or to supply the information that has led them not to be registered, and if there is a penalty under the law that can be applied to those persons who failed to supply information that would have enabled them to register, would the Labour party care to invite the Government to prosecute those 15,000 people for not supplying information that would have been registered had it been supplied in the first place?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend makes a good point. At law, it is an offence not to register. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, that is an offence for which prosecution should be used sparingly. There will be appropriate cases. One of the study groups is considering that point. I regret that Brent is held up as a particular party political example. There are plenty of places where there is a suggestion that registration is not high. There has been a decline in the register in Brent. The party political control in Brent changed recently, but, as I said, the decline straddles that change. To make an issue out of that does not help the debate to move forward and it certainly does not indicate the realities of the situation in that borough, either.

Mr. Thomason: Does my hon. Friend concede that, according to a report in October 1991, there has been a reduction of 7,500 people from the electoral registers of the constituencies of Vauxhall, Streatham and Norwood, which together make up the London borough of Lambeth?

Mr. Lloyd: Most of the debate has been non-partisan. Electoral registration is a real issue. It is a matter of real concern that we get the highest possible registration. Registration differs from place to place. How much it differs is not known on the information that we have. Electoral registration officers use a variety of techniques, and some will undoubtedly be more effective than others. The important thing is that we have working groups examining the issue thoroughly to deduce where the problems are and the best ways of tackling them.

Mr. Maclennan: Is it within the remit of the working groups to consider the recommendations of the Hansard Society about central funding of the process?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that that falls directly to the working groups. The funding of the process is as it exists now. Elections are funded through the rate support grant in the normal way.

If there is a specific problem with the way in which the arrangements are funded, I am sure that the working groups will not be slow to point it out. I expect the working groups to show the cost of any changes that they recommend. Some of the recommendations will be a small matter of a different approach; others will be substantial. The value of the work to be done will diminished if we do not know what the changes involve administratively and in terms of financial resources.

Opposition Members asked about the fine for not sending in the form. The fine is £1,000. It increased when the whole system was changed in the Criminal Justice Act at the end of 1992. The duty is on electoral registration officers to maximise registration. We require them to publish an annual register of all those who appear to them to be eligible to vote. We establish elaborate facilities for the public to check and correct the register.

Another feature of the seriousness with which the question is regarded is that electoral registration officers are answerable not to the local authorities who appoint them or to the Home Office. Judging by what the hon. Member for Upper Bann said, that sort of independence causes him some unease. Electoral registration officers are answerable directly to the courts.

In accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983, electoral registration officers are required to conduct house-to-house or other sufficient inquiries to satisfy themselves that their lists are accurate and as up to date as possible. There has been some suggestion in the debate that that is not done at all, or not done often. The OPCS research that we have suggests that a third of electoral registration officers use personal canvassing on the first reminder. By the third reminder stage, three quarters of them use personal canvassing. The hon. Member for Upper Bann may be concerned that 25 per cent. of electoral registration officers appear not to use personal canvassing, but the majority certainly do. Personal canvassing is especially high in areas that have been of considerable concern during this debate and which are of concern to the Home Office and electoral registration officers—in metropolitan districts and in London where it seems, though it is not yet entirely demonstrated, that registration is well below the average. It would not be surprising if registration were well below average, given the transitory population who tend to live in central city areas.

Mr. Barnes: I should like to find out about the role of the Home Office. Earlier, the Minister said that electoral registration officers and returning officers were acting generally under the supervision of the courts. Nevertheless, the Home Office plays a considerable role because it publishes whole lists of circulars and of advice on occasions.

One disastrous circular linked electoral registration with poll tax registration. No forms had been returned over a period, no record of a registration was kept on the poll tax register and people's names were to be removed. That interlink was not justified. That example shows the significance and importance of the role that the Home Office plays in such matters.

Mr. Lloyd: The Home Office accepts that it has a central and crucial role in supplying advice, undertaking monitoring and ensuring with the working groups that best practice is distilled, recommended and followed. Everything depends, of course, on what is done at local level.

My remarks are designed to confirm how seriously the Government take the issue of electoral registration. I do not want to sound complacent, because, as I have said, there are some real problems that we need to tackle, but it is worth remembering that we have an estimated level of registration of about 95 per cent. of the potential electorate. About £40 million is spent each year in England and Wales on the process of electoral registration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), in a thoughtful speech, was right to express concern about the resource implications for local authorities. I was not wholly comforted when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East rose to reassure him and explained that he had designed the Bill so that any extra expense would fall on the Home Office. I do not take that with the sort of equanimity that was suggested in the hon. Gentleman's intervention and recommended to me by the hon. Member for Upper Bann.

I have no doubt that improvements to the system will be forthcoming, which will cost money. I hope that we shall be able to find ways other than those suggested of making the system more efficient and more effective by saving some resources to balance things out.

As well as continuing a high level of expenditure in maintaining the registration system, we launch each year a nationwide advertising campaign. It is designed to encourage people to complete and return the electoral registration form. In 1992, we spent £617,000 on the campaign. We are now considering the format of a campaign—we shall launch it in August or September—when form A will start to be distributed.

Mr. Barnes: Expenditure on publicising the need to return forms is extremely limited given the range of Government expenditure. Abbey National held a ballot to determine whether it should become a plc. It spent £7·5 million on advertising the campaign, which was directed only towards the members of the society. Expenditure of £617,000 is a minor provision. It falls short of the sums that were spent to encourage expatriate votes—purely voluntary votes. There is a strange mixture when that is set alongside the compulsory provision that exists in the United Kingdom. Money needs to be spent and there also needs to be more imaginative advertising so that people in Plymouth, for example, and other areas do not have to engage in their own activities. Perhaps the Home Office can learn from Plymouth.

Mr. Lloyd: The campaign for overseas voters was a one-off. It was launched immediately after Parliament had decided to extend the right to vote to British citizens overseas. The campaign has not been repeated and we have no plans to repeat it. Annually, however, we have advertising expenditure to encourage people to complete and return the electoral registration form. I am not sure that I agree with the hon. Gentleman's assumptions. I sympathised with Lord Lever when he said that he knew that half of the money that he was spending on advertising was an absolute waste, but that he did not know which half. I am not certain that the money that is spent on advertising the form each year could not be better spent by providing local authorities with that much more resources for canvassing. I suspect that people are not unaware that

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there is a registration process, but that they need an active reminder. Perhaps increasing the resources of local authorities in that way would be a more effective way of doing that. I would expect observations to come from the professionals on the working parties. I do not think that the problems can be dealt with simply by advertising expenditure.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister's point about local authorities touches a central issue—whether the right to register should depend on the efficiency and effectiveness of local government. Even if one tops up the resources available to local authorities, they do not have an obligation in law to undertake such activities—and I do not suggest that they should. Is it not for national Government to ensure that the register is up to date and complete?

Mr. Lloyd: The onus must be on the individual—that is quite sufficient. However, machinery must be available to enable the elector to register easily, and that provides a reminder. I do not see how that could be done nationally—it must be undertaken at local level. I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's point. If he is suggesting that the Home Office, as the central Department having an overseeing responsibility, has a duty to remind, cajole, promote best practice and provide information, I agree. We are in train of doing that.

Mr. Trimble: Am I right in thinking that the number of persons on the register is expressed simply as a percentage of those estimated to live in an area? Am I also correct in thinking that that percentage does not link the total number of residents with the number on the register? Have any studies been made, or are any likely to be made, of the accuracy of the register—rather than relying on a purely statistical exercise that may or may not show anything?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is right—it is a statistical exercise, based on out-of-date figures from the last census. The more time that elapses since the previous census, the more the percentage is a calculation based on an assumption about a figure which, however accurate it may have been initially, has come to be an approximation. That is because assumptions must be made about population growth and movement.

As to whether studies have been made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of registration, as I said earlier, various assumptions are made about particular boroughs and constituencies—but they can only be assumptions. I shall return to that aspect later.

The Bill seeks to establish the rolling register and, as I commented earlier, there is nothing in the principles of the proposals that the Government would rule out. I am sorry to be so lukewarm, but, as we have not received the results of the study, it would be wrong to say that we favour a change in the direction that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East suggests, because we do not. I should be quite glad if it turns out to be an efficient and practicable way of ensuring that registers are fuller and more up to date.

At present, the electoral register is compiled on an annual basis. That causes a number of difficulties, particularly in relation to people who move from one electoral district to another and who may take months to find their way on to the register for the area to which they moved. A number of electoral registration officers are in favour of moving to a system of rolling registration, and I believe that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has spoken to number of them. Those officers say that system would enable them to publish updated registers more frequently.

The system of having just one annual register dates from 1949 and is itself part of a traditional system of electoral administration dating back to the 19th century. Clearly, there have been significant technological changes since then.

Most EROs now have access to computerised databases, but I accept that the impact of new technology has not so far been as great in the electoral process as it has in other spheres. I readily concede that we need to look carefully at what changes might be introduced in the compilation and publication of the register by means of new technology. Such technology appears to make a rolling register simple as well as desirable, but there has not so far been any rigorous examination of exactly what it would entail. We have very little hard data on the costs and benefits involved. The Government must maintain an open mind on the issue, and there are likely to be a number of problems that must be addressed.

One working group of our post-election review is dedicated to examining the issue of electoral registration, and a rolling register is one of the detailed subjects that it is considering. I hope that that working group will report in the summer. We do not have clear evidence of what a rolling register would require in terms of resources, what its implications would be for registration criteria—for example, how we would handle a qualifying date—and whether it would result in more people registering. Therefore, I shall be interested to see the working group's conclusions. That is one reason why I cannot today offer Government support for the Bill. It is too early to say whether a rolling register is as enticing a proposition as it is sometimes described—as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East did so well this morning.

Another aspect of timing difficulties stems from the fact that the Government are still digesting much of the information gleaned from the 1991 census. Returning to the point raised by the hon. Member for Upper Bann, I can state that 10 years ago we obtained valuable data on the accuracy of the electoral register and many other electoral matters by means of follow-up studies conducted for us by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We are currently receiving the same sort of information from the 1991 census, which will give us an excellent set of comparative data. We hope and expect that they will yield valuable information on under-registration and the effectiveness of the various canvass methods to inform our future work.

The hon. Members for Derbyshire, North-East and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) rightly said that there seemed to be different levels of registration in different constituencies and districts. We need to discover how far, where and why that is true before we start to prescribe a legislative cure. The hon. Member for Burnley suggested that registration levels were becoming steadily worse. The position seems to have improved last year, but that is only an estimate. I hope that it will continue to do so. We cannot be sure about those matters until we have the results of the OPCS study.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West spoke of the risks of impersonation and deceit, which should not be ignored in any new attempt to devise a register that it is more up to date. We must keep alive to such problems. The hon. Member for Upper Bann asked about the guidelines due to be issued on the registration of the mentally ill. We are still working on them and are waiting to hear from the Law Society and the National Association for Mental Health. We sought the opinions of both those organisations and should like to receive them before we produce our circular.

Supporting the electoral registration part of the Bill today could, unfortunately, mean prejudicing much of the strategy can evolve effectively only later in the year when more of the basic information is to hand.

Mr. Barnes: If the Bill is given a Second Reading, it will go to Committee and there will be a time delay. If reports relating to a rolling register start to be produced, they could easily be dealt with in Committee and would provide a ready-made vehicle to advance the proposals; that would avoid having to wait for the Queen's Speech and other procedures.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand the hon. Gentleman's determination, but I do not think that we shall have these reports before the summer. When we receive them we shall have to examine and consider them. We may want to ask the working groups other questions. We have undertaken to go back to the political parties and to the local authority organisations. I do not expect that they will be able to reply without thinking again and consulting. I should be very surprised if the Government were able to reach even provisional conclusions before the autumn after that wholly proper consultation.

The provision for consideration of private Member's Bills is insufficent to enable consideration of this Bill to be completed and for it to reach the statute book before the summer recess. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman introduced his Bill a year too early. If he does well in the ballot next year, he may find that the position is very different. I understand how frustrating it is for him, but we must go through the due processes if we are to get the matter right. As the hon. Gentleman said, many complex question must be sorted out. We cannot do that before we receive the working groups' responses.

The second part of the Bill deals with a different matter —improving the physical access to polling stations for disabled persons.

Mr. Barnes: Am I right in thinking that not one of the five reviews that the Home Office has engaged upon since the last election deals with this matter? Although it may be under consideration by the Home Office, it does not appear to fall foul of the problem posed by the need for full consideration of all these reviews, which will take time. If there are difficulties over the first part of the Bill, might it not be possible to go forward with the second part?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is both determined and ingenious. In a way, I shall have to disappoint him. One of the groups does cover this question. I have no quarrel in principle with the general objective. I am not convinced that the legislative route is the right one to follow, but the hon. Gentleman's objective—that every polling station should provide easy access for the disabled—is one with which I entirely agree.

In 1985, we made it a statutory duty for local authorities to choose polling stations that offer facilities for the disabled over those which do not, where there is a choice. However, we have to recognise that in some areas choice will—for the present, anyway—be limited. Where the only building available does not provide good access for disabled voters, we provide a grant of about 50 per cent. towards the cost of a temporary ramp. Grants from election funds towards permanent adaptations to buildings could not be justified, because elections are held only infrequently.

The buildings that are used for polling stations are, however, usually ones to which the public have access on other occasions. I should have thought that it would be a priority for local authorities to make access for the disabled to those buildings at least fairly convenient. In some of the reports, difficult access is described as almost no access at all. There are two problems—first, where there is no access and, secondly, where access is possible but needs, by the use of more imagination, to be made much easier.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I apologise for having missed the earlier part of the debate, through no fault of my own.

The all-party disablement group has been campaigning hard on the deficiencies of the existing legislation. The 1985 changes have not borne the fruit that we expected. In my constituency, rooms have been used to which people in wheelchairs cannot gain access, even though other parts of the same building would have been accessible. The existing legislation is not good enough. If the rest of the Bill is not acceptable, for the reasons that the Minister has given, it must surely be possible to use or to amend this part of the Bill so that progress on this narrow point can be made.

Mr. Lloyd: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If I have heard him aright he said that the part of the building used as a polling station did not have access for the disabled, but other parts of the building did. That seems extraordinarily remiss of those in charge, and I should have thought that local pressure would be the most effective way to deal with it. No doubt, as a result of the hon. Gentleman's noticing the problem, such pressure has been effective.

Polling stations are a national requirement, but also a local service provided by the local authority for a local event—the election in that constituency—and the problem needs a little more foresight, imagination and pressure from local people if it is to be solved. I shall return to the subject in my concluding remarks.

I know that ramps are necessary, as long as the slope is reasonable for people in wheelchairs. For people who are disabled and find walking difficult, but who are determined not to use a wheelchair, even a ramp with a low incline is difficult and steps are often easier to use. That is why I said that thought and imagination are required because the problems are not easily solved and different people have different requirements. The problem can only be solved with common sense and determination at a local level, although grants are available from the Home Office. An 80 per cent. grant is available for special polling booths, which are designed for use by disabled people within the polling station.

The engine of any change must come from sensible local decisions, based on imagination and foresight. Our aim is

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that all polling stations should be accessible to disabled people. For that reason, our working group, which is considering counting and other aspects of the voting process, has invited the Royal National Institute for the Blind to talk about its concerns. It is important to take into account the views of those who are able to offer practical advice about disabled people's problems. The RNIB last year drew up valuable guidance on polling station lay-out and equipment, which we circulated to returning officers before the election.

After the Spastics Society drew up its report, we invited it to provide similar guidance. We have had talks with Mencap about helping people with learning difficulties to register to vote; that answers a question from the hon. Member for Upper Bann. When we receive guidance we bring it to the attention of the people who need it, but considerably more needs to be done, through continued dialogue with specialist groups that serve the interests of the disabled. I assure the House that we shall continue that dialogue and will take careful note of the working group's recommendations.

The Government have much sympathy with the aims of the Bill. As I said, timing is its unfortunate aspect. I welcome this informed and concerned debate on Second Reading and can undertake to the House that issues raised in the debate will be studied carefully by the Home Office working groups—and no doubt by the political parties —with which we are committed to discuss the findings before taking further legislative or administrative action that seems right and practical in the light of what they say.

I cannot give Government support for the Bill at this time. I regret that I must say that, because I share the objectives of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, and know that he has taken an enormous amount of trouble with the Bill. Even if it does not get on to the statute book this year, he will have brought his goals much closer than they were before he embarked on the endeavour, and I congratulate him on that.

1.24 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It used to be a little easier to be heroic in creating democracy in this country, as I know from my local history, because the best part of 200 years ago three of my fellow citizens in Nottingham were executed on the steps of Shire hall for having had the temerity to demonstrate to secure the vote for ordinary people. No doubt the hangman was a guffawing ancient relative of he hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). These days, however, it is much tougher.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for tackling the unglamorous and difficult thicket of legislation surrounding electoral registration. He has done his job remarkably well and I am sure that his hard work will be rewarded, certainly in the future, if not today. I link his name to that of Councillor Peggy Quirke whom we mentioned earlier. Almost single-handedly she managed to get about 15,000 additional people on the register in the London borough of Brent. The Conservative-controlled council opted for so-called "positive registration", which means letting people register themselves without any assistance.

I am a little saddened that the Minister did not take the opportunity to condemn the actions of the Conservative-controlled council in Brent, which initially denied about 26,000 people the opportunity to vote in just that one borough. It means that the fight to secure the vote is by no means over; it continues to this day, although perhaps less glamorously than in the past.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will my hon. Friend comment on the lackadaisical way in which the Government threw away more than 20,000 votes in Brent but assiduously pursued votes in South Africa before the previous election?

Mr. Allen: As usual, my hon. Friend anticipates some of my remarks; I shall return to that topic shortly.

Perhaps part of the reason for the Government's inactivity and complacency is that there has been a one-party state for about 17 years. The Home Office response to under-registration may be described as at best complacent and at worst cynical. The Government have allowed a system to continue which delivered the goods to the Conservative party. From their point of view, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" Electoral registration is too important to be left in a party political context.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who has now left the Chamber. He said that there was no place, at least in Northern Ireland, for an independent electoral commission. I believe that we need to consider seriously not just an independent electoral commission but an independent commission for democracy to make steady, carefully considered proposals about the nuts and bolts of our democracy. Such issues should not be dealt with through the lengthy, protracted procedure of a private Member's Bill, having to depend on the good fortune of one hon. Member and the acquiesence of a Government who feel that they will not benefit from such proposals. There must be a better way.

My view and that of my party is that we need to establish, or to consider establishing, an independent commission to make proposals when they are required, rather than having to wait for the good fortune of a private Member's ballot.

Mr. Maclennan: I fully agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of establishing an electoral commission. He will no doubt have read and had his argument strengthened by the 1991 report of the Hansard Society, an all-party—or no-party—commission of great authority and weight.

Mr. Allen: Indeed, I support that proposal from the Hansard Society and many of its other proposals. We constantly come up against the great difficulty that we cannot put matters before the House for a decision. If there were an independent commission of some sort it could do the valuable background work, produce considered proposals—which would, of course, have to command the agreement of all parties—and put them before the House in the form of a report would could be legislated upon. No doubt those matters will come before us at some time in the future.

The debate has been helpful, too, because it has allowed us to think afresh about some of the measures that we should consider in order to make the detail of our democracy work. Hon. Members may wish to consider whether we need registration at all. Of course, that

question cannot be answered today. There are difficulties about how people are to make themselves known on polling day if they are not registered, but one state in the United States, for example, has already done away with electoral registration: provided that someone can prove who he is on the day, he is entitled to vote. I do not suggest that we deal with that idea today at any great length, but we need to think afresh about the ways in which we can make our system work.

Our current electoral system is decrepit and ancient. It survives only because of the good will and hard work of electoral registration officers and political activists, who fill in the gaps in lieu of the job being done properly by means of a modern technologically efficient system.

Every elector should have the right to vote and the Government have a responsibility to assist that process. Their failure to do so effectively meant that in April 1992 nearly 2 million Britons, having failed to register, could not vote in the general election. Many of those people were from already marginalised areas of society; many were young people and residents of inner cities. Two million people have no stake in our democratic system. Let us think on that when we talk about the young people on Meadowell or people who turn to crime and are alienated from our society. Somehow, we must give those people back their stake in our society and in the government at local and national level for which they are now avoiding responsibility.

No doubt some people deliberately left the register, thinking to avoid poll tax bills which they could ill afford. Others registered for the tax and assumed that they were also registered to vote. I am sure that my local party was not alone in having to deal with scores of potential voters who had not realised that they were not on the electoral register until election day, when they wondered why their ballot cards had not arrived. I expect that the Minister's local party had the same experience.

Many others will have failed to register because of problems of literacy or because their disability meant that they were unable to fill in the forms. Some will have failed to register due to apathy and alienation—feelings which can only be reinforced by inability to participate in the democratic process. Such under-representation of sections of the community seriously weakens our democratic system.

The boundary commission is due to report in the near future and its recommendations will be based partly on the size of local electorates, as recorded in the electoral registers. Large-scale under-registration will significantly affect the results of its deliberations. Some areas will be over-represented and others under-represented. The registers for Greater London, with only 90·3 per cent. registration, miss out more than 500,000 voters—the equivalent of almost seven constituencies of 80,000 people each.

The under-representation is worse in some areas, such as here in the City of Westminster, where one person in three is missed off the register. In one borough that has received a lot of attention this morning—the Conservative-controlled borough of Brent—only the threat of High Court action drove the council to undertake a canvass of households of the kind that the rest of us take for granted. As a result, at least 15,000 people were put back on to the register out of the 26,000 whom the borough had failed to put on in the first place.

Mr. Wigley: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument and I agree sustantially with it. Does he agree —I suspect that he will with enthusiasm—that, apart from individuals having lost out, the outcome of the election could have been determined by the numbers missing from the register? There were 11 constituencies in which the Conservative winner had a majority smaller than the reduction in the electoral register. If the results had been different, we would not have the present Government.

Mr. Allen: I know that the hon. Gentleman feels much the same as I do. All Members of Parliament, no matter what their party, should represent every person in their constituencies. I know that the hon. Gentleman also agrees that the voting intentions of those who are not registered are not a matter for us here. Voting intentions are entirely a matter for the individual, who can vote as he or she wishes in the secrecy of the polling booth. Every individual, regardless of political leaning, is entitled to that vote. Part of our duty and, above all, the duty of the Home Office is to ensure that everyone votes. The hon. Gentleman has no better information than I have on how those missing from the register would have voted. Who can say?

How can Parliament be said to represent the British public if so many people do not have the chance to vote? Whether they have withdrawn deliberately from the democratic process or not, they no longer possess even the ability to vote. The Government have dodged their responsibilities. I am appalled that they spend only 1·2p per elector on promoting registration. If that is the extent to which the Government value our electoral system, it is no surprise that so many people do not bother to take part. Any party truly committed to the ideals of democracy—I am sure that Conservative Members claim to have that commitment—should be willing to pay for the responsibilities that that belief entails.

Lady Olga Maitland: What budget does the hon. Gentleman reckon to be appropriate for advertising?

Mr. Allen: Initially, an appropriate sum might be the amount that the Government spent on recruiting overseas voters from South Africa and Spain. I understand that 30,000 individuals were recruited in that campaign. A spokesperson for Conservative central office said that the Conservatives expected that 70 per cent. of those registered would be their supporters. For the hon. Lady's information, that budget was £750,000. I should go for that figure for a start. No doubt the hon. Lady will outbid me because she is keen to register even more people.

Mr. Barnes: A parliamentary answer I received a couple of years ago showed that out of the total Government expenditure on publicity, including publicity for selling off industries and encouraging people to go on to fancy employment schemes, the expenditure on encouraging electoral registration was 0·132 per cent. In a democracy, we must be willing to spend considerably more than that.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend puts his finger on the point. If we are serious about registering electors rather than registering people likely to vote for a particular party, money should be made available. Money has been made available for the latter and it should be made available for the former.

If the Government are not prepared to do the job themselves, they and their working parties should try to

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facilitate the task of others. They should assist political parties in registering electors, perhaps by means of free postcards which could be returned to the local electoral registration officers. I would not normally wish to associate too closely with a company as free with its writs as McDonald's is, but I pay tribute to McDonald's in the United States—a very rare tribute indeed—for its keenness on promoting electoral registration. Those of us from the United Kingdom who were around for the presidential election campaign were surprised to see that, for example, post offices and McDonald's hamburger joints were keen to promote electoral registration and were making registration cards freely available. That may be worth considering in the United Kingdom.

Ultimately, we may be able to develop a system where registration technology is such that we can allow electors to register on election day itself, as happens elsewhere in the world. I hope that such ideas will not be ruled out in the Home Office working parties' review.

The absence of a person's name on the electoral register affects not only his or her right to vote; it debars him or her from jury service, which should be a matter of particular concern to us. Juries are meant to represent local populations; if large numbers of people, particularly from the inner city, are unable to serve on them, the social spread that our system is meant to contain and represent will be seriously distorted. It is debatable whether electoral registers represent the best way of selecting jurors for service, but while the present system remains in place it is important for that reason alone that registration is as full as possible.

We should consider not only the problem of low voter registration but that of turnout. In the last general election only 77·7 per cent. of the electorate voted; 9 million people who were eligible to vote failed to do so. In the 1992 metropolitan borough elections, only 32·5 per cent. of the electorate voted. In 1990—not a year characterised by election fatigue—the figure was only 46·3 per cent. Such figures are symptomatic of the electorate's disillusionment with the democratic process and represent an indictment of our present system of government. If we cannot persuade those registered to vote to do so, how can we expect to convince those not registered of the wisdom of registering?

The Bill addresses many of the concerns about our electoral process and I applaud the sentiments behind it. But until the British public regard their elected representatives as their voice in government, be it local or national, and not merely as emasculated administrators or simply lobby fodder, it will be hard to ensure popular participation in our democracy. Such participation requires not just changes in the powers and responsibilities of electoral registration officers, but a sea change in the way in which government at all levels views itself in relation to the public and their representatives.

The Labour party's Plant committee has been considering the British electoral system. Nationwide, local Labour parties are participating in the largest consultation exercise on constitutional reform ever been embarked upon. The Labour party is the only party genuinely willing to debate issues of democracy with an open mind rather than a fixed agenda. The next Labour Government will examine the possibility of instituting a commission on democracy, which I know has the support of other Opposition parties, along the lines of the Commission for Racial Equality. The commission would be charged with reporting both to Parliament and to the country. Its task would be to ensure freedom and fairness in all aspects of our electoral system and constantly to review and tune the nuts and bolts of our democracy and electoral process.

Similarly, the Labour party is now examining a Bill of Rights. It is inconceivable that the worst excesses and abuses of the electoral system—such as that in the Conservative-controlled London borough of Brent to which I referred—would survive a challenge under Bill of Rights provisions fairly adjudicated on by a modernised judiciary.

Other aspects of the current electoral process certainly need examination. The first is postal voting.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Allen: Of course.

Mr. Powell: Before my hon. Friend develops that point, I should like to draw his attention to the fact that I recently changed my address. My constituency was reorganised in 1983 as a result of the reorganisation of parliamentary boundaries. I tried to find accommodation in my new constituency for 10 years. I received a letter dated 2 February from the returning officer in which he informs me that I cannot possibly be registered on the electoral register in my constituency until next October. I cannot get on to the rolling programme suggested in the Bill. As the Member of Parliament for Ogmore, I am not allowed to register until next October. I shall not be allowed to vote for myself and, with the small majority that I have, I shall have great difficulty being returned to the House. That is a very important point.

Mr. Allen: When hon. Members are in the very tenuous electoral position of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), every vote counts. No doubt he will try to push his Bill more speedily through Standing Committee so that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East can get his Bill into Committee and therefore allow my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore the electoral registration that he so richly deserves.

With regard to absentee voting, the entire system of postal and proxy voting is in dire need of reassessment. In general, ignorance of procedure and of the availability of such facilities must be remedied. In the United States of America, which undoubtedly has its own electoral problems, no notes from doctors or employers are necessary for absentee ballots. Such a reform would be widely welcomed in this country. In California recently, one in five of the votes cast in presidential and other elections was cast as an absentee ballot. We shall examine the possibility of postal voting in this country for every individual who needs one, requires one and requests one. Certainly, everyone over retirement age should have an automatic right to apply for a postal or proxy vote on the ground of ill health.

The timing of elections is also an issue. Hon. Members will know that the Labour party remains committed to fixed-term Parliaments. Many people in the electorate

believe that it is an outrage that an incumbent Prime Minister can choose to go to the country to suit his or her——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that his contribution has nothing to do with the Bill. It would help the debate if the hon. Gentleman could return to the Bill.

Mr. Allen: Access to polling stations is referred to in the Bill and is another vital issue. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East has drawn attention to that matter. We have always been committed to ensuring equality of access to the democratic process. That will not occur while there is still inequality of access to the voting booth. I therefore welcome the proposals in the Bill about accessibility audits.

In July 1992, the Spastics Society reported that only one in eight polling stations surveyed was considered adequately accessible. Although each constituency has an average of 6,000 housebound people, the Government spent just £14,500 in 1991 publicising the rights of the elderly and disabled to obtain long-term postal and proxy votes.

Accessibility audits suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East will not be enough on their own. Unless central Government take full financial responsibility for ensuring access for the disabled, there will be no way of effectively ensuring adequate standards of access countrywide. In the face of increased financial pressure from the Government, the current requirement for local authorities to find 50 per cent. of the cost of improving polling station access means that a disabled person's right to vote depends effectively on the spending priorities of the local authority.

I welcome the Bill's attempt to widen and standardise provisions for disabled persons' access to democracy. I urge the House to support the Bill. It contains many positive proposals. It is vital for the health of our democracy that we do not allow our electoral process to stagnate. We must not sit back and watch our inner cities become Americanised, populated by a class of people who are outside our conventional democratic structures. If that is not to happen, we need to act fast. The cycle of disillusionment and disfranchisement is vicious and it needs to be stopped early. The Labour party is fully committed to working towards reversing the growth of that invisible electoral population.

Opposition Members will not stop there. When the Labour party comes to power, it will create a culture of citizenship in which every Briton will take part. We shall have responsive and open government, an end to the dictatorship of the Executive, an elected second Chamber, a Bill of Rights, a reformed and accountable judiciary, Scottish and Welsh Assemblies and independent local government. All will be part of a new democracy for the United Kingdom—a democracy in which people will have pride, one in which they will participate and one which they will feel that they own.

The Bill is a worthy and valiant attempt by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East. It is a good start on the road that beckons us on to more fundamental reform which can come only with a change of Government.

1.50 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): Having been present throughout the debate, I expected that it would be an important debate, bearing in mind the topic of the Bill, but I am surprised at how lively and how wide ranging it became. The Bill begins with the laudable objective of improving the democratic process, and I welcome that, but from then on it goes into a rather severe decline. At times, even the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) appeared somewhat confused about the details in his Bill. He certainly proposed measures which are impractical and in some cases are based on an exaggerated analysis of the problem.

I do not deny the hon. Gentleman's sincerity in pursuing that objective, but I regret the late availability of the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not to blame for that, but on a matter of such importance to everyone in this country it is most important that all elements are most carefully scrutinised and debated at length.

Mr. Barnes: One problem with a private Member's Bill is that, in going to the wire, it is produced as well as it can be. If it is produced earlier, there might be more defects in it. There is the problem of that trade-off. Many other Bills have strong pressure groups behind them, and they do much of the legal and other work. Although I had great support and people were offering ideas, I had to do much of the work myself. Unfortunately, that pushed us to the wire. I agree that the issue is of such importance that we could have done with two months in which to look at the Bill before we debated it.

Mr. Merchant: I appreciate that, but I am bound to say that if there are not many pressure groups trying to exert influence on the topic, the problem is perhaps not perceived by the population to be so great as the hon. Gentleman has portrayed it.

The hon. Gentleman concedes that matters need to be thoroughly discussed and investigated before a Bill is presented and the law is changed. That is why the main fault in the Bill is that it is premature. My hon. Friend the Minister has said that his Department is looking in detail at all aspects covered by the Bill and, indeed, others as well. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has said that, given another few months, he would have been able to present a better Bill. Surely the answer is to wait until the Home Office review is complete, when all such matters have been investigated and all the ramifications, practicalities and so on are examined before such a Bill is laid before the House.

Apart from the issues incorporated in the Bill, there are two other matters that should rightly be examined at the same time and, if necessary, included in legislation.

There are wider issues such as the question whether double registration should continue to be allowed and whether it is a good thing, the extension of the absent vote, which my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, the various implications of European agreements on EC nationals and their voting rights at some stage in the future, and electoral counting methods and the possible use of electronics or machine methods to count votes. All those issues need to be examined at length.

The United Kingdom has a precious democratic system. It is important to examine the implication of suggestions about a rolling register or access for the

[Mr. Merchant]

disabled to ensure that any changes that take place will be for the better and benefit the population in terms of ease of voting.

While some of the suggestions in the Bill at first appear attractive—they are ones with which I generally agree—the practicalities need to be taken fully into account. For example, with regard to the clauses dealing with voting for the disabled, one needs to ask whether, by imposing a requirement to have one polling station in a constituency fully equipped and designated for the disabled, one is not making the situation worse by discouraging electoral returning officers from providing adequate facilities at other polling stations, especially in a constituency that may cover a large geographical area. Such matters need to be fully weighed up before any final decision is taken.

The idea of a rolling register is quite attractive. It has many merits and has become much more feasible with the availability of new technology to speed up the process of adding or subtracting names then publishing them, certainly in an electronic form. The difficulties relate to standardisation and finding systems that work and are reliable.

We have all seen numerous examples of the hiccups—often they are more than hiccups—that occur when electronic methods are introduced. A criticism in the early days of the community charge was the difficulty that borough and district treasurers had in getting their machinery to work properly. If we introduce a system that is heavily based on a new electronic process, all the ramifications of it will need to be examined. We need to come to a conclusion on a system that will work and which can be standardised across the country.

The sale of the electoral register was mentioned at various times in the debate. I shall refer to that matter briefly, as I have some previous experience, not directly in the direct mail business but in dealing with some of the problems thrown up by the direct mail industry and the public on direct mail matters. I should add that I no longer have a connection with the industry.

I am convinced that, on balance, the sale of the electoral register is a good thing. Apart from the arguments against it being limited by practical factors, I am not sure whether we can prevent the electoral register from becoming available one way or another. Given that availability, we may as well charge for it.

In no case that I can think of is the electoral register used by direct mail houses to blanket an area and deliver junk mail—it would indeed be junk mail as it would be entirely untargeted—which they would not otherwise be able to do. That would be bad direct mailing and of no interest to direct mail houses. Direct mail houses use the electoral register for an entirely benign process—to clean up and check their existing records. People benefit from the system, because it ensures that the names and addresses used are much more accurate than they would be if they were not cleaned up by that process. Preventing direct mail houses from using the electoral register might lead to a deterioration in the targeting quality of direct mail and create many more public complaints than exist at present.

Non-registration is the ill which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is trying to correct by means of the Bill. There are non-registration problems, of course, but some of the figures that he quoted exaggerate the problem. Everyone accepts that no one can know accurately, without carrying out an extremely detailed exercise, how many people are unregistered. Many of the figures produced tend to suggest that it is nearer 5 or 6 per cent., not 10 per cent. as the hon. Gentleman suggested. A document produced by the Library tells us that the estimated percentage of people registered when set against the population has increased during the past year over the previous year in Scotland, England and Wales.

The decline measured in previous years was not that great. There were only marginal changes. Most interesting of all, the percentage of the younger age groups—the attainers—estimated to be registered is higher now than a decade ago and has been slowly increasing over that period. There is no suggestion that the community charge or anything else has produced a declining registration among attainers.

Opposition Members have claimed that the Labour party would be helped by greater registration or, at least that the results of elections and opinion polls would be different, but there is no evidence on which to base that claim. Anyone who assumes that all those who are not registered would vote for a particular political party and thus make a dramatic difference to the results of elections in marginal seats is greatly mistaken. The majority of opinion polls are not carried out with reference to the electoral register; they are conducted by interviewers who stop others in the street to ask them for their views. That may account for opinion polls being inaccurate, but I doubt whether electoral registration has any impact on such polls.

A valid question is whether registration should be compulsory. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), who unfortunately can no longer be in his place, suggested that registration should not be compulsory. I have some sympathy with that view because it strikes me as strange that in a democracy people should be forced to register. On balance, I think that the present system is for the best, even if at times I have some doubts about its ethical validity. In practical terms, however, I am prepared to accept it. To the extent that it is compulsory, I find it peculiar that it appears not to be enforced, given that there are penalties. It may interest my hon. Friend the Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury that if all those who are estimated to be unregistered were prosecuted and fined, the Treasury would be able to raise about £2 billion, which would no doubt be of great help now. A degree of enforcement would help to increase registration by acting as an incentive. If that were complemented by more advertising and more thorough door-to-door canvassing, I believe that many of the problems stemming from lack of registration would be overcome.

What are the reasons for non-registration? It has been suggested that it is linked with deprived areas. I find that difficult to envisage, because deprivation existed in past years, and often at much worse levels. Yet the percentage of those reckoned to be registered was higher during those years. The community charge has been used as an excuse, but there is no clear evidence to suggest that it has had a significant effect on registration. There will, of course, always be marginal examples. If we are talking of a severe problem, I believe that deprivation and the community charge are not the causes. Some say that anonymity is a

factor. Some people will always want to guard their privacy to a high degree, and I do not think that anything can overcome that wish.

A difference in administrative practice is probably a main reason, because there is a good deal of variety between electoral registration officers. That problem must be addressed.

There is also the question of dissenters. There are always those who decline to take part in any of the society's activities, including registering and voting. The effort required to overcome the resistance of that last 1 or 2 per cent. would be enormous and not worth it—particularly when one bears in mind that some dissension would be on valid ethical or religious grounds.

It worries me sometimes that once Opposition Members seize on an idea, they are tempted to go almost to totalitarian lengths to enforce it. I find objectionable the Bill's requirement that if one moves to a new address, one must inform the registration officer within three weeks. That is rather draconian, but at least it does not go so far as some Labour Members, such as the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who have long campaigned for compulsory voting. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West gets very excited at that prospect. I sometimes wonder whether he will follow it up by requiring compulsory voting for the Labour party. That hon. Gentleman told the House:

"Already we consider certain activities in our society too important for the common good to be left as options."—[*Official Report*, 5 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. 589.]

He includes voting among them. The hon. Member for Rother Valley went further. He said:

"I would not be prepared to make any detailed provision for the right to abstain of religious groups or of anyone else."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 615.]

That takes the argument to absurd lengths.

The House must allow the Home Office review to be completed, consider and debate its implications, and then carefully and thoroughly reach its conclusions and right the problems that exist—without altering practices that operate perfectly effectively.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Ray Powell.

2.6 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a great pleasure to be called by you, having risen in my place on this spot since last May. On odd occasions, I have been tempted—being so short—to jump on my seat, in the hope that I would catch your eye. I feel very privileged this afternoon to have caught your eye and I am grateful to be called.

I am grateful also to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for presenting a Bill of great importance—in particular, to this country's democracy. Earlier, he told me that if there were to be compulsory voting, that should operate today. Perhaps all hon. Members will take due note. I hope that most are in the House today.

I regret that I was unable to be in the Chamber earlier, to hear the Minister and his suggestion for a Home Office review. I have grave doubts of its value, if it applies any previous Conservative legislation affecting the electoral register. I refer, for example, to the Representation of the People Act 1990 to permit British residents overseas to apply for registration, which became law prior to the last general election. I know for a fact that Labour lost one seat as a result of that legislation. Labour lost Vale of Glamorgan by 19 votes in an election in which 58 registered overseas electors cast their votes by proxy—undoubtedly for the Conservative candidate. Most of the votes were cast by overseas residents who could qualify for the electoral roll if they had at one time been resident in this country, even if they had not been resident here or on the electoral roll for as long as 20 years. Not only could they register, but they could identify the constituency in which they wanted to register, even if they had never lived in that constituency. Therefore, I would not rely on the Home Office review to resolve the problem.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is interesting to know that the hon. Gentleman is sure that any British resident overseas is bound to vote Conservative. That was not the view of the Labour Front-Bench team when it assented to the inclusion of the paragraph in the legislation. The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong to say that overseas British residents can register in the constituency of their choice. No overseas British resident can do that. They can register only in the constituency where it can be demonstrated that they were resident and on the register immediately before they left this country.

Mr. Powell: On the first part of the Minister's answer, I cannot be responsible for actions taken by other Labour Members, whether Front Benchers or Back Benchers. If they had 15 years experience as a parliamentary constituency agent. as I have, and had studied the Representation of the People Act 1990 to ensure who was entitled to vote in an election, their opinions would probably be different.

On the amending legislation, although the Minister suggested that not all overseas residents voted Conservative, when a television programme was shown in this country involving an organisation for those with properties abroad, its president asked the audience of 500 people at a dinner to take note of their rights to register. He said that he hoped that they would all vote for the Conservative party. Those people might have been misguided, as they had been out of this country for so long—some of them for as long as 14 or 15 years. They might have been unaware of what had happened in that period under the Conservative Government, but that programme was shown in this country only a matter of weeks before the general election, and it undoubtedly had some impact.

Mr. Thomason: The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that most overseas voters vote Conservative. Is he arguing that, therefore, they should not be allowed to vote? If so, what does that have to do with the Bill?

Mr. Powell It has a lot to do with the Bill. It is unfair to extend rights to people who have not resided in this country for 20 years when those rights go beyond those held by residents and Members of Parliament in this country. Even as an elected Member of Parliament, when I moved I was denied the right to register on the electoral roll at my new address as my name was not on the roll before October. The register of electors is open to people who have not been residents in this country for periods of up to 20 years. That was the subject of the Home Office review when the amending legislation was introduced.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, whatever the political opinions of the people, Conservative Members who went abroad made a concerted attempt to contact those people and get their names on the register? I do not think that those Conservative Members would have been making that effort if they did not believe that most of those people were Conservative voters.

Mr. Powell: I accept entirely what my hon. Friend suggests. That undoubtedly happened. It had a direct effect on a number of marginal seats. It should not have been allowed, but it was allowed, by agreement on both sides——

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: Let me deal with the point that has been made; then I shall gladly give way to the hon. Lady.

That should not have been allowed, because the amendment extended rights to citizens outside this country that are not afforded to citizens in this country.

Lady Olga Maitland: This strikes me as a case of sour grapes. What steps did the Labour party take to find their voters? I suspect they did not take any steps because there were no Labour voters.

Mr. Powell: The hon. Lady is making the very point that I made. The primary objective of both the Home Office and the Government was to extend this right to their own supporters.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way again?

Mr. Powell: Yes, I will. If I do not do so, the hon. Lady will, I know, be up and down all day.

Lady Olga Maitland: The same opportunities can be given to Labour voters overseas. If they do not choose to vote, or if there are no Labour voters overseas, we cannot help the hon. Gentleman, can we?

Mr. Powell: No, but most of the people who live abroad and who have properties abroad are obviously those who benefited from opening shops on Sunday that they should not have opened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now beginning to stray away from the Bill. I should be grateful if he would return to its contents.

Mr. Powell: The hon. Lady got me so excited that I was bound to go astray.

Reference was made earlier to opinion polls. Some years ago I introduced a ten-minute Bill that would have prevented opinion polls from being carried out five weeks before a general election or a by-election. One day, Members of Parliament in all parts of the House will come to their senses and realise that that is the right approach. It would save all political parties millions of pounds in carrying out opinion polls. In all probability, we should then have a true reflection of how the electorate intended to vote. I am surprised that the Conservatives are concentrating on opinion polls and the influence that they have, instead of wanting electors to vote in accordance with their political views.

Many changes occurred during the 15-year period that I was a political agent. At one time the register was collated in October, with a supplementary register being published by 16 February of the following year. If electors registered during that period they were allowed to vote. Therefore, the agents of all the political parties had the opportunity between October and February to ensure that their supporters were registered. That opportunity has been taken away from us. It is high time that the Government considered introducing a system under which there would be a rolling register and also the possibility, after the register had been compiled in October, of a cut-off date three months later so that people who were not on the register in October could be registered within that three-month period.

At the last election I was disturbed by the fact that between 400 and 500 of my constituents were not on the register. Since then, a survey has been conducted to find out the total.

On the day of the election, two residents of the Caerau area of Maesteg in my constituency went to vote. Apparently, one of them—I could not understand where he came from or his family background—went to vote Conservative, and we are conducting an investigation into that. Misguided though he was, he went to the polling station with his next-door neighbour, who had been a neighbour and a friend for years. They used to go to the Conservative club together—although the neighbour voted Labour he was an officer of the Conservative club in Caerau, which is typical of the valley people.

When that man went to the polling station he found that he was denied the right to vote because he was not on the electoral register, although he had lived at the same address and voted at the same polling station for the past 50 years—and he paid his poll tax. His neighbour aggravated the situation because he was voting for two non-residents of the Ogmore constituency, who had been recruited on to the register because of the iniquitous decision to allow voting rights to residents abroad. That highlights the problems created at the last election—the postal date of registration and the fact that people from abroad are allowed to register and to vote.

I hope that there will be a Division on whether the Bill should have a Second Reading. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East will succeed in that Division. I also hope that the Minister will concede that there is time for the Bill to be debated and will find time for early completion of the preceding Shops (Amendment) Bill, which I am promoting. I hope that the House will encourage the Minister to arrange an early Report stage for that Bill so that my hon. Friend can get his Bill into Committee.

Mr. Thomason: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill would not have helped the voter from his constituency who turned up on the day of the election to find that he was not on the register? The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East says that the Bill requires more than seven days' prior notice—in my opinion, as drafted, it requires 14 days—for a name to be put on the register. It is not a rolling register, but is fixed to two points in time—an election and the annual update. Does the hon. Gentleman concede that it will not deal with that problem?

Mr. Powell: It would be a big help if the draft register were published in October and if adjustments could be made until February, which is what used to happen. Of course, it would help if people were allowed to go on a

rolling register and to ensure that their names were on it before the day of the election. As my constituent had been on the register for 50 years, it is surprising that he should find that he was not on it.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East will get support for the Bill. I and a number of other hon. Members will be in the Lobby to support him, and we are grateful that he has taken the time, effort and energy to promote the Bill, with the backing of a number of organisations, so that Parliament has the chance to rectify many mistakes, and to allow people to exercise their democratic right to be on the register and to vote for a Labour Government which, in all probability, is what will happen at the next election.

Mr. Barnes *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 78, Noes 0.

Division No. 150] **[2.24 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Livingstone, Ken
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Maclennan and Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Piers Merchant and Mr. Roy Thomason.

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure or for Proposal of Question).*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 March.

WATER CHARGES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading, what day?

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 2 July.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (TOBACCO SMOKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading, what day?

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 19 February.

COMMONWEALTH OF BRITAIN BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The royal consent having been given, I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

LICENSED PREMISES (EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN PERSONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [15 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed, what day? No day named.

COMMONWEALTH OF EUROPE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Benn: The royal consent having been given, I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 16th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Smith relating to Agriculture (S.I., 1993, No. 70) not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 17th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Lang relating to Local Government (Scotland) not later than three hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Isle of Sheppey (Assisted Area Status)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.38 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry for his continuing and helpful interest in our area. He is, I know, coming to Sheppey in a few weeks' time to open a new factory. He was in Thanet and Dover only a few months ago. He also arranged recently for a full, helpful and lengthy meeting with north and east Kent Members to discuss the east Kent initiative. We found that meeting most encouraging and I hope that we were right to do so. Not least, my right hon. Friend is responding to the debate today. I should apologise to him and to his constituents for keeping him here this afternoon if it were not to debate a matter of such significance to north Kent in general and to the Isle of Sheppey in particular.

The debate is about the economic situation of the Isle of Sheppey and assisted area status. I have deliberately specified the Isle of Sheppey for reasons that I shall give in a moment. An application for assisted area status has been lodged in respect of the east Kent coastal strip, which includes the travel-to-work areas of Sittingbourne and Sheerness, Thanet, Dover and Deal, Folkestone and the coastal towns of the Canterbury travel-to-work area, which have all been brought together under the east Kent initiative.

Many of my hon. Friends asked whether they could take part in the debate. I told them that the debate was about the Isle of Sheppey—not even about the whole of my borough of Swale or the whole of the area covered by the east Kent initiative. That is because the Isle of Sheppey has specific problems that I wish to place on record. At the same time, however, let me place on record my admiration for the highly professional way in which the east Kent initiative application has been presented and processed and for the co-operation of all the local authorities and other organisations and individuals concerned with the initiative. As I said, several of my hon. Friends from north Kent wanted to be here, but, although our combined efforts are, I think, fundamental to the application, this is, none the less, a debate about Sheppey.

It is estimated that by the year 2000 the area as a whole could have a jobs shortfall of more than 40,000. Some serious structural changes are taking place in north and east Kent, which is why the application that we have lodged is so important. The Kent impact study predicts a bleak future for east Kent if nothing radical is done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) constantly reminds us how many jobs will be lost in Dover alone as a result of the completion of the tunnel and of the single market. In passing, let me thank my hon. Friend and our Member of the European Parliament, Christopher Jackson, for their work in pressing successfully for a special fund to help customs clearance agents and freight forwarders who will become redundant as a result of the changes. Three years ago, it was estimated that well over 2,000—perhaps nearly 3,000—people were employed by such companies. As a result of their lobbying, substantial sums will be available this summer, in particular to help with retraining.

I shall paint a gloomy picture, although I stress that there is another side to the coin. Sheppey is one of the strongest manufacturing areas in the south-east of England. It is a leading producer of steel, pharmaceuticals, electrical goods, ceramics and other products. It has Britain's fifth-largest port by tonnage and a ferry company with the best ships on the channel—they are second to none. It is a newly designated environmentally sensitive area. The people of Sheppey are proud of their island and rightly so. In strategic terms, it is superbly located and there is great local determination to use the advantages to create economic growth and local prosperity.

The present position was summed up rather gloomily in the *Financial Times* of 8 August 1992, in an article entitled "Tackling Blight in the Garden of England, Depressed East Kent is Perceived as Part of the Prosperous South East". That perception is our problem. The article states that Sheppey is the worst blackspot of all, with regeneration hampered by the bottleneck of a narrow access road and a lifting bridge over the River Swale. It refers to the 22,000 vehicles a day crossing that bridge—the figure is actually 24,100—and mentions the big blow that was dealt to the hopes of the area when the Government recently rejected a £500 million development plan for Sheppey, which included a new road and a new Swale crossing.

Unemployment in Sheppey was then running at more than 16 per cent. Regrettably, it is now estimated to be 18 per cent. and it could be 20 per cent. by the end of February as a result of a sad dispute over contracts at Sheerness docks. In November, the Sittingbourne and Sheerness travel-to-work area, which includes Sheppey, was the 13th worst-hit in England and the 17th worst-hit in the United Kingdom. Even more serious, its long-term unemployment is the highest in Kent.

We have been hit hardest by the recession—particularly by the rundown in the construction industry and by the very severe recession in London, which has had a heavy fallout in north Kent. East Kent has a fragile economy which is about to undergo severe structural changes. Sheppey is worst hit of all because of our poor road and rail links.

As we have been hit hardest by the recession, the steps that we can and should take now would allow Sheppey and north Kent to help lead the south-east out of recession. Let me tell my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry what I would like him to do—if he can—to help us, quite apart from the question of assisted area status. I should like him to use his good offices to spur other Departments to make rapid progress with projects that are in the pipeline, but which always take a long time to conclude.

There is the all-important question of the second Swale crossing. I have already referred to the daily traffic movements of 24,100 over the single carriageway lifting bridge. The volume is higher than that of the M20 east of Maidstone.

I shall not refer in detail to the Lionhope scheme, which is sometimes referred to as the Swale project. As I have said, that project was turned down by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, anything that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry can do in that respect would be greatly appreciated.

The Secretaries of State for Environment and for Transport, their staff, local councils, planning authorities and many other organisations have been working very hard, and have impressed me enormously with their commitment, to produce a package to replace the

[Sir Roger Moate]

Lionhope scheme or what we might call the Swale project phase 2. They have been working hard to produce a package that is environmentally acceptable and legally and financially viable and one which would use private sector finance to speed up construction of the second bridge to allow the development of the docks at Sheerness and the creation of new business parks.

However, time is of the essence. I have a real fear that the legal complexities will cause delays that will discourage private sector involvement. If we are to make a reality of private sector involvement in public sector projects, as we are so anxious to do, and if we are to make a reality of the east Thames corridor concept, it is vital to get that type of project off the ground, cut red tape wherever it impedes us and galvanise economic growth.

I wish once again to balance the picture. It was magnificent news last week when the Government approved the £47 million dualling of the road from the M2 as far as the Kingsferry bridge. That is a stimulus to economic confidence and new investment. I record again my appreciation that that very important decision has now been taken and that construction will soon be under way. Nothing can exaggerate the importance of that to our area. It is a lifeline for jobs and I am grateful that it is under way. However, we must press on with the second crossing and the road link that is supposed to link Sittingbourne to the new road.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to talk to the Minister for Energy—I am sure he does regularly. The Sheerness steelworks is one of the best in Europe. It is one of the leading steel producers in the United Kingdom. However, it is also a large, intensive energy user. Its outrageous electricity costs are a serious threat. We have made many representations, but so far with little result. My right hon. Friend the Minister will understand that there is little use in pouring new investment and infrastructure into the area if, at the same time, we are seriously undermining existing employers. I do not suggest that the problem is easy to solve. However, companies such as Sheerness Steel face unbearably high energy costs.

Although it may not be the direct responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister, anything that he can to do co-ordinate efforts in Whitehall in respect of our new community hospital would help. It is estimated that that project would cost £11 million. The signs are encouraging, but the project must be started. That would be another stimulus for economic confidence and further investment on the island.

Economic growth in north Kent was built on the back of the railway links to London. Our rolling stock is ancient and overcrowded. We have been promised new trains and, in effect, that would virtually mean a new railway. Some of the money was allocated in the autumn statement, but there is a frustrating delay and we need some serious political pressure to deliver the new investment. At the same time, we seek improved rail services—that means passenger and freight services—to the Isle of Sheppey.

We know that assisted area status would be a great boost to the area. It would help us in all the arguments that we continually make for better infrastructure, whether we are arguing with Ministers, Whitehall generally or, indeed, Brussels. It would certainly encourage existing companies and new companies with a very useful range of grants.

For example, I refer to one project—it is confidential at the moment and I should like to discuss it with my right hon. Friend—about which I have just learnt. It is certainly not yet on the record. A very large number of jobs could be safeguarded and new jobs generated by the grant that would come from assisted area status. There was a suggestion that we could create about £130 million of new investment. That is a considerable understatement, because I know of additional projects that would increase that figure substantially.

In a recession, it is very hard, even for large companies, to justify major investments when the companies concerned are not turning in adequate profits. Often a modest Government grant could be the key to opening up a parent company further away to make a significant investment, sometimes in new technology or sometimes to defend present employment. I am aware of circumstances in which a Government grant could be the factor that tilts the balance in favour of an investment decision.

I pay tribute to Swale borough council, which is not a Conservative-dominated body—three parties share the running of the council—for its highly professional work in promoting economic development in the area. I pay tribute also to the new professional chamber of commerce, which was established jointly by the local authority and local commerce, the Kent training and enterprise council, the east Kent initiative and the Sheppey Industries Association for all the work that has been done. Their work demonstrates their awareness—our awareness—that, ultimately, self-help wins through. We know that assisted area status is not a panacea by any means, but it would provide the framework in which those determined local organisations have a chance to succeed. We very much look forward to my right hon. Friend's visit. In particular, we hope that he will shortly be able to give some good news for the Isle of Sheppey.

2.52 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) for his kind remarks. I very much look forward to my visit. I congratulate him on choosing this well-targeted subject for debate—as he said, not the whole of the borough of Swale but the Isle of Sheppey.

My hon. Friend has understandably referred to the granting of assistend area status. I am sure that he will understand that I cannot give any indication of whether the Isle of Sheppey, east Kent, or anywhere else for that matter, is likely to obtain assisted area status. I appreciate that there is great interest in the outcome. We shall announce the results of the review of the whole map as soon as we can. In doing so, we shall take account of the results of the coal review. We have also to obtain the necessary clearance by the European Commission. I know that my hon. Friend will understand why I cannot anticipate those decisions.

I can assure my hon. Friend that all the submissions made to us, including what he has said, will receive the same careful consideration. That is as true of the case made for Sheppey as it is for any other submissions. Our decisions will be based on the relative merits of the individual cases. My colleagues and I will be taking into account the up-to-date statistics in reaching our conclusions. I am, of course, aware of the problems that have affected parts of east Kent, to which my hon. Friend

referred. They are forcefully set out in the submissions that I have received. My hon. Friend paid tribute to the work of the east Kent initiative and that of other bodies, and I am happy to recognise that, but, as my hon. Friend knows, I have also had the benefit of visiting the area. I have been shown at first hand both the difficulties and the potential of the area.

The Isle of Sheppey has to be seen in the context of the changes that are affecting the whole of east Kent. Great changes are taking place. The single European market and the channel tunnel are probably affecting east Kent more than any other area because of its position as the gateway to Europe. The changes are bringing problems—changes often do—and, as my hon. Friend has so eloquently said, the Isle of Sheppey has shared in those problems.

While not minimising the problems in any way, we must not lose sight of the fact that east Kent also has many advantages. I was pleased to hear what my hon. Friend said on that point. East Kent has a unique position between London and Europe. It has two large and attractive markets for business, with the channel tunnel making access to both even easier. It has excellent ports, including Sheerness. Road communications into the area are good. It is served by the A2/M2 and the M20, although I recognise that there are difficulties affecting access to the Isle of Sheppey itself. Its strengths make it well placed to benefit from the recovery as it comes through.

One possible approach to overcoming some of the specific problems was the original Sheppey—or should I call it Swale—project package of development proposals. The project was refused planning permission by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in July 1992 after a public inquiry. The main reason for the decision was that the proposals would cause damage to sites of national and international importance to nature conservation. There were also highways and countryside objections and significant conflicts with development plan policies. My hon. Friend is well aware that the area around the Swale is especially important to nature conservation in not simply national but international terms.

My hon. Friend referred to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of Transport on 5 February which was extremely important to the area. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham for the welcome that he gave to that announcement on the funding that will be provided for the improvements to the A249 between the M2 and slightly north of Iwade.

Proposals for a second Swale crossing are being examined in the context of further improvements to the A249 between Queensborough and the Iwade bypass. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State fully appreciates the need for that road and I know that every effort is being made to progress the scheme as quickly as possible.

There is land available in Sheppey for development, some of which is situated at the eastern end of the east Thames corridor. It is one of the major development opportunities of the future. The change may well bring problems. Equally, it can bring opportunities, as my hon. Friend recognised. East Kent and Sheppey are well placed to take advantage of those opportunities.

I have referred to the strength of the area, because there is an important point that must be recognised. In the past six months, I have received an enormous amount of correspondence urging on me the case for assisted area status to be granted to some parts of the country. I should make the point that assisted area status, by itself, is not a panacea, dispelling at a single stroke all the ills that are perceived as affecting an area. As its name implies, it is a mechanism for providing assistance of a specific sort. It can be used for creating and safeguarding jobs. In practice, it goes primarily to industry.

The major form of assistance that comes with assisted area status is regional selective assistance. As its name makes clear, the scheme is operated selectively to bring the maximum benefit to the areas in which it operates. It is not operated wholesale and it cannot, and nor should it, be a replacement or substitute for the efforts of all those concerned in an area to improve their position.

As my hon. Friend recognises, there is great potential in east Kent, but there is much work to be done to convert that potential into success. Work needs to be done, irrespective of assisted area status. Many potential investors are not primarily concerned about their ability to secure grants. For many of them at least, it is important to have the knowledge that they can identify suitable premises and staff, and that the local authority and others will work with business to help them succeed. I am sure that, as my hon. Friend said, that is not lost on the local authorities, the training and enterprise council or any other bodies in Kent.

Clearly, good-quality inward investment benefits the area in which it takes place and can directly and indirectly create much-needed jobs. Local authorities should organise themselves to provide speedy, detailed and high-quality responses to inquiries from potential inward investors. My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau is energetically pursuing inward investment into the United Kingdom. However, the bureau depends on individual local authorities for the detailed descriptions of available land that can attract investors' interests.

I am aware of the need to encourage investment in the Sheppey area. I am pleased to say that the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are liaising closely with the local highways and planning authorities, with a view to enabling appropriate investment and infrastructure to be provided. Their Departments are involved in continuing discussions with a number of interested parties about future developments on and near Sheppey.

That brings me to a theme of particular importance in creating a climate locally that will encourage businesses to establish in an area and grow. It is essential that all local interests work together. The TEC, local chambers of commerce, business-support organisations and local authorities must work closely with each other in the service of the community—training the work force, assisting businesses and providing a climate in which businesses will invest.

I know that in Kent there is an effective and active training and enterprise council to which my hon. Friend referred. The TEC has received considerable support from the county council. My Department is currently discussing with the TEC the support that we shall be making available, through it, to assist small firms in the area. While those negotiations are not yet complete, it is our aim that there should be a soundly based structure of support for small businesses, particularly those operating in Sheppey and in other parts of Kent.

In many parts of the country and, I have to say, especially in Kent, the advice and support for small firms comes from many different sources. In Kent, there are

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

many chambers of commerce, local enterprise agencies and other support bodies. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has invited bids from those concerned with the provision of support for the establishment of one-stop shops. The aim of the one-stop shop will be to create more effective organisations providing help and support for smaller businesses and to reduce the confusion surrounding the provision of support for small firms.

I am glad to say that there has been a strong response to the invitation, with 57 one-stop shop bids received from all parts of the country, including one from Kent. We are reviewing the bids with a view to drawing up a shortlist. There will be up to 15 winners from among those who have bid. Whether or not the Kent bid is successful, it is important that we continue to make progress towards the establishment of a fully effective support structure for small firms in all parts of Kent. I am sure that that is one of the ways in which we can best help to address the problems to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention. My Department stands ready to assist in that process.

I know that my hon. Friend's constituents recognise the need for such work themselves. Indeed, much has already been put in hand. The east Kent initiative has done a splendid job of bringing together local interests in pursuit of the common goal. It is important that that work should continue, ensuring that local authorities and others are working together to identify the strengths of the area and, where weaknesses exist, what can be done to remedy them. I am sure, however, that my hon. Friend is well aware of the necessary limits on public expenditure. That makes it all the more important that, in areas such as those that we are discussing, the priorities for expenditure should be identified. That is one of the valuable functions that the east Kent initiative can perform.

My hon. Friend drew attention to several matters that affect Departments other than mine. I take note of his comments about the new community hospital, and I shall bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

My hon. Friend referred to the important subject of electricity prices and their effect on industrial users. In fact, the average electricity price paid by industrial customers overall has fallen by 6 per cent. in real terms over the three years since privatisation. I accept, however, that some very large industrial companies have seen significant price increases. My Department is in discussion with large users about the working of the market, and electricity prices paid by large users are being considered in the coal review. I cannot, for reasons which I am sure my hon. Friend will understand, of course, anticipate the conclusions of that review.

I note my hon. Friend's comments about Networker express trains on coastal services. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is pursuing with British Rail its plans for rolling stock. I will draw to his attention my hon. Friend's concerns about the rolling stock used on the services to his constituency—perhaps at the same time that I draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the rolling stock in use when I journey to my constituency.

This has been a most helpful debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on the manner in which he approaches the challenges and opportunities of the Isle of Sheppey. I hope that my hon. Friend and, through him, his constituents accept that the Government recognise the problems that confront them and that the Government are willing to play their part in overcoming them. The enterprise and energy that can be brought together locally is of the greatest importance in addressing problems and taking advantage of the opportunities that my hon. Friend and I realise exist.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 1 February 1993

TRANSPORT

Harbours Act 1964

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he plans to bring into force the amendments to the Harbours Act 1964 made by schedule 3 to the Transport and Works Act 1992;

(2) what consultation he will be carrying out with organisations representing users of public rights of way on the implementation of the new provisions for enabling harbour revision orders to be made which will divert or extinguish public rights of way.

Mr. Norris: The amendments to the Harbours Act 1964 made by schedule 3 to the Transport and Works Act 1992 were brought into force on 15 July 1992 by the Transport and Works Act 1992 (Commencement No. 1) Order 1992 (Statutory Instrument 1992 No. 1347 (c.45)). We shall ensure that, when application is made for a harbour revision order which would divert or extinguish a public right of way, the applicant notifies user organisations of the application so that, if they so wish, they may make objection to it.

Braer Disaster

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the departmental investigation into the causes of the Braer disaster in Shetland will include consideration of the nature and duration of insurance arrangements for the vessel, and the arrangements which were in hand for any extensions to the period of insurance cover.

Mr. Norris: It has already been established that the Braer complied with the requirements to have compulsory insurance cover in respect of any pollution damage she may have caused up to the owner's liability under the 1969 civil liability convention on oil pollution. Other forms of insurance on the ship—for example, in respect of her hull or cargo—are not compulsory and are matters for the owner or cargo interests.

The purpose of the marine accident investigation branch investigation is to establish the cause of the accident and consider measures to prevent a recurrence. It will not look further into the insurance arrangements unless there is good reason to believe that they are directly related to the accident. The general issue of insurance is within the remit of the inquiry which has been set up under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson to advise on whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the United Kingdom coastline from pollution from merchant shipping.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies had been made of the effect of the channel tunnel on the income from light dues.

Mr. Norris: The light dues income from vessels using ports adjacent to the tunnel is estimated to have been £650,000 out of a total light dues income of £45 million in 1991-92. The effect of the opening of the channel tunnel on income from light dues is therefore likely to be minimal.

English Channel (Traffic Separation)

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *270*, what action is taken at the time to prevent a collision if a vessel is observed to be contravening the traffic separation schemes in the English channel.

Mr. Norris: An identified vessel observed contravening the traffic separation scheme will be contacted and a warning broadcast made to all other traffic using the scheme. In addition, this information will be included in the routine broadcasts transmitted.

London Underground

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the amount of money planned by London Underground to be spent on the Northern line during 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: London Transport has not yet finalised its spending plans for 1993-94.

Royal Train

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are under his proposals for the railways for the services provided by the royal train to be put out to private tender.

Mr. Freeman: We shall consider arrangements for the royal train in due course.

Ipswich-Lowestoft Railway Line

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the closure of the Ipswich to Lowestoft railway line.

Mr. Freeman: None. It would be for British Rail to bring forward proposals to close passenger lines or stations. I am not aware of any such proposals concerning the Ipswich-Lowestoft line. Under our privatisation plans a full statutory procedure will continue to apply to closure proposals.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of the collapse of Charterail for his Department's franchising arrangements for British Rail and the proposed use of charging policy to freight companies for track use.

Mr. Freeman: The collapse of Charterail has no implications for the franchising of British Rail services, nor for the access charging regime for rail freight operators.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the issues discussed and decisions taken at the joint Environment/ Transport European Council meeting in Brussels on 25 January.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column 796.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he received, following his White Paper on rail privatisation, from *(a)* the passenger transport executives and *(b)* British Rail about the restrictions on capacity and train paths which exist on the Rugby to Stafford via Birmingham section of track over which the west coast main InterCity route operates.

Mr. Freeman: We are aware from general discussions with BR that this is a very heavily used section of the network.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what advice he received following his White Paper on rail privatisation in respect of the reduction in train paths that would be a consequence of the required or planned renewal of track and infrastructure forming the InterCity west coast main line route;

(2) what advice he has received following his White Paper on rail privatisation on the scope for allocating adequate maintenance periods on that track and infrastructure vested in InterCity west coast main line between Crewe and Carlisle.

Mr. Freeman: None. Decisions on maintenance and train paths will primarily be a matter for Railtrack.

Railways (Disclosure of Information)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers the regulator, franchising authority and Railtrack will have to demand disclosure of information concerning customer numbers using routes, and other matters which would normally be deemed as commercially confidential.

Mr. Freeman: The rail regulator will have the power to require relevant information from operators under the conditions of the licences that he will issue to train operators; the franchising director will be able to require information under the conditions of franchise agreements; and such powers for Railtrack are considered unnecessary.

Rail Safety

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which body will be responsible for certifying that a locomotive or rolling stock which has been the subject of a train failure is safe to move following the vesting of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: The train service operator will have primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of his locomotives and rolling stock in line with the arrangements contained in his railway safety case validated by Railtrack.

Rail Incidents

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who he intends shall be responsible for marshalling and providing customer action teams and increasing at short notice the staffing levels both in the retail and operational management area following either a major delay, incident or rail crash.

Mr. Freeman: It will be for franchisees and other passenger operators to decide their own arrangements for the care of passengers.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his intention on how diversionary routes shall be charged or costed out following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(2) which body shall be responsible for deciding the apportionment of costs, charges or damages relating to delay or loss of customers due to a train failure where more than one operator had use of the track or train path, following the vesting day of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters for access agreements.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whom he proposes shall be authorised to instigate diversionary routes, and the alteration of operators' timetables as train paths, where a train failure, crash or repair work impedes a particular route, following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(2) who would be authorised to provide the appropriate staff when it becomes necessary for emergency hand signalling to be instituted, following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(3) which body shall be responsible for managing the flow of train services around a train failure, following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(4) whose responsibility it will be to remove debris and clear and restore the track and site when an operator's train has damaged or destroyed track or equipment, following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(5) if the franchising authority would prepare the national timetabling through an iterative process; and by what criteria or basis the route which is first on the graph would be determined;

(6) which body shall be responsible for organising repair, line clearance and restoration of equipment when more than one train operator was involved in an incident which resulted in the route or train path being blocked, following the vesting day of Railtrack;

(7) which body would determine priority services and re-write the timetables of the various operators on those occasions when an engineering possession has been made to a section of track over which more than one franchise or operator of a service exists;

(8) whose responsibility it will be, following the vesting day of Railtrack, to minimise delay in clearing the track following a train failure; and who will be expected to provide the rescue locomotive.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack would have the lead responsibility for these matters, subject to the legislation currently before Parliament.

Rail Ticketing

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what procedures he proposes for ensuring inter-availability of tickets following a train failure, or major interruption or delay in a particular service or route after Railtrack's vesting day or the introduction of franchising over one or more routes.

Mr. Freeman: Arrangements for the inter-availability of tickets will be a matter for operators, subject to any requirements imposed by the regulator or franchising director.

Euston Station

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has received from British Rail about additional train paths, junction layouts and platform capacity that may be available at Euston station for prospective franchisers to expand services operating from that terminus during peak travel times.

Mr. Freeman: I have received no such advice.

Rail Timetables

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to indemnify or exempt the franchising authority, or operators, from charges of collusive or anti-competitive behaviour when determining the national timetable and connecting services where there exist competing operators and demands for connections of services, train paths, track and related facilities.

Mr. Freeman: There will be no need to grant such indemnities. Railtrack will allocate access to the network and prepare the operating timetable, subject to the oversight of the rail regulator, who will be responsible for authorising access agreements. The regulator will have duties to promote competition and to protect the passenger's interests, and will have to take these into account when deciding whether to authorise access agreements. The Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976 will not apply to the provision of railway services. The regulator will also have the power to refer matters related to the provision of licensed railway services to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate whether they operate against the public interest.

M3-A303-A30

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date the M3-A303-A30 southern route to the west country between London and Exeter will be entirely dual carriageway.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We intend to provide dual carriageways to replace all the remaining single carriageway sections of this route. The timetable for completing this programme of improvements depends on satisfactory progress through the statutory procedures, including public inquiries where necessary, and the continuing availability of funds.

Dual Carriageways

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the stretches of road and the distances involved of the carriageway between Andover and Exeter along the A303-A30 which are not dual carriageway; and by what dates it is intended they will be developed to become dual carriageways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer my right hon. Friend to my answer to his earlier question today. The Department's schemes to replace the remaining single carriageway sections of the A303-A30 between Andover and Exeter are as follows:

Scheme	*Next key stage*
A303 Amesbury-Berwick Down	Public consultation, spring 1993
A303 Wylye-Stockton Wood	Public draft orders, late 1993
A303 Chicklade Bottom-Mere	Public consultation, spring 1993
A303 Sparkford-Ilchester	Publish draft orders, spring 1993
A303 Ilminister bypass dualling	Preferred route announcement, spring 1993
A303 Ilminister-Marsh	Publish draft orders, summer 1993
A303-A30 Marsh-Honiton	Re-publish draft orders, spring 1993, for public inquiry later in year
A30 Honiton-Exeter	Decision following public inquiry, autumn 1993

Railtrack

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which body shall be responsible for surveying any crash, or incident involving damage to track, locomotive or rolling stock, with a view to assisting in the apportioning of costs, charges or damages, following the vesting day of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack and train service operators.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what form of regulation or arbitration he proposes in order to deal with incident costs when the charges that have been identified and attributed to a company or operator are disputed, following the vesting day of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: The form of regulation or arbitration to deal with disputes over the attribution of costs after an incident will be a matter for access agreements which will be subject to the approval of the rail regulator.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will impose minimum response times on those charged with clearing routes, track or train paths, as well as subsequent safety inspections, in the event of train failure, crash or derailment, following the vesting day of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: This will be the responsibility of Railtrack, as it now is of British Rail. Any related contractual obligations would be covered in access agreements.

Rail Franchising

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the franchising authority will be required to prepare a national timetable, and to seek franchises in response to bids by public or commercial bodies to operate existing or suggested services or routes.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack, as the track authority, will plan and produce a working timetable for the rail network and will be required to ensure that a national timetable is published. The Railways Bill places a duty on the franchising director to designate services—whether existing or new—as eligible for provision under franchise agreements. It further provides that public sector operators may not be franchisees.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to maintain rail services in the immediate period following a franchiser or operator arbitrarily or unilaterally vacating a train path or service due to breach of contract or company failure.

Mr. Freeman: The franchising director will be able to step in and provide for continuity of service through the terms of the franchise agreement and the special railway administration procedures as set out in the Railways Bill.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has received from British Rail of the increase in the total number of drivers that would be required by InterCity to have its own dedicated train crews following franchising or privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: We have received no such specific estimate from British Rail. Following franchising it will be for franchisees to determine total staffing requirements in the light of their obligations to provide the services specified in their franchise contracts, and comply with the terms of their licence and their validated railway safety case.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his approach to deciding the conflicting bids for train paths, track, platforms and related facilities between the InterCity executive type services and those of the passenger transport executives where currently InterCity services are given priority in their planning and allocation.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for British Rail.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that InterCity should maintain its existing rights to priority on train paths over those sections of track where it currently enjoys the status of lead business, following the vesting day of Railtrack and the introduction of franchising.

Mr. Freeman: Our intention is that the initial pattern of franchised services should be based on the services provided by BR immediately before franchising.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public access there will be to the land offered in exchange for land compulsorily purchased along the route of the east London river crossing under compulsory purchase orders 10 and 11, 19 November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We propose to plant 89 per cent. of the exchange land and protect it until the woodland becomes established. Access to these areas will be via the "Green Chain Walk" and an extensive system of subsidiary footpaths. The remaining areas of exchange land will be fully accessible for public use.

Road Freight

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the total tonnage miles of freight carried by railways in the United Kingdom in each of the last 15 years for which figures are available; and what were the comparable actual and percentage figures for road freight transport in each of those years.

Mr. Freeman: Comparative data for Great Britain can be found in table 9.3 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Table 1.9 contains percentage figures for the years 1981-1991; comparable data for earlier years may be found in previous annual reports. Equivalent data for Northern ireland are not available.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the key factors in determining the currently used United Kingdom search and rescue helicopter response criteria as laid down by the helicopter coverage group.

Mr. Norris: I am replying as the Helicopter Coverage Group was established under the aegis of the Department of Transport.

The key factors affecting the need for SAR helicopter coverage were:

1. The usage by merchant shipping of UK waterways
2. The increase in ferry traffic around UK waters
3. Changing fishing patterns and the effects of EEC quota regulations on fishing vessels movements
4. The increasing popularity of maritime recreational pursuits

Bridges, London

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take responsibility for the co-ordination of works on the bridges of London between Hampton Court and the sea.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* I am currently considering whether any changes are necessary to the arrangements currently in place for managing the bridges concerned. I am not currently satisfied that any change would do other than add an additional layer of bureaucracy.

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the Civil Aviation Authority is taking to introduce emergency training for new air traffic controllers on their initial training courses and for ongoing emergency continuation training for experienced operational controllers as recommended by the air accidents investigation branch.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority's safety regulation group (SRG) intends to consult industry shortly on proposals for additional requirements for emergency training to be undertaken in all courses for trainee controllers, and as part of the continuation training for qualified operational controllers. In the meantime, National Air Traffic Services has already implemented additional emergency training which will meet these proposals.

ENVIRONMENT

Derelict Land Grant

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the derelict land grant projects funded in each of the last three years and the amount of funding allocation.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available in the form requested. However, the following table shows, by region, the expenditure on land reclamation incurred by local authorities which has attracted derelict land grant over the last three years. About 95 per cent. of this expenditure was supported by grant at 100 per cent.

Derelict land grant expenditure
1989-90 to 1992-93

Local authority	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Northern				
Alnwick	0	0	350	0
Blyth Valley	0	0	36,100	100,000
Chester le Street	12,000	0	0	0
Cleveland county council	24,174	35,401	15,463	120,000
Darlington	563,164	668,018	370,164	714,000
Derwentside	180,005	475,920	15,000	135,000
Durham county council	2,024,497	980,666	553,286	1,500,000
Durham city	3,142	2,035	10,145	10,000
Easington	406,866	125,113	149,290	325,000
Gateshead	1,035,454	1,303,606	1,558,246	1,700,000
Hartlepool	80,556	256,776	11,575	500,000
Langbaurgh	202,313	251,102	27,809	250,000
Middlesbrough	11,875	50,284	296,874	550,000
North Tyneside	485,303	773,567	508,513	750,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	194,298	104,810	538,561	450,000
Northumberland county council	758,493	1,429,134	800,706	2,055,000
South Tyneside	299,088	341,907	297,004	200,000
Sedgefield	6,650	10,169	124,360	160,000
Stockton on Tees	75,698	34,885	155,178	500,000
Sunderland	1,239,592	1,403,637	1,593,509	1,700,000
Teesdale	0	0	6,418	0
Tyne and Wear MCC	0	0	0	0
Wear Valley	129,549	39,896	429,818	350,000
TOTAL	7,603,168	8,247,030	7,068,551	12,069,000
North West				
Allerdale	1,331,491	1,571,074	312,648	0
Barrow in Furness	0	0	3,000,000	2,000,000
Blackburn	64,847	370,811	374,415	200,000
Blackpool	21,179	23,992	0	18,000
Bolton	9,318	493,239	221,066	660,000
Burnley	26,257	47,573	81,182	200,000
Bury	97,966	156,165	697,395	660,000
Carlisle	0	0	216,043	900,000
Cheshire county council	494,361	1,070,145	1,434,597	1,500,000
Chester	0	0	0	80,000
Chorley	1,876	160,956	228,034	200,000
Congleton	151,707	231,624	47,564	100,000
Copeland	0	0	163,190	900,000
Crewe and Nantwich	42,870	3,828	30,538	50,000
Cumbria county council	3,509,500	2,117,590	2,991,360	0
Eden	0	0	0	130,000
Hyndburn	205,085	174,072	115,890	200,000
Lancashire county council	459,762	740,240	528,947	300,000
Lancaster	58,000	203,071	421,906	500,000
Macclesfield	42,691	101,358	74,661	150,000
Manchester	32,820	0	372,930	1,200,000
Oldham	324,247	724,291	676,265	1,250,000
Pendle	27,159	219,486	0	200,000
Preston	1,606,987	19,240	436,405	300,000
Ribble Valley	6,522	575,532	249,009	200,000
Rochdale	24,194	34,444	0	310,000
Rossendale	601,336	149,385	120,095	200,000
South Lakeland	0	10,350	0	100,000
Salford	3,120,025	563,947	820,103	2,680,000
South Ribble	0	0	41,876	0
Stockport	0	72,448	13,931	500,000
Tameside	272,665	64,487	1,263,999	1,200,000
Trafford	12,316	7,200	19,688	150,000
Vale Royal	123,000	59,045	134,157	200,000
West Lancashire	6,454	0	59,709	200,000

Local authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Warrington	223,227	313,164	90,022	200,000
Wigan	1,229,353	691,342	1,754,456	1,500,000
TOTAL	14,125,215	10,970,099	16,992,081	19,118,000
Merseyside task force				
Cheshire	208,000	744,142	101,794	500,000
Ellesmere Port and Neston	2,099,000	2,185,766	1,503,996	1,650,000
Halton	1,334,000	1,312,617	914,466	1,275,000
Knowsley	498,000	378,728	634,424	650,000
Liverpool	403,000	1,746,514	3,047,190	2,270,000
Merseyside MCC/RB	7,000	0	0	0
Sefton	185,000	605,741	408,728	1,200,000
St. Helens	646,000	416,148	1,368,914	1,358,000
Wirral	175,000	371,641	351,419	400,000
TOTAL	5,555,000	7,761,497	8,330,931	9,303,000
Yorkshire and Humberside				
Barnsley	2,086,627	1,685,189	877,713	1,646,964
Boothferry	710,025	773,560	839,673	140,000
Bradford	385,728	780,617	494,522	396,000
Calderdale	381,416	51,104	2,970,946	2,000,000
Cleethorpes	48,166	10,900	949	0
Doncaster	501,180	1,371,837	702,420	2,150,783
Glanford	1,935,770	2,494,436	3,612,119	3,000,000
Grimsby	6,107	99	37,200	106,383
Holderness	3,472	115,612	0	0
Humberside county council	44,429	0	0	0
Kingston-upon-Hull	92,274	38,856	139,811	62,386
Kirklees	766,500	957,389	1,054,334	980,000
Leeds	227,886	849,775	770,696	250,000
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	10,000
Richmondshire	0	0	21,621	51,000
Rotherham	2,637,550	3,876,401	4,585,974	5,149,396
Ryedale	57,725	12,125	0	0
Scarborough	0	45,157	0	0
Scunthorpe	0	0	0	0
Selby	12,039	21,729	2,581	0
Sheffield	53,470	133,873	635,888	559,929
Wakefield	517,207	944,341	1,160,250	1,498,000
York	0	0	0	10,000
TOTAL	10,447,571	14,163,000	17,905,897	18,010,841
West Midlands				
Birmingham	652,750	281,537	893,446	1,224,000
Cannock Chase	39,505	280,030	152,138	511,000
Coventry	2,161	0	0	25,000
Dudley	3,656,203	3,997,461	4,887,623	2,780,000
Lichfield	73,889	215,464	1,000	103,000
North Warwickshire	0	0	0	0
Newcastle-under-Lyme	257,670	1,239,612	691,486	1,614,000
Nuneaton and Bedworth	1,557	170,744	50,554	0
Oswestry	0	0	33,250	50,000
Redditch	0	0	0	0
South Staffordshire	21,000	6,074	2,945	1,000
Sandwell	1,321,731	1,865,409	1,023,621	1,425,000
Shropshire county council	596,203	1,458,615	615,850	1,291,000
Staffordshire county council	231,527	275,262	1,387,127	601,000
Staffordshire Moorlands	0	0	6,000	51,000
Stoke-on-Trent	610,374	256,706	763,752	695,000
Tamworth	0	0	0	6,000
Walsall	3,778,999	2,738,123	4,222,623	3,838,000
Warwickshire	116,269	157,345	36,760	29,000
Wolverhampton	585,000	447,375	1,676,043	1,981,000
Wrekin	693,189	336,154	672,755	773,000
TOTAL	12,638,027	14,725,911	17,116,973	16,998,000
East Midlands				
Amber Valley	15,889	71,415	0	235,000
Ashfield	99,404	54,773	65,944	24,000
Bolsover	0	68,967	33,549	80,000
Chesterfield	0	2,497	864,493	122,000
Corby	2,410,386	1,374,391	1,914,953	1,927,000

Local authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Daventry	0	0	0	50,000
Derby	0	0	180,000	25,000
Derbyshire county council	1,727,580	2,958,839	2,672,151	2,597,000
Derbyshire dales	0	0	16,737	260,000
Erewash	296,504	308,066	555,234	1,000,000
East Lindsey	317	0	0	0
Gedling	0	0	124,982	27,000
Hinkley and Bosworth	11,719	0	0	0
Kettering	0	0	6,875	0
Leicester	0	0	4,000	106,000
Leicestershire county council	569,656	697,283	367,717	877,000
Lincoln city	0	1,425,107	694,932	1,010,000
Mansfield	93,703	249,176	823,915	1,168,000
Melton	0	0	0	0
North West Leicestershire	655,749	899,602	5,618	9,000
Newark and Sherwood	361,936	0	0	77,000
Nottingham	8,753	12,820	176,280	600,000
Nottinghamshire county council	1,888,648	1,631,835	2,638,540	2,631,000
North East Derbyshire	2,727	2,727	43,669	204,000
Ruchcliffe	0	0	0	25,000
South Derbyshire	202,743	467,923	297,485	7,000
Wellingborough	0	0	0	0
West Derbyshire	2,661	42,550	0	0
TOTAL	8,348,375	10,267,971	11,487,074	13,061,000
London				
Barking	148,333	74,166	0	—
Bexley	38,197	0	0	—
Camden	30,000	15,000	15,000	—
Croydon	0	0	0	—
Enfield	0	6,358	38,843	—
Greenwich	86,585	182,044	81,884	—
Harrow	0	0	0	—
Havering	0	17,640	0	—
Merton	118,000	0	20,521	—
Newham	440,606	0	0	—
Richmond upon Thames	16,800	8,400	—	—
Tower Hamlets	54,535	364,026	1,963,775	—
TOTAL	933,056	667,634	2,120,023	2,193,000
South West				
Bath	0	0	139,755	603,000
Bristol	0	84,161	138,741	55,000
Caradon	0	0	0	100,000
Carrick	0	670,113	0	250,000
Cheltenham	0	0	0	0
Cornwall county council	31,340	25,289	288,851	432,000
Devon county council	43,954	57,387	94,053	50,000
East Devon	0	0	0	0
Forest of Dean	0	3,204	142,417	0
Cloucester	29,000	3,684	3,684	0
Kerrier	389,100	93,286	1,728,293	1,420,000
Kingswood	1,286	1,286	0	0
North Cornwall	95,997	16,596	18,345	20,000
Penwith	56	0	0	60,000
Plymouth	67,887	55,823	82,000	100,000
Portland	0	30,882	0	0
Restormel	0	0	31,298	250,000
Sedgemoor	0	10,590	0	0
Teignbridge	687	5,154	5,354	1,000
Thamesdown	96,927	455,680	33,659	47,000
Torbay	4,715	7,695	0	8,000
Woodspring	4,454	1,919	1,000	2,200
West Devon	0	0	47,666	15,000
TOTAL	765,403	1,522,749	2,755,116	3,413,200
South East				
Chichester	0	43,315	941	—
Gravesham	0	0	1,800	—
Guildford	0	0	0	—
Hastings	0	0	0	—
Isle of Wight	62,181	49,704	0	—
Kent county council	0	11,747	120,728	—

Local authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1] 1992-93
Portsmouth	0	0	16,814	—
Reading	0	0	10,279	—
Reigate and Banstead	0	3,777	0	—
Rochester	75,918	0	39,857	—
Swale	0	138,405	0	—
Test Valley	0	0	8,760	—
Thanet	0	0	12,807	—
Wealden	0	0	2,500	—
TOTAL	138,099	246,948	214,486	898,500
Eastern				
Bedfordshire	0	0	29,583	—
Braintree	0	7,753	0	—
Breckland district council	0	0	3,156	—
Broadland	229,781	45,837	0	—
Hertfordshire county council	22,540	0	15,000	—
Ipswich	0	0	11,812	—
Kings Lynn and Norfolk	0	0	0	—
Luton	0	0	77,257	—
Mid Suffolk	0	0	593	—
Norwich	109,987	126,408	71,000	—
Norwich	0	0	81,074	—
South Cambridgeshire	0	335,229	142,039	—
Thurrock	0	0	8,177	—
TOTAL	362,308	515,227	439,691	972,000
GRAND TOTAL	60,916,222	69,088,066	84,430,823	96,036,541

[1] Forecast expenditure.

Homelessness

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people applying to councils in each standard region were *(a)* accepted and *(b)* not accepted as officially homeless under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 in each of the last three years.

Mr Baldry: Full information for regions is available only from April 1991. Estimates for the first complete year are as follows:

Households, 1991-92

Region	Accepted as homeless	Not accepted as homeless
North	9,010	10,460
Yorkshire and Humberside	12,930	21,020
East Midlands	10,530	10,920
East Anglia	3,610	3,670
South East	58,090	61,740
South West	9,010	10,100
West Midlands	18,550	19,790
North West	23,100	20,170
England	144,830	157,870

Those households counted as not accepted as homeless represent the sum of those whose applications resulted in a section 64 decision being issued during the year and who were found not to be homeless, or in priority need but intentionally homeless, or not to be in a priority need category and were not accepted for rehousing.

In the quarter ended September 1992, local authorities accepted 35,520 households and 43,060 decisions of non-acceptance were issued.

Regional estimates of acceptances for earlier years are published but these do not take account of the change in definition from April 1991 when intentionally homeless people were no longer counted as accepted. Consistent information on non-acceptances is not available for earlier years.

Figures for acceptances (including intentionally homeless provided only with temporary accommodation) for each quarter appear in table 1 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England, Results for . . . Quarter 19 . . ., Supplementary Tables" and from the third quarter of 1990 in table 1 of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England, Statistics for the . . . Quarter 19 . . .." Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Hedgerows

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to bring forward Government legislation on hedgerows.

Mr. Maclean: The Government continue to support the Hedgerows Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth). It is too soon to anticipate that my hon. Friend's Bill will fail in this session.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any of the land offered in exchange for land along the route of the east London river crossing under compulsory purchase orders 10 and 11, 19 November 1991, is designated as *(a)* a site of special scientific interest or *(b)* as being of special character and metropolitan importance under the Greater London development plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: *(a)* None. *(b)* The land within the London borough of Bexley offered in exchange for public open space to be acquired for the east London river crossing is

designated as an area of special character in the Bexley borough plan, adopted in February 1985, which implemented the policy aims set out in the Greater London development plan.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the consultation on the local government finance settlement for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 28 January 1993 column 854]:* Unfortunately, owing to a computing error, the notional amounts for Enfield, Gateshead, and Cleveland specified in the "Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (England) 1993-94", which was laid before the House on 28 January 1993, are incorrect. We are today laying before the House the "Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) (Amendment) Report (England) 1993-94" which specifies for these three authorities the correct notional amounts which are £199,624,000, £152,785,000 and £397,941,000 respectively. I shall arrange for copies of this report to be sent to all local authorities.

Forests

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from non-governmental organisations regarding the development of the United Kingdom's national plan on forests; and how he intends to involve non-governmental organisations in the process.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

I have received one letter on this subject, from Friends of the Earth.

The Forestry Commission will be co-ordinating the preparation of the national plan for the implementation of the forest principles agreed in Rio de Janeiro, and will seek the views of non-governmental organisations before it is completed.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *327*, if he will indicate to which cases the public interest immunity certificates apply.

The Attorney-General: The information is as follows:

CPS	*SFO*	*DPP(NI)*
1987		
—	—	—
1988		
—	—	—
1989		
R *v.* Pottle and Randle	R *v.* Saunders and others	—
R *v.* Batley	—	—
1990		
R *v.* Kokabi	R *v.* Deller, Page and Rycott	—
R. *v.* Coren and Greenwood	—	—
1991		
—	R *v.* NatWest Investment Bank Limited and others	—
1992		
A current case	—	Latimer, Hegan, Bell and Allen *v.* Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland
R *v.* Bennett	—	—

The cases referred to in the answer to the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) are set out in the table. As explained in that answer, the information is provided from the recollection of officers since such information is not recorded centrally. There are two corrections to the original answer. R *v.* Coren and Greenwood was originally recorded erroneously as 1987. R *v.* Batley was counted twice and therefore the number recorded for the CPS in 1989 was two and not three.

EDUCATION

Special Learning Needs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the size of the GEST—grants for education support and training—allocation in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and projected for 1993-94 together with the size of the allocation *(a)* nationally and *(b)* earmarked for the training of teachers of young people with special learning difficulties; in cash and real terms.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure in England supported by the grants for educational support and training (GEST)

programme is given in the table. The GEST programme in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	Cash £ million	Real terms[2] £ million
(a) GEST total[1]		
1990-91	353	393
1991-92	364	389
1992-93	377	377
1993-94	320	311
(b) of which GEST supported expenditure on the training of teachers of young people with special educational needs:		
1990-91	7·1	7·9
1991-92	7·5	8·0
1992-93	8·1	8·1
1993-94	10·0	9·7

[1] Total of expenditure supported by education support grants and LEA training grants. Figures include both grants and LEA contribution.

[2] Real terms figures are at 1992-93 prices, repriced using the GDP (market prices) deflator index.

Examinations

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students have passed O-level, GSE/GCSE and A-level examinations in languages in each year since 1982; and if he will give a breakdown of the languages concerned.

Mr. Forth: The estimated numbers of school leavers who have passed O-level/CSE/GCSE and A-level examinations in selected modern foreign languages for each year since 1982 are shown in the following table.

Numbers of school leavers in England
Examination attainments in modern languages

Thousands

Academic Years:	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
GCSE/O/CSE passes grades A-G									
French	243·84	242·24	239·28	231·18	230·17	225·45	230·72	229·21	243·25
German	68·04	67·90	65·36	63·71	62·61	62·63	63·19	70·52	72·68
Italian	2·26	2·44	1·95	1·78	1·68	1·75	1·47	1·55	1·93
Spanish	13·80	13·69	13·03	12·50	13·12	13·60	14·61	15·74	18·17
Russian	1·48	1·31	1·34	1·17	1·38	1·15	1·04	1·21	1·29
A/AS level passes grades A-E									
French	16·23	16·01	15·16	13·22	13·50	13·15	15·13	19·28	19·79
German	6·42	6·78	5·88	5·54	5·36	5·03	5·68	6·76	7·45
Italian	0·26	0·36	0·21	0·22	0·33	0·32	0·16	0·28	0·31
Spanish	1·83	1·89	1·59	1·91	1·61	1·53	2·02	2·36	2·30
Russian	0·21	0·26	0·27	0·26	0·24	0·28	0·29	0·33	0·43

Source:—School Examination Survey.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils entered for GCSE examinations in British government and political studies, citizenship and/or community studies, in each year since 1990; and what proportion of the total school population of 15 and 16-year-olds they represented.

Mr. Forth: Information is not readily available for 1990 or 1991 but by the summer 1992, 589 pupils aged 16 attempted GCSEs in politics and 4,617 attempted GCSEs in community studies. These numbers represent 0·1 per cent. and 0·8 per cent. of pupils reaching the age of 16 in the academic year 1991-92.

Teachers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers have left the profession in each year since 1982.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the numbers of teachers who left full-time service in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England and Wales in each year. They include retirements and teachers who transferred to other sectors (such as independent schools, special education or further education) or to part-time teaching. In addition, many of those who leave service each year return to teaching after a career break. Surveys of teacher resignations carried out by the Local Government Management Board show that fewer than 1 per cent. of teachers annually leave teaching to take up other employment.

Number of leavers from full-time maintained nursery, primary and secondary school sector

Year to March	*Number*
1982	33,291
1983	31,781
1984	31,274
1985	32,831
1986	32,473
1987	31,238
1988	31,711
1989	36,882
1990	38,330
[1]1991	39,700

[1] Provisional.

School Meetings

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has about attendance levels at school annual general meetings, costs of calling them and the numbers that are inquorate.

Mr. Forth: All parents of pupils registered at a school are eligible to attend the annual parents' meeting. Information as to the numbers of parents attending annual parents' meetings and the costs of calling them is not collected by the Department. It would appear that in general, parental attendance is disappointing, although there are instances of very successful meetings.

Nursery Education

48. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education by what date he will publish the January 1992 figures for the proportion of three and four-year-olds in nursery education in each local authority.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *353*.

City Technology Colleges

49. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which companies at present sponsor city technology colleges; and how many governorships those companies hold.

Mr. Forth: The following private sector sponsors have committed sums of £0·2 million or more to individual city technology colleges or to the development of the programme:

ADT Group plc
BAT Industries plc
Boots Company plc
British Record Industry Trust
Cable & Wireless plc
Mr. H. de Capell Brooke
Dixons Group plc
Sir Harry Djanogly
Esmee Fairburn Foundation
Findlay Publications plc
Forte plc
Haberdashers' Livery Company
Mr. J. Hall
Hanson plc
Sir Philip and Lady Harris Charitable Trust
IMI plc
Kodak plc
John Laing plc
Landau Foundation
Sir Geoffrey Leigh
Mr. D. Lewis
Lucas plc
Mercers' Company
Safeway plc
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
Tarmac plc
Unisys Ltd.
Vardy Foundation
Wellcome Foundation
Weston Foundation
Wolfson Foundation
Mr. H. Wong

The major sponsors of each college form a trust which has strategic control of the management of the college. The trustees are responsible for electing a governing body, whose members will normally include representatives of sponsors, but no central record is held of the current composition of each governing body.

School Reorganisation

77. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local authority school reorganisation proposals are awaiting a decision from his Department; and how many have been awaiting a decision for more than *(a)* one month, *(b)* three months, *(c)* six months and *(d)* one year.

Mr. Forth: At 28 January, 104 proposals published under section 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 were awaiting a decision. Of these, 101 have been awaiting a decision for more than one month, 72 for more than three months, 31 for more than six months and six for more than one year.

Proposals outstanding for less than four months may in certain cases fall to the local authority for determination.

Schools (Performance)

78. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those schools which have recently been sent a letter from OFSTED about their poor performance; and when each of those schools last had a full HMI inspection.

Mr. Forth: This is not a matter for my right hon. Friend. HMI have not inspected all schools on a regular basis, and OFSTED believe it would be invidious to publish the names of those which, on the basis of inspection evidence, give them cause for concern. The new inspection arrangements being established under the Schools Act will ensure that all schools are regularly inspected, and those at risk of failing their pupils are identified in a published report.

Grant-maintained Status

79. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications from schools for grant-maintained status are awaiting a decision from his Department and how many have been awaiting a decision for more than *(a)* one month, *(b)* three months, *(c)* six months and *(d)* one year.

Mr. Forth: At 29 January, 150 applications for grant-maintained status were awaiting a decision by the Secretary of State. Of these, 132 have been awaiting a decision for more than one month, 21 for more than three months, six for more than six months and none for more than one year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the size of the earnings disregards for claimants of income support in each year since 1988; and if he will express the value of the earnings disregard against changes *(a)* in prices and *(b)* in earnings over the period.

Mr. Burt: New, increased, earnings disregards were brought in with the introduction of income support in April 1988. The standard disregard is £5 and a higher, £15, disregard applies to certain groups of people—lone parents, long-term sick and disabled people, members of a couple who are both aged under 60 and have been in receipt of income support for two years and, from April 1993, carers.

The table shows what the earnings disregards would have been if they had risen in line with changes in earnings and prices each year.

	Value of disregards against changes in:			
	Earnings		*Prices*	
	£	£	£	£
1988	5·00	15·00	5·00	15·00
1989	5·00	16·45	5·40	16·20
1990	6·00	18·00	5·90	17·75

	Value of disregards against changes in: Earnings		Prices	
	£	£	£	£
1991	6·50	19·55	6·30	18·85
1992	6·90	20·75	6·55	19·65

Source: The abstract of statistics general index of retail prices (all items) and average gross earnings new series index (whole economy) seasonally unadjusted.
Note: Figures rounded to nearest 5p.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many claimants of income support have taken advantage of earnings disregards to supplement their income in each year since 1988.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table.

	1988	1989	1990	1991
Cases where claimant has earnings	121,000	130,000	124,000	117,000
Cases where partner has earnings	34,000	32,000	31,000	48,000

Source: Income support annual statistical enquries May 1988 to May 1991.
Note: All figures rounded to nearest thousand.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the operation or level of the earnings disregard for claimants of income support.

Mr. Burt: The earnings disregards are kept under review. From April 1993, carers will be entitled to the higher £15, disregard. We have no other plans at present to change the operations or level of the earnings disregards.

Sickness and Maternity Benefits

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he will take to ensure that all employees are paid their full entitlement to sickness and maternity benefits by their employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Employers already receive comprehensive guidance and advice on how to operate the statutory sick pay (SSP) and statutory maternity pay (SMP) schemes through the medium of guides, manuals, free telephone enquiry service and training seminars. A quick guide to enable employers to deal with most cases under the schemes is revised and issued to all known employers annually and an updated version of the employer's manual to SSP will be issued to employers next month.

Explanatory leaflets and a free telephone service are also available to inform employees of their rights. Disagreements between employer and employee can be resolved by an independent adjudication officer at the local social security office.

As part of the Contributions Agency's 1992-93 target of 114,000 survey visits to employers to check their compliance with the legislation, the agency has introduced measures aimed at improving employers' performance in administering the schemes including a programme of 17,000 educational visits. The agency is also planning a random survey of employers to obtain a more representative view of employers' performance to identify and resolve areas of particular difficulty.

Water Charges

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the introduction of a rebate scheme for water charges payable by lower income households; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: None. Water should be treated in a similar way to other items of expenditure in the family budget.

Households Below Average Income

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the data from which figures 1 and 2 in "Households Below Average Income, 1979 to 1988-89" were constructed.

Mr. Burt: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on the basis of the assumptions used in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", what he estimates *(a)* the upper earnings limit and *(b)* the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions will be, as a percentage of average earnings in (i) 2015, (ii) 2025, (iii) 2035 and (iv) 2045.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table.

	Earnings limit	
		Percentage
	Lower	Upper
2015-16	12·2	91·4
2025-26	10·5	78·6
2035-36	9·1	67·9
2045-46	7·8	58·5

Assumes real earnings growth of 1·5 per cent. per annum.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the direct costs savings which would arise from equalising the pension age at 65 years for men and women during each year of the phasing-in period, assuming that the new age is phased in beginning in *(a)* 2003 and *(b)* 2010; and that phasing-in takes place at a rate of (i) one year in one, (ii) one year in two, (iii) one year in three, and (iv) one year in four.

Miss Widdecombe: The savings' which would accrue from equalising the state pension age for women and men at age 65 assuming that the phasing begins in 2010 at the rate of one year in three (option (b) (iii)) are given in the table. Other information is not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Amounts are given rounded to the nearest £100 million and, in common with those given in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", at 1991-2 prices.

	Amount saved in each year
Year	£ million
2010	3—
2011	3—
2012	500
2013	600

Year	£ million
2014	600
2015	1,100
2016	1,200
2017	1,300
2018	1,800
2019	2,000
2020	2,100
2021	2,700
2022	2,800
2023	2,900
2024	3,400
2025	3,500

[2] Savings less than £100 million.

Notes:

Assumes real earnings growth of 1·5 per cent.

Including effects on other social security benefits, income tax, national insurance contributions and the labour market.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on the basis of assumptions used in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age," if he will publish figures estimating the value of *(a)* basic retirement pension, *(b)* the average SERPs addition for men and *(c)* the average SERPs addition for women expressed as a percentage of average earnings in *(a)* 2015, *(b)* 2025, *(c)* 2035 and *(d)* 2045.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table.

Percentage

	2015-16	*2025-26*	*2035-36*	*2045-46*
Basic pension	12·2	10·5	9·1	7·8
Average additional pension (women)	13·8	12·7	12·7	11·8
Average additional pension (men)	20·3	16·9	14·4	12·9

Notes: The additional pension percentages are based on the amount of SERPS payable in each respective year to an individual whom had average earnings in every year of his or her working life. They are not based on average AP awards to new pensioners as these cannot be estimated.

Assumes real earnings growth of 1·5 per cent. per annum.

WALES

Homelessness

8. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to tackle homelessness in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Several. Most recently my right hon. Friend announced an extra £35,000,000 for Housing for Wales to provide additional homes for those in housing need.

Cardiff Royal Infirmary

9. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had concerning the closure of the Cardiff royal infirmary proposed by the South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Three.

Discretionary Awards (Education)

10. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount spent in each of the following years by Welsh local education authorities on discretionary awards *(a)* in 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992-93; and what is the number of students in receipt of awards in each year in each authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: About 11,500 students received discretionary awards from local education authorities in Wales in academic year 1990-91. This is the latest year for which this information is available. Details of local authorities' expenditure on discretionary awards is not held centrally.

Local Government Finance

11. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from county councils on local authority funding levels for 1993-94 and in his capping criteria announced on 14 December 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Six.

19. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from local authorities regarding the 1993-94 settlement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from six counties and 10 district and community councils.

14. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the level of funding provided by central Government for local government at the county and district levels.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from six county councils plus 10 from district and community councils and more than 600 other representations.

Enterprise Allowance

12. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated by his Department to promote the enterprise allowance within Wales in each year since 1987-88.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The enterprise allowance scheme is administered by the TECs who are free to adapt it to local circumstances and who, in recent years, have introduced greater selectivity to ensure that assistance is targeted at those businesses with the most promising plans and prospects. We have made £5·3 million available for this purpose in 1992-93.

With permission, figures for earlier years will be circulated in the *Official Report*: they total some £53·4 million.

The figures for earlier years are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	12·0
1988-89	12·9
1989-90	12·4
1990-91	9·0
1991-92	7·1

Vineyards

13. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grants are available for the planting of new vineyards in Wales; and if he will make a statement on Government policy regarding existing vineyards.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. We are approaching the point where, under the terms of EC policy, planting for new vines will not be possible. That being so, there is no justification for the provision of Government assistance for new vineyards.

Cardiac Services (Report)

15. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now publish the Touche Ross report into cardiac services in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend will announce the findings of the Touche Ross appraisal as soon as he has had an opportunity to consider the conclusions of the final report.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

16. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the subject of the proposed reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from Welsh MPs, the Welsh farming organisations and individual farmers in respect of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in Wales.

Labour Statistics

17. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were unemployed in *(a)* Ogmore, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: The unadjusted figures for Ogmore, Mid Glamorgan and Wales in December 1992 are 3,647, 27,374 and 134,929 respectively.

21. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently unemployed in Wales and in Clywd.

Mr. David Hunt: The unadjusted figures for Wales and Clwyd in December 1992 are 134,929 and 16,848 respectively.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the figure for male unemployment in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: The seasonally adjusted male unemployment figure for Wales was 105,700 in December 1992.

Quangos

18. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy for appointments to quangos in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I seek those who are best suited to each post.

Bottled Water

20. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to promote the sale of Welsh bottled water.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh bottled water industry, like other industries, is able to take advantage of a number of schemes of assistance available from the Welsh Office, Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales. Advice and information on the marketing of food and drink products in Wales is also available from Welsh Food Promotion Ltd.

Welsh Language Bill

22. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes making to the Welsh Language Bill to meet criticisms made of it.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's Welsh Language Bill represents a significant advance for the Welsh language and for the people who speak it. The Government have already signified their intention to bring forward amendments to the Bill concerning the use of Welsh in the courts and in statutory titles. We will consider very carefully any other suggestions aimed at improving the Bill which are put to us during its detailed scrutiny by Parliament.

Young Offenders (South Wales)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will use his influence to help secure the speedy construction of a secure unit for young offenders in south Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am satisfied that the proposals for a new all-Wales secure unit are being taken forward energetically under the direction of the joint Welsh Office/local authority working party.

Oak Woods

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being undertaken by his Department to protect Welsh oak woods from grazing sheep.

Mr. David Hunt: Good management of all woodlands, which includes protection from grazing animals, is encouraged by grants available under the woodland grant scheme, which also offers grants for the establishment of new woodlands, including oak woods. The Forestry Commission and ADAS give advice to farmers on the management of their woods, and specific grants for protecting farm woodlands from livestock are also available under the farm and conservation grant scheme. Further support for the protection of woodlands in Wales is provided by Coed Cymru, a Government backed initiative to encourage landowners, particularly farmers, to improve the management of existing broadleaved woodlands, particularly ancient and semi-natural oak woods.

School Governors (Ring-binders)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the date on which contracts for the supply of ring-binders for school governors under the local management of schools scheme were put out to tender; if the tender was advertised in open competition or via a closed list; how many firms made bids; and if the winning bid was the lowest tender.

Mr. David Hunt: Tenders were invited from selected companies on 6 April 1989 and 17 August 1989. Four companies submitted bids for the first of these contracts and three companies submitted bids for the second contract. In each case the company submitting the lowest tender by the specified date was awarded the contract.

Schools

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those opted-out schools in Wales which have made an application to him for capital expenditure; which applications have been approved; and what were the sums approved in each case.

Mr. David Hunt: Bids were received from the three schools in the grant-maintained sector last year. I was pleased to approve the following projects:

	£
Brynmawr	
Refurbishment of ground floor toilet facilities	26,975
Canteen	55,575
Refurbishment of first floor toilet facilities	26,975
Bishop Vaughan	
Improvements to gymnasium	98,000
Perimeter fencing	61,000
Creation of graphics/computer classroom	105,000
Cwmcarn	
Refurbishment of two-storey block—work to curtain walling	67,000
Refurbishment of single-storey block—work to windows and doors	53,000
Remodel front entrance and entrance lobby	10,000
Remodel and refit school kitchen	25,000

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial provisions he has made for 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 for *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue expenditure on opted-out schools.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	1992-93 £	*1993-94*[2] £
Capital grant	509,000	6,000,000
Annual maintenance grant	4,286,742	—[3]
Other revenue expenditure[1]	310,000	2,125,000

No decisions have been taken for future years.

[1] Other revenue expenditure includes transitional grant, special purpose grants, grant made to the grant-maintained schools centre, and payments to the Electoral reform Society for arranging the parental ballots.

[2] The 1993-94 details are set in Estimates which are subject to parliamentary approval.

[3] Annual maintenance grant reflects the sum the local education authority would have spent on the school if it had continued to control it. Decisions on future levels of support cannot therefore, be taken until LEAs have resolved their budgets.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Jamaica

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Jamaican Government over their planned resumption of the death penalty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Jamaican Appeal Court is still in the process of reviewing the cases of those on death row into capital and non-capital categories. Those found guilty of capital offences can appeal to a panel of Appeal Court judges. It would therefore not be appropriate for Her Majesty's Government to make representations to the Jamaican Government.

Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the peaceful re-unification of Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Our support for efforts to achieve a peaceful solution on the Korean peninsula is undiminished. We were generally encouraged by the talks between South and North Korea which took place during 1992, though much remains to be done. We hope that dialogue will resume before long.

We also hope that bilateral nuclear inspections will get under way soon. Together with continued International Atomic Energy inspections in North Korea, these are an important confidence-building measure.

Angola

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure the release of a British citizen held by rebel forces in Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have raised the case of the three British citizens held by UNITA in Angola with UNITA representatives in London on 22 and 28 January, and with the UNITA delegation attending the UNITA/Government talks in Addis Ababa. Our embassy in Luanda is working closely with FINA Oil and Weatherford Services, the men's employers, in order to obtain their release.

Indian Subcontinent (Visas)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for officials at the posts in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh to make brief visits to the regional centres of those countries to assist people intending to apply for visas to visit the United Kingdom; if he will discuss with those countries' high commissioners in the United Kingdom how such facilities could be provided throughout the Indian subcontinent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. Information and assistance is already available at our four posts in India, two in

Pakistan and one in Bangladesh. Any person intending to visit the United Kingdom can visit, telephone or write to these posts for assistance.

Royal Family

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what functions in connection with the royal family are covered by expenditure for the marshall of the diplomatic corps.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The duties of the marshall of the diplomatic corps are of an official nature. He makes all necessary arrangements for heads of diplomatic missions on state and official occasions, and for their duties in connection with the Queen as Head of State. There is no expenditure in connection with other members of the royal family.

European Community (United Kingdom Presidency)

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the outcome of the issues which arose during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes. I have placed in the Library a document produced by the Cabinet Office which gives details of the achievements of the United Kingdom presidency of the Community, from July to December 1992.

Kenya

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the assessment of the treatment of the rights of opposition candidates in the recent elections in Kenya will be taken into account in future decisions of the granting of aid to Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 25 January at column 594. Grievances arising out of the electoral process are now a matter for the Kenyan courts, and we hope these will be swiftly addressed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the incidence for each year since 1986 of detected re-offending by terrorists who have already served *(a)* one to five years, *(b)* five to 10 years, *(c)* 10 years and *(d)* life sentences.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Since 1986 there have been four cases, two in 1990 and two in 1992, where individuals sentenced to life imprisonment for terrorist related offences and released on licence have been recalled to prison after re-offending. In all these cases the new offences were not related to organised terrorism.

The rest of the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

"The Committee"

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further information he has concerning the allegations about RUC involvement in terrorist activity contained in the Channel 4 documentary entitled "The Committee" broadcast in October 1991 to which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage referred on 17 December, *Official Report*, column *578;* and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am advised that police investigations in relation to matters arising from the programme are continuing. No evidence has emerged to support the programme's claims.

Prison Officers

Mr. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the absentee rate through sickness, injury and other causes relating to prison officers in *(a)* Crumlin Road prison, *(b)* Maze prison, *(c)* Maghaberry prison and *(d)* Magilligan prison during each of the last three years.

Mr. Mates: The information is as follows:

Number of days lost through sick leave

Prison	*Year*		
	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Belfast			
Injuries	2,876	5,542	5,752
Other sick leave	20,641	17,221	19,764
TOTAL	23,517	22,673	25,516
Maze			
Injuries	1,438	336	637
Other sick leave	27,174	23,698	20,448
TOTAL	28,612	24,034	21,085
Maghaberry			
Injuries	575	573	722
Other sick leave	10,158	12,500	13,754
TOTAL	10,733	13,037	14,476
Magilligan			
Injuries	288	403	329
Other sick leave	8,655	7,871	10,357
TOTAL	8,943	8,274	10,686

Crumlin Road Prison

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what type of violent incidents have occurred *(a)* between prisoners and *(b)* between prisoners and prison officers in Crumlin Road prison during each of the last three years; how many prisoners and prison officers have been involved; and what injuries have been sustained in each case.

Mr. Mates: Details of violent incidents in Her Majesty's prison Belfast during the last three years are as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Incidents between prisoners	28	71	65
Number of prisoners involved	96	179	148
Incidents in which prisoners directly attacked prison officers	12	17	29
Number of prisoners involved	11	72	42

The violence usually takes the form of fisticuffs or the throwing of hot liquid.

Details of the number of officers involved in these incidents are not recorded but the following numbers of officers were injured as a result of prisoner-initiated violence:

	Number
1990	100
1991	132
1992	84

Most injuries were sustained when officers intervened in fights between prisoners.

Details of injuries sustained by prisoners and officers in each case are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, apart from the bomb explosion on 24 November 1991, as a result of which two prisoners died, the most serious injury sustained by a prisoner was a broken leg. In most cases any injuries sustained were minor cuts and/or bruises. Injuries sustained by officers included serious scalding and fractures of the wrist and jaw.

DEFENCE

International Defence Exhibition

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department plans to make to the IDEX 93 international defence exhibition to be held in Abu Dhabi in February.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) has been working with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Defence Manufacturers Association and the exhibition organisers to co-ordinate and encourage participation by United Kingdom industry in IDEX '93. The DESO will be represented at the exhibition. In addition, a Royal Navy warship and a Lynx helicopter from the Armilla patrol will be visiting Abu Dhabi during the exhibition and, subject to their operational commitments, will participate in its naval element. I hope to visit IDEX 93 myself.

Defence Equipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the operation of the code of conduct governing transatlantic trade in defence equipment between NATO partner states.

Mr. Aitken: I refer to the answer given to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 26 January at column *645*.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of biological weapons research still undertaken in Russia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following Russia's admission last year that it had possessed an offensive biological weapons programme, the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia are now engaged in a trilateral process to ensure it has ended. It would be premature to make an assessment before that process is complete.

Trident

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cost/benefit analysis he has made of the Trident missile programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: The Government carefully examined a range of possible options when they considered a successor to Polaris to meet the United Kingdom's continuing requirement for a minimum strategic nuclear deterrent. Its analyses and conclusions were set out in the Defence open Government documents 80/23, 82/1 and 87/01, copies of which are in the Library of the House. As reported by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 21 January 1993 at column *419*, the United Kingdom Trident programme continues on time and within budget to enter service in the mid-1990s.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ships have been chartered by his Department to ferry supplies to the Falklands over the last 10 years; if he will list the period of their charter, the flags under which they operate and their ultimate ownership.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence ferries dry cargoes to the Falkland Islands using a liner service. This service is maintained by a contractor who is currently required to provide a scheduled shipping service departing the United Kingdom every 28 days. The vessels are chartered by the contractor and the Ministry of Defence is given priority in the allocation of cargo space on the scheduled voyages. In addition 10 tankers have been chartered by the Ministry of Defence over the last 10 years for periods ranging from two months to the current tanker which has been on charter since October 1987. The tankers have mostly delivered fuel to the Falklands as part of a schedule that includes Ascension Island and Cyprus. Records are not complete back to 1982 but the flags have included Bermuda, Denmark, Norway, Singapore and United Kingdom. The present vessel is on the Isle of Man register. The ultimate owner of these vessels is not generally known to my Department as the charter is with the operator who is, in most cases, not the owner.

Gulf War

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ships were chartered for the Gulf conflict; and how many were under the British flag.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 162 vessels were chartered in support of the move of men and equipment to and from the Gulf, of which five were British flagged. A number of vessels undertook more than one voyage.

Nuclear Weapons (Transport)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vehicle breakdowns of specialist vehicles designed for the movement of nuclear warheads, bombs and other arms, whether loaded or unloaded, occurred in the counties of Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland in 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1992 there was one instance where a mechanical problem with a vehicle designed for

the transportation of nuclear weapons caused a military convoy to make an unscheduled stop while travelling in the specified area. After inspection of the vehicle, the full convoy was able to continue its journey.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the vehicle reliability performance of *(a)* Mammoth Major nuclear arms material transit vehicles and *(b)* Foden nuclear arms material transit vehicles in 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Truck Cargo Heavy Duty (TCHD) Mk 1 vehicle (Mammoth Major) has been replaced by the TCHD Mk 2. Despite some minor teething problems, the new vehicles represent a significant improvement in mechanical reliability over the Mk 1 vehicles. Both old and new vehicles provided a safe and secure means of nuclear warhead transport in 1992.

Rail Travel Warrants

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many railway journeys were made by service personnel using travel warrants in the latest available year; what was the total cost of that travel; and what were the normal BR fares charged for journeys over an equivalent aggregate distance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In financial year 1991-92 the latest year for which figures are available, 703,000 warrants were issued to service personnel. Information on the number of journeys is not available as a warrant can cover a single, return or season ticket. The total cost of this travel was £32,038,000 after discounts had been applied. Details of normal British Rail (BR) fares charged for journeys over an equivalent aggregate distance are not known. All service warrants for the year in question were charged at the normal BR fares however, to which an agreed percentage discount was applied. Season tickets were exempt from this arrangement.

Job Losses

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of jobs lost since 1990 and planned to go by 1996-97 at Ministry of Defence establishments *(a)* in Dyfed and *(b)* in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 January at column *754-55*.

Immersion Temperatures (Survival)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the length of time a person can be immersed in water at *(a)* 8 deg C, *(b)* 9 deg C, *(c)* 10 deg C, *(d)* 11 deg C, *(e)* 12 deg C, *(f)* 14 deg C, *(g)* 15 deg C and *(h)* 16 deg C before standing at least a 50 per cent. chance of becoming unconscious; and how rapidly their chances of survival in percentage terms decrease at each of those temperatures.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the 1986 report of the United Kingdom civil rescue helicopter coverage working group, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, in which years and at what cost the royal yacht Britannia has been refitted since her launch.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following is the information:

Costs of repairing and refitting HMY Britannia in Her Majesty's dockyards

Dates of refits	*Financial year*	*£000 at outturn prices*
September 1954 to December 1954	1954-55	68
October 1955 to March 1956	1955-56	100
September 1957 to January 1958	1957-58	184
November 1960 to March 1961	1960-61	218
March 1962 to January 1963	1962-63	72
December 1964 to April 1965	1964-65	333
August 1967 to November 1967	1967-68	258
August 1969 to December 1969	1969-70	481
October 1972 to July 1973	1972-73 1973-74	1,213
January 1976 to April 1976	1975-76	1,286
September 1979 to April 1980	1979-80	[1]4,990
September 1983 to March 1984	1983-84	[1]6,000
January 1987 to October 1987	1986-87 1987-88	[1]17,000
November 1991 to May 1992	1991-92 1992-93	[1]7,000

[1] Best estimates. More detailed figures can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the refit on the royal yacht Britannia in 1992 was spent on *(a)* superstructure, *(b)* engines, *(c)* royal apartments and *(d)* other.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The work carried out during Britannia's refit in 1992 can be broken down as follows:

	per cent.
Structure	24
Engines	34
Royal apartments	6
Other	36

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, on what dates and where the royal yacht Britannia has been used as a hospital ship.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Circumstances have not required Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia to fulfil the wartime role of hospital ship. In view of her age, and the availability of other more suitable vessels, it has been decided that there is no longer a requirement for Britannia to retain this role.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of the refit on the royal yacht Britannia begun in 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Approximately £17 million.

Gulf War Chartering (Fraud)

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to investigate alleged fraud in the chartering of vessels for the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence police have carried out an investigation into alleged fraudulent activity and as a result papers were passed to the crown prosecution service on 6 November 1992. The Ministry of Defence police investigations continue into certain aspects, and further comment would not be appropriate at this time.

SCOTLAND

Craftsmen

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to align the support given to craftsmen and women in Scotland with that in England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: I plan to introduce support measures to meet the special needs of individual craft makers in addition to the marketing support already provided to the crafts sector in general by Made in Scotland Ltd, set up in 1991. Following discussions with the Secretary of State for National Heritage I am arranging to make available for this purpose, through his Department, £300,000 in 1993-94. The money will be paid to the Crafts Council and the Scottish Arts Council. Through the existing mechanisms and expertise of the Crafts Council and the local resources and knowledge of the Scottish Arts Council support for individual craft makers will include: funding to equip themselves and set themselves up as small businesses; funding for training; publicity and exhibition facilities for their products on a United Kingdom basis. The details of these new arrangements, including their start date, will be publicised in due course.

Radon

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total number of houses in each regional and island authority area which may exceed *(a)* a radon level of 200 Bq/M3 and *(b)* 20 Bq/M3; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* I cannot give such an estimate. Information on radon in Scotland is contained in a report by the National Radiological Protection Board, "Radon in Dwellings in Scotland" published on 20 November 1991. Copies are available in the House Library. A further report by the board is to be published this year.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy for ensuring that disabled employees, clients and members of the public have access to all parts of *(a)* new-build and *(b)* existing buildings for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The policy is to ensure the easiest possible access for disabled people to Scottish Office buildings by providing ramps, wide access doors, internal lifts, toilets for the disabled, etc. The design of some buildings, particularly older buildings and smaller local offices, makes access difficult for those with disabilities but every effort is made to minimise these difficulties.

The proposed major new office building for the Scottish Office will be designed to meet the highest standards of provision for disabled staff and visitors.

House of Commons

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) of 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, column 415, if he will make a statement on his proposals to enhance the position of Scotland within the House of Commons.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The Government are currently taking stock of constitutional issues affecting Scotland including the handling of Scottish business in the House. The outcome will be reported to the House.

MV Braer

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans have been drawn up for compensation payments in the event of delay in the slaughter of fatstock due to contamination by toxic residues arising from the MV Braer oil spillage.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The Government have made available assistance to producers who are suffering economic hardship through a bridging fund, which will be operated for the Government by Shetland Islands council. Details of the fund's operation were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in answer to a question from the hon. Member from Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) on 21 January.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Minister for Overseas Development's recent visit to Kenya and the subjects that were discussed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development intends to visit Kenya between 5 and 8 February in conjunction with a visit to Somalia. She hopes to meet the President and other Kenyan leaders for discussions on a range of issues.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 11 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *808*, if he will estimate the number of forest dwellers that are dependent directly upon the trade in tropical timber; and if he will outline the benefits derived by the forest peoples from such trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 17 December, *Official Report*, column *467*.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will give details of the proposals put forward *(a)* directly by the Government

and *(b)* through the European Community during the British presidency concerning reform of the international tropical timber agreement;

(2) what mechanisms have been established by his Department to monitor the performance of the International Tropical Timber Organisation in attaining its target of sustainable management of tropical timber by 2000.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *127*.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 December to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), *Official Report*, column *302*, what total amount in United States dollars has been committed as the United Kingdom's full share of the interim multilateral fund to assist developing nations to phase out chlorofluorocarbons; and over what time scale he envisages this full share being achieved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The total amount committed as the United Kingdom's full share of the interim multilateral fund (known as the multilateral fund since 1 January 1993) is US $13,826,548. This will be drawn down against a disbursement profile proposed by the fund managers up to the financial year 1995-96.

Guinea Bissau

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many aid programmes are being undertaken in Guinea Bissau; and what is their nature.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We assist Guinea Bissau mainly through our contributions to the aid programmes of multilateral development institutions. For example, the European Community has an indicative aid programme of 42 mecu (about £32 million) for Guinea Bissau for 1990-95: our share amounts to over 16 per cent. We also support the work of United Kingdom NGOs in Guinea Bissau and make available modest funds through the non-resident British ambassador for gifts with a developmental or welfare purpose.

Aid (Contracts)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to link the overseas aid budget more directly with contracts of various kinds with British companies in addition to the existing criteria for aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Around 70 per cent. of our bilateral aid commitments (£934 million in 1991) are tied to British goods and services. In addition we estimate that for every £1 we commit to multilateral agencies (£918 million in 1991) an average of £1·40 is spent on British goods and services. We have no plans to tie a greater proportion of our bilateral aid.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if tobacco curing operations carried out in relation to Commonwealth Development Corporation-supported investments in the Rusitu region of Zimbabwe have used charcoal produced locally from natural and semi-natural forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Decisions relating to the appraisal, implementation and monitoring of individual investments are the responsibility of the board of the CDC. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member on the specific question he has asked and will arrange for copies of his letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what activities are supported by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in the Rusitu region of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* In the Rusitu region the Commonwealth Development Corporation has investments in enterprises producing milk, beef, coffee, tea, macadamia nuts and arable crops (primarily maize). The Commonwealth Development Corporation has also supported smalholder tea and dairy farming in the region.

International Development and Co-operation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy initiatives he is planning to undertake in the next six months to promote international development and co-operation; what meetings he is planning to attend; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* We shall continue our efforts to promote international co-operation and sustainable economic and social development, and to reduce poverty. With our European Community colleagues we shall undertake further work on improving the co-ordination of European Community development policy, as agreed at last November's Development Council.

We are working for effective follow-up to the United Nations conference on the environment and development last June, including the first meeting of the Sustainable Development Commission this summer. We shall continue to press for a satisfactory conclusion to the GATT Uruguay round. We shall also work for resolution of conflicts and the relief of suffering, particularly in Somalia and the former republics of Yugoslavia.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development plan to attend meetings with European Community, G7 and developing country partners, including the economic summit in Tokyo.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policies the Commonwealth Development Corporation has regarding minimum standards for the conditions of workers employed as a result of investment it supports.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* It is the Commonwealth Development Corporation's policy to make investments only when it is satisfied that employment policies are in accordance with good local

practice. While the Commonwealth Development Corporation remains an investor it uses its influence to ensure that such good employment practices are maintained.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on aid to Sierra Leone.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced in Abuja (Nigeria) on 5 January 1993 that in response to the summary execution of at least 26 alleged coup-plotters on 29-30 December we would suspend all new aid to Sierra Leone, withdraw our existing offer of £4 million in balance of payments support and consider what further measures might be taken, for example, on the future of existing projects.

Our emergency relief aid, to help those displaced in the region as a result of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean crises, will continue.

Mahogany

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from members of the British timber trade regarding the circumstances of mahogany production in the Amazon rain forests of Brazil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* We have received information from the Timber Trade Federation (TTF) and M&N Norman Timber Ltd. about claims that British imports of Brazilian mahogany comes from illegal logging in indigenous peoples' lands. A TTF representative is visiting Brazil from 1 to 6 February to hold discussions with relevant Brazilian authorities to seek assurances that imported timber is not obtained illegally or in a manner which infringes indigenous peoples' rights.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Savoury Snack Food

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has now concluded its review of VAT on savoury snack food; and what is the result of its inquiry.

Sir John Cope: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is still consulting the trade but expects to complete its review by the end of February.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the basis upon which market testing is currently taking place in relation to the secretarial services provided to the Inland Revenue in the South Western area, including Southampton.

Mr. Dorrell: As part of the programme that we have agreed, the Inland Revenue is market testing typing and secretarial services in its South Western region. In doing so, it will compare the service provided by its own staff with tenders to be sought from external providers on the basis of the best combination of quality and price. Southampton does not fall within the Inland Revenue's South West regional area.

Pension Funds

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the tax yield from taxes imposed on surpluses in pension funds in excess of 105 per cent. of their liability in each year since the tax was introduced;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for the latest year the numbers of pension schemes proposing a contribution holiday to reduce a pension fund surplus in accordance with the Finance Act 1986;

(3) what information he has concerning the extent of occupational pension scheme contribution holidays being taken by employers or employees.

Mr. Dorrell: Statutory rules for dealing with actuarial surpluses in occupational pension schemes were introduced in the Finance Act 1986 and took effect from 6 April 1987.

Estimates of tax deducted from payments of surplus funds to employers for 1987-88 to 1991-92 are shown in table 6·9 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1992". The provisional estimate for 1992-93 is £135 million.

Available information on occupational scheme contribution holidays is shown in table 6·8 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1992".

Mr. J. Oliver

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects a reply to be sent to the letter sent by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Financial Secretary on 27 October 1992, about Mr. J. Oliver of Alnmouth, Northumberland.

Mr. Dorrell: I replied on Thursday 28 January.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take in 1993 to fulfil the requirements of the Maastricht treaty in respect of moving to stage 2 of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* The requirements for action by member states before stage 2 begins are set out in article 109e(2)(a) of the Maastricht treaty and the Government will meet the requirements, as qualified by the provisions of the United Kingdom protocol to the treaty.

Article 109e(2)(a) obliges member states to abolish restrictions on capital movements, to cease borrowing from central banks, to end the privileged access of public bodies to financial institutions and, if necessary, to adopt multiannual convergence programmes for assessment by the Council. Since the United Kingdom Government have no restrictions on capital movements, fund their borrowing each year by sales of debt to the private sector, have no privileged access to financial institutions, and regularly adopt a multiannual economic programme in the medium term financial strategy, this will not involve significant changes to current policies or monetary arrangements. But it may be necessary to make some technical changes to the methods of issuing Government debt instruments.

Transport Infrastructure Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his consultations with the chairman of the European investment bank regarding the balance between public and private sector investment expenditure on transport infrastructure.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* I have not had any such consultations.

Queen (Tax)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to complete the arrangements for Her Majesty the Queen to pay tax by the start of the next financial year.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* I refer the right hon. Member to the written answer from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today at column *47*.

PRIME MINISTER

Maastricht (Social Chapter)

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the amendments and additions to the social chapter of the treaty of Rome proposed by the social chapter of the treaty of Maastricht to which Her Majesty's Government do not assent.

The Prime Minister: The social chapter of the treaty of Rome will remain entirely unchanged after ratification of the treaty on European union. At Maastricht I made it clear to our Community partners that I was not prepared to accept treaty changes to the social chapter which would have increased industry's costs and jeopardised the jobs of British employees.

On this basis the United Kingdom will continue to play a full part in sensible Community action on social affairs and to resist measures which would prove damaging to British industry.

India

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Prime Minister what representations were made to him during his visit to India about the proposals of his Government to remove the right of appeal from visitors refused leave to visit the United Kingdom from India.

The Prime Minister: The Indian Prime Minister and I discussed our proposals and I was able to explain to him the reasons for our proposals.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will name the industrialists who accompanied him on his visit to India and the companies they represent.

The Prime Minister: The names are as follows:
Sir Brian Shaw, ANZ Grindlays Bank plc.
Mr. Roger Mabey, Bovis International Ltd.
Mr. Richard Evans, British Aerospace plc.
Mr. Norman Davis, British American Tobacco Co. Ltd.
Mr. Robert Evans, British Gas plc.
Mr. Norman Hawkins, Cadbury Schweppes plc.
Mr. Patrick MacDougall, Chartered West LB Ltd.
Mr. G. Douglas Gadd, GEC Alsthom Ltd.
Mr. Richard Reynolds, GPT Ltd.
Mr. Brian Baldock, Guinness plc.
Mr. Philip Daubeny, ICI plc.
Mr. Andrew Cummins, Inchcape plc.
Mr. Graham Hadley, National Power plc.
Dr. Terry Harrison, Rolls Royce plc.
Mr. Philip Hills, Samual Montagu and Co. Ltd.
Mr. Peter Grant, Sun Life Assurance Society plc.
Mr. Howard Davies, Confederation of British Industry

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he took to raise concerns expressed by British citizens at the destruction of the Babri mosque during his recent visit to India; and what was the response.

The Prime Minister: During my recent visit to India, I had a long discussion with the Indian Prime Minister about the situation in India following the destruction of the Babri mosque. I also restated our support for the principles of India's secular democracy, rule of law, tolerance and protection of minorities.

Terrorist Attacks

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of co-operation between the British Army and the authorities of the Republic of Ireland in dealing with terrorist attacks launched from within the Republic of Ireland.

The Prime Minister: There is very effective co-operation between the security forces in Northern Ireland and those in the Republic of Ireland. Both Governments recognise the importance of keeping existing measures under review, and that further improvements can be made wherever practicable.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what benefits he expects to accrue to pensioners in the United Kingdom from the European Year of Older People launched on 25 January.

The Prime Minister: The Year will bring lasting benefits for older people in the United Kingdom, and I was particularly pleased to welcome the initiative during our presidency of the European Council. In collaboration with many organisations we are managing a substantial programme of initiatives, connected with the initiative, focusing on four main themes: combating ageism, volunteering, health promotion and active leisure, and social and environmental integration. The programme is designed to secure the involvement of older people themselves, professionals who work with them, and the general public. I hope that many people will play a part. The outcome will be improved understanding between the generations and an increasing recognition of the vital part older people have to play in our society.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Trend: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish an updated list of ministerial standing and ad hoc committees of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister: All the ministerial Cabinet Committees I listed in my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 19 May 1992 at column *110* are still in existence. In addition one Standing Committee and one ad hoc group have been established,

and their membership and terms of reference are given below. Copies of the revised list, which includes minor revisions to the membership of existing Committees, are available in the Library of the House.

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EXPENDITURE (EDX)

Composition

Chancellor of the Exchequer *(chairman)*
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Lord Privy Seal
Lord President of the Council
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of Reference

"To consider the allocation of the public expenditure control totals and make recommendations to the Cabinet".

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON REFUGEES FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA (GEN 24)

Composition

Secretary of State for the Home Department *(chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
The Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Social Security
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Attorney General
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Minister for Overseas Development)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office

The Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will also receive papers and be invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference

"To consider whether a visa regime should be instituted for citizens of former Yugoslavia in the context of the Government's overall policy towards that region and to review the practical arrangements for the reception and subsequent support of those arriving in the United Kingdom from this area taking account of the implications for the treatment of refugees from other parts of the world, and to report to Cabinet."

Queen (Tax)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will report on the up to date position regarding the tax arrangements for the Queen.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Discussions are continuing between the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the royal household. I will make a statement shortly about the arrangements for the tax year commencing 6 April 1993.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals for legislation to extend the range of offences which apply to the misuse of imitation firearms, following recommendations by the Firearms consultative committee.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The committee's recommendation to extend the range of offences which apply to the misuse of imitation firearms will be implemented at a suitable legislative opportunity.

Hillsborough

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason the local major disaster plan was not implemented in respect of the Hillsborough disaster.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the police initiated their major disaster plan at or shortly after 3.06 pm (paragraphs 96 and 252 of the Interim Report into the Hillsborough Stadium Disaster (Cm. 765)).

Police (Rechargeable Services)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 the total income received for rechargeable services and the percentage this represented for each force of their total income.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Separate information on income received by police forces in England and Wales for rechargeable services is not collected centrally. Income from fees and charges is shown in the table (of which income from rechargeable services is a main component) and as a percentage of total income other than central government grant and local authority finance.

1981-82 and 1991-92 Police Fees and Charges Income expressed as a Percentage of Total Income—England and Wales

Police Authority	*1981-82 Fees and Charges Income* £	*1981-82 Fees and Charges as Percentage of Total Income*	*1991-92 Fees and Charges Income* £	*1991-92 Fees and Charges as Percentage of Total Income*
Avon and Somerset	537,281	15·0	5,683,869	42·9
Bedfordshire	149,697	9·5	1,611,714	28·0
Cambridgeshire	174,520	9·1	2,775,513	51·5
Cheshire	162,618	6·0	625,711	5·3
Cleveland	277,216	15·3	393,431	8·1
Cumbria	368,432	24·4	1,408,873	33·0
Derbyshire	171,759	7·7	1,955,326	26·7
Devon and Cornwall	636,094	20·4	1,450,048	14·4
Dorset	124,315	8·1	324,383	6·9
Durham	103,579	2·2	1,552,497	23·5
Essex	224,736	4·9	586,790	4·3
Gloucestershire	169,952	15·5	484,094	13·0
Hampshire	338,137	8·9	754,269	7·4

Police Authority	1981-82 Fees and Charges Income £	1981-82 Fees and Charges as Percentage of Total Income	1991-92 Fees and Charges Income £	1991-92 Fees and Charges as Percentage of Total Income
Hertfordshire	223,766	11·4	596,465	9·1
Humberside	307,190	11·4	559,751	7·7
Kent	382,645	9·1	1,117,164	9·6
Lancashire	382,157	7·7	7,116,995	51·3
Leicestershire	172,695	8·2	539,558	6·0
Lincolnshire	268,179	14·4	2,959,043	42·7
Norfolk	202,442	9·9	1,777,168	32·1
Northamptonshire	92,228	5·3	463,554	9·2
North Yorkshire	243,591	10·7	623,292	8·9
Nottinghamshire	224,248	7·0	1,924,424	21·7
Staffordshire	465,030	12·5	1,610,044	22·3
Suffolk	205,486	13·9	448,902	8·9
Surrey	211,643	7·9	2,364,356	38·1
Sussex	419,199	5·4	1,481,460	6·3
Thames Valley	437,266	8·2	6,522,527	38·4
Warwickshire	379,530	33·9	403,739	9·3
West Mercia	301,488	9·5	3,668,148	42·4
Wiltshire	214,823	14·1	444,907	10·0
Greater Manchester	600,625	6·1	28,290,410	63·1
Merseyside	947,739	9·3	4,543,909	15·1
Northumbria	359,206	8·0	8,086,496	49·0
South Yorkshire	1,125,144	29·6	4,981,306	36·5
West Midlands	1,059,067	9·1	8,165,880	30·8
West Yorkshire	450,409	8·4	2,858,562	8·8
City of London	232,618	14·5	862,945	21·0
Metropolitan Police	1,017,044	1·0	62,429,000	28·3
Dyfed-Powys	125,720	9·7	2,134,599	43·3
Gwent	54,499	4·0	200,696	5·4
North Wales	245,460	17·5	305,716	5·3
South Wales	244,974	5·8	5,574,920	42·7
Total	15,034,447	6·1	182,662,454	27·0

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number, title and date of publication of all reports issued by the National Audit Office on the Metropolitan police since 1987.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There have been two reports:

"Home Office: Control and Management of the Metropolitan Police Estate", published 22 June 1989, HC 455 of 1988-89.

"Reducing Crime in London: A study of the partnership and other methods used by five Metropolitan Divisions", published 25 February 1992, HC 270 of 1991-92.

Fingerprinting

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken by police forces in England and Wales to improve the effectiveness of their fingerprint departments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The effectiveness of fingerprint departments is being improved by the development of quality assurance measures and performance indicators to ensure the best use of resources and staffing; by the enhancement of training brought about by the establishment of a national training school at Durham; and by the introduction of automated fingerprint recognition equipment in the majority of fingerprint bureaux.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the projected cost of the proposed national automatic fingerprinting recognition system when it is expected to be in service; how it will be financed; what advantages the proposed system has over the fingerprint file put into operation by a consortium involving police forces in England and Wales; and what consideration he gave to adopting the consortium fingerprint file as the national system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The national automated fingerprint identification system is expected to have cost some £45 million by the time that it comes into service in 1996-97. It will be financed as a common police service. Because it is being designed specifically to meet national requirements and because it will incorporate more up-to-date technology, the NAFIS will offer advantages of cost, accuracy, and reliability over any system which is at present in use in the United Kingdom. Under the established rules of government procurement, a system of this size must be the subject of an open competition. It will be open to all suppliers, including those of the consortium system, to bid for the contract.

Immigration

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the planned dates of meeting of the ad hoc immigration group and its sub-groups; and what will be the subject matter of its meetings.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Danish presidency has provisionally allocated a total of 38 days to meetings of the ad hoc working group on immigration and its sub-groups, as follows:

Nature of meeting	Date of meeting
Asylum sub-group	15 January 1993
Ad hoc immigration group	19 to 20 January 1993
Asylum sub-group	26 to 27 January 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	29 January 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	3 February 1993
External frontiers sub-group	5 February 1993
Asylum sub-group	10 February 1993
Sub-group meeting to be confirmed	18 February 1993
Asylum sub-group	4 to 5 March 1993
Visa sub-group	8 March 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group (am)	11 to 12 March 1993
Forged documents sub-group (pm)	12 March 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	22 March 1993
Asylum sub-group	24 March 1993
External frontiers sub-group	29 March 1993
Visa sub-group	30 March 1993
Sub-group meeting to be confirmed	31 March 1993
Ad hoc immigration group	1 to 2 April 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	6 April 1993
External frontiers sub-group	7 April 1993
Asylum sub-group	21 April 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	23 April 1993
Sub-group meeting to be confirmed	28 April 1993
Asylum sub-group	30 April 1993
Admission/expulsions sub-group	4 May 1993
Ad hoc immigration group	13 to 14 May 1993
Asylum sub-group	24 May 1993
Sub-group meeting(s) to be confirmed	25 to 26 May 1993
Sub-group meeting to be confirmed	10 June 1993
Visa sub-group	14 June 1993
Forged documents sub-group	16 June 1993
Asylum sub-group	18 June 1993

It will be for the Danish presidency to determine the precise agenda for each of these meetings as they arise. In general terms, however, the presidency has indicated that the groups will continue work currently in hand under the immigration and asylum work programme agreed by Ministers at the end of the Dutch presidency in December 1991, including discussions on admission for the purpose of family reunification, admission for the purpose of employment and self-employment, harmonisation of asylum procedures and measures to combat illegal immigration. The presidency has also indicated that the asylum and external frontiers sub-groups will continue work on the preparatory measures required for implementation of the Dublin asylum convention and the draft convention on external frontiers.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the British representatives who will participate in the ad hoc group on immigration and the sub-groups which will operate during the period of the Danish presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The United Kingdom delegation to meetings of the ad hoc working group on immigration will be led by Mr. A. R. Rawsthorne, an Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office.

The United Kingdom delegation to meetings of sub-groups will be headed by other senior officers of the immigration and nationality department, as follows:

Sub-group	Heads of United Kingdom delegation
Admissions-expulsion	Mr. N. R. Varney-Mr. C. B. Manchip
Asylum	Mr. J. Casey
External frontiers	Mr. N. R. Varney
Forged documents	Mr. C. B. Manchip
Visa	Mr. R. G. Yates
Yugoslavia (special sub-group)	Mr. A. Cunningham

Heads of delegation will be assisted by other officers of the immigration and nationality department, and of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Government Departments, as the business requires.

Women Police Officers

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that women police officers should have the best available equipment to defend themselves from assault in the execution of their duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Decisions about the purchase and issue of equipment are matters for chief officers. My right hon. and learned Friend would expect all officers to be provided with the best protective equipment available which is appropriate to the situation.

Prisoners (Training)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have received national vocational qualifications from their vocational training in prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the nine months up to December 1992, more than 1,000 prisoners had been registered with national vocational qualification (NVQ) awarding bodies, 276 had gained full NVQs and over 3,400 units towards full NVQs had been accredited. Prisoners do, of course, gain NVQs through work and other regime activities as well as through vocational training.

WPC Kirsty Snellgrove

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Essex concerning the assault on 25 January on WPC Kirsty Snellgrove.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The investigation of criminal offences is an operational matter for the chief constable.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has on the level of juvenile re-offending after cautions or non-custodial sentences have been passed on such offenders, in the latest convenient period.

Mr. Jack: Information on this is available firstly from a sample study of juveniles during 1985 and is given in the table. The figures are subject to sampling error. More information on this study is given in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin (HOSB) "Criminal histories of those cautioned in 1985 and 1988".

Secondly, information is also available from sample studies of cohorts born in certain years. Of those born in 1953, 1958 or 1963 who were convicted of an offence before they were 16 and given a non-custodial sentence at their first conviction, 35 per cent. were reconvicted of

another offence within two years. More information is available in HOSB 7/85 "Criminal careers of those born in 1953, 1958 and 1963", and results from both studies are regularly updated. Copies of statistical bulletins are available in the Library of the House.

Number of juveniles cautioned in 1985 and proportion convicted within two years

	Percentage convicted	*Number cautioned*[1]
Under 14	11	834
Age 14–16	16	1,327
Under 17	14	2,161

[1] = 100 per cent.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Boundary Commission is expected to commence its inquiries for a review of the European parliamentary constituencies in Essex and to make recommendations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the provisions of the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, the boundary commission for England is required to begin its revision of all European parliamentary constituencies in England, including those in Essex, when its current general reviews of constituencies for our Parliament has been completed, and an Order in Council has been made implementing the recommendations.

The target for completing that review has been set by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992 as 31 December 1994.

We shall, however, need to make some special arrangements, in time for the June 1994 European parliamentary elections, to give effect to the decision of the European Council to increase the number of seats for the United Kingdom by six. The Government are developing proposals on how best that might be done.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners were held in police stations in Greater Manchester on 22 January; what were the comparable numbers over the last two years; how many are being held in police cells in adjacent police forces; what progress is being made to phase out Operation Container; and when he now expects it to end.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 22 January, 202 prisoners were held in police stations in Greater Manchester. Figures for prisoners held by Greater Manchester police since April 1990 are given in the table, together with the national figures.

Date	*Number of prisoners held by Greater Manchester police*	*All forces*
1 April 1990	0	0
1 August 1990	329	790
12 December 1990	283	814
1 April 1991	245	835
1 August 1991	169	1,150
1 December 1991	217	1,677
1 April 1992	271	1,825
1 August 1992	244	1,065
1 December 1992	210	367

On 22 January, Merseyside police held 28 prisoners and Lancashire police held six prisoners.

The number of prisoners held nationally on 29 January (the latest date for which figures are available) was 166, of which 161 were held by the Greater Manchester police and five by the Merseyside police. This represents a dramatic improvement in the national police cells position, although the burden on the Greater Manchester police continues. The reduction of the number in police cells to the current level has involved transferring large numbers of sentenced prisoners from the area to establishments elsewhere in the north and Midlands. The next step will involve substantial movement of prisoners awaiting trial although the prison service recognises that this would affect other criminal justice agencies. It is therefore not yet possible to say exactly when Operation Container will be closed, but the prison service hopes to reach that position in the near future.

United States Citizens

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his practice that his Department should not provide any information it holds on a citizen of the United States of America standing for elected office without the Home Secretary's personal approval.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I do not propose to vary the policy explained in my answer of 14 January to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), *Official Report*, columns *793-94*.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what efforts were made by his Department during the inquiry into Shamrock (GB) Ltd. to contact the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The inquiry into Shamrock (GB) Ltd. was undertaken following the "World in Action" programme shown last June, and in the light of two reports and other video material sent to the Home Office by the BUAV in July. The Home Office took the view that the BUAV would not have withheld any relevant information, and did not feel that anything would be gained by discussing the material further with the BUAV.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about possible irregularities in study 161/212 on primates at Hazleton UK; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 15 December at column *100*.

The case involving monkeys was one of a number of specific research projects using primates, the purpose or the methodology of which were queried by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in the context of its allegations about Shamrock (GB) Ltd. and Hazleton UK. The Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate has now examined the points made by the BUAV, and its observations will shortly be considered by the animal procedures committee.

Public Alert System

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the need for a public alert system to warn the public of emergencies and disasters; and what system is to be installed following the dismantlement of the siren system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Future national arrangements for warning the public will be based on the use of television and radio broadcasts. Local arrangements are the responsibility of the authorities in the areas concerned. Home Office officials are holding discussions with local authorities in whose areas the siren system formed part of local warning arrangements.

Prison Service Agency

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the responsibilities of the planned prison service agency will be in relation to private sector involvement in the management of prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have decided that when the prison service becomes an executive agency on 1 April it should assume full responsibility for taking forward Government policy on the involvement of the private sector in the management of prisons. The framework document and corporate and business plans for the agency will reflect this position.

The objective of the agency will be to raise standards and secure better value for money throughout the prison system. I envisage an increased role for the private sector in the management of prisons in order to provide an effective source of competition, new ideas and comparison for the management of the public sector prison service. The agency will make recommendations to me later this year on the extent, form and timetable for private sector involvement. In the interim, further existing establishments will be identified for market testing.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Doncaster (Development Area Status)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it remains his policy that the Doncaster travel-to-work area will be upgraded to development area status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Coal Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning coal exports arising from his recently launched initiative encouraging more British companies to export to Europe.

Mr. Eggar: The reports of the independent consultants John T Boyd and Caminus Energy, published on 22 January, comment on the potential for coal exports. The Government will be considering that issue as part of the coal review. The Business in Europe programme recently announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade offers a range of help to businesses which have the capability of exporting to Europe.

197. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the future of the coal industry social welfare organisation indoor and outdoor schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have received a number of representations concerning the future of coal industry social welfare arrangements, including such schemes.

We are giving careful consideration to the important and sensitive issues involved.

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account was taken of *(a)* the Her Majesty's inspector of pollution licensing procedure laid down in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and *(b)* the EC directive on the public availability of environmental information by his Department when deciding to maintain the confidentiality of licensing applications for oil and gas exploration in *(a)* the Bristol channel and *(b)* Cardigan bay.

Mr. Eggar: *(a)* The licensing procedure laid down in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 does not relate to the award of oil and gas licences.

(b) Applications for exploration and production licences are made under The Petroleum (Production) (Seaward Areas) Regulations 1988 and contain commercially confidential information, a ground for refusing disclosure under Article 3 of the directive.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require environmental impact assessments for all offshore licensing block applications in the 14th round which are within 25 miles of offshore islands within United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Eggar: The consultation procedure which preceded the announcement of blocks available for licensing in the 14th Round enabled environmental bodies to identify all blocks which require environmental assessment at the exploration stage, including any within 25 miles of offshore islands within United Kingdom waters. Companies proposing to operate in such blocks would need to provide an environmental impact statement for assessment before approval could be given to develop any oil or gas discovery.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the conduct of environmental impact assessments for allocated blocks for offshore licensing within the 14th round; and what opportunity experts on coastal and offshore environmental matters and the general public will have to scrutinise such assessments prior to the granting of licences.

Mr. Eggar: Companies are subject to the environmental impact assessment procedure before approval can be given to develop any offshore oil or gas discovery, where this is required in the special conditions attached to their licence.

Companies awarded licences in the 14th round will be required to liaise with the environmental and fisheries bodies consulted prior to the block's release for licensing, and with certain other local and national organisations where appropriate, as well as with the Department of

Trade and Industry, with regard to the nature and conduct of any environmental assessment required under the special conditions attached to individual blocks. Such assessments may be required before seismic surveying or before exploration drilling, depending on the sensitivities of the block identified during the consultation process.

Such conditions are, however, attached to licences when they are granted. The completed assessment will be circulated to the liaison bodies and may be revised in the light of their comments. It would then be used to inform the licensee's activities in the block on matters such as seasonal restrictions on exploration, choice of drilling location, mud formulation to be used, etc.

At present there is no requirement for wider publication of this information, although some existing licensees have made such material more widely available under the Access to Environmental Information Act 1992, the general public will be able to seek access to such information where is has been required under legislation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what considerations underlay the decision to limit the requirement for environmental impact assessment under the 14th round of offshore licensing block allocations to blocks within 25 miles of the coast and blocks within designated environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Eggar: During the consultation procedure carried out before any blocks were released for licensing in the 14th offshore round, the views of a number of relevant bodies were sought with regard to environmental conditions to be attached to all the areas nominated by the industry as being of interest. Those consulted included the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and their regional equivalents, together with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and a number of other non-statutory bodies representing, for example, fisheries interests.

The views of these organisations were the basis of the list of indicative conditions for the 14th round blocks circulated to the industry, a copy of which has recently been placed in the Library of the House. In sensitive areas, these require the licensee to liaise with the advisory bodies; in the most sensitive areas, those bodies may require the licensee to carry out an environmental assessment before exploration commences.

Since the 11th round, areas within 25 miles of the coast have been recognised as those where fisheries, wildlife and tourism interests are likely to be most intensive and hence in greatest need of protection through such special conditions. The consultation procedure which precedes the announcement of any licensing round enables the bodies listed to draw attention to any areas outside this zone which may require similar conditions to be attached, as well as to any areas within the zone which are particularly vulnerable.

Post Office

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the results of the review of the Post Office initiated in June 1992.

Mr. Leigh: The Post Office review was announced on 29 July 1992. The review is not yet completed. A statement will be made to the House in due course.

Biofuels

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action is currently undertaken by his Department to promote the use and production of biofuels.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* The Department of Trade and Industry stimulates the development and use of renewable sources of energy, including biofuels, wherever they have the prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. Our programme includes work on dry agricultural wastes such as straw—a precursor for energy crops such as short rotation arable coppice and miscanthus. Recent reports on this work include "The Development of Compacted Straw Fuel, ETSU B 1189"; "Short Rotation Arable Energy Forestry, Technology Summary 048"; and "The Potential of Miscanthus as a Fuel Crop, ETSU B 1354". These reports have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and are available from the renewable energy inquiries bureau at the energy technology support unit, telephone (0235) 432450.

Electricity

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the distribution of subsidies to the electricity supply industry within the United Kingdom under the 20 per cent. EC guidelines.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* It is for the European Commission to interpret its guidelines, which are not part of Community law, as it sees fit from time to time. All state aid to the energy sector has been notified to the Commission.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Listed Buildings

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what was the planned expenditure in each financial year from 1992-93 onwards by English Heritage regarding listed buildings in Greater London to the present date;

(2) what was *(a)* the amount allocated to English Heritage or its predecessor bodies regarding listed buildings in Greater London and *(b)* the amount spent, for each financial year from 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage's London region has been responsible for a varying range of duties, including archaeology and conservation areas, in addition to listed building work, since April 1986. The figures for each year are not directly comparable as the region's activities and responsibilities have developed and altered over recent years. The following total amounts were allocated by English Heritage to the work of London region, in the financial years 1986-87 to 1992-93:

	Amount allocated (£ million)	*Amount spent (£ million)*
1986-87	5·9	4·3
1987-88	5·9	6·2
1988-89	6·5	6·4
1989-90	6·9	6·4
1990-91	6·7	6·8

	Amount allocated (£ million)	Amount spent (£ million)
1991-92	5·8	5·7
1992-93	5·5	[1]

[1] Not yet available.

EMPLOYMENT

Genetically Modified Material

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many premises were licensed for the use and processing of genetically modified material in 1990, 1991 and 1992; how many on-site inspections were carried out in each of those years; how many premises were discovered using such material without a licence in each of those years; and what action was taken.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no legal requirements for a licence to use premises for genetic modification work but under the Genetic Manipulation Regulations 1989, persons are required to notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) of an intention to do so.

The information required is as follows:

Year	Active centres	HSE inspections	Centres failing to notify	Notices issued
1990	351	100	2	[1]5
1991	400	70	1	[2]2
1992	445	121	2	[2]1

[1] Improvement.
[2] Prohibition.

All the notices were served on the centres which had failed to notify. In 1992, work was stopped at both sites which had not notified. A prohibition notice was issued at one; the second complied with the requirements before enforcement action was completed.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received regarding the level of funding for TECs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received representations from a number of sources about the levels of funding for TECs. I am satisfied that TECs will have sufficient resources to carry out the objectives agreed in their business plan.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the bonus points awarded to each TEC.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table lists the TECs successful in gaining awards in performance-related funding during 1991-92 and gives the number of bonus points earned by each TEC.

TEC name	Bonus points
Barnsley/Doncaster	2·5
Bolton/Bury	2·0
Bradford	1·0
Calderdale/Kirklees	4·0
CAMBSTEC	1·0
Central London	0·5
Devon and Cornwall	1·0
Dorset	3·0
ELTEC	2·0
Gloucestershire	1·0
HAWTEC	2·0
Isle of Wight	0·5
Leeds	1·0
Lincolnshire	3·0
Milton Keynes	1·0
Northumberland	4·0
North Yorkshire	2·0
North West London	0·5
Rochdale	2·0
Rotherham	1·0
Sheffield	1·0
Shropshire	1·0
South and East Cheshire	2·0
Stockport/High Peak	4·0
Sussex	0·5
Teesside	2·0
Thames Valley	1·5
Tyneside	1·0
Wakefield	1·0
West London	1·0
Wolverhampton	0·5

Job Creation, Birmingham

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in the Birmingham area in the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates for local areas are available only from the biennial census of employment. The latest results relate to 1989; estimates for 1991 will be published in April. Over the two years to September 1989 there was a net increase of 30,400 employees in employment in the Birmingham travel-to-work area.

Business Education Partnership

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the national increase or decrease in the budget for the education business partnership for 1993-94 compared with 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: The national budget for education business partnerships for 1993-94 is £2 million, compared with £2·4 million in 1992-93.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the increase or decrease in real terms of the average unit price for youth training in 1993-94 relative to 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not able to provide a comparison of the average unit prices for YT in 1993-94 and in 1992-93 as the 1993-94 price subject of negotiation between the Department and training and enterprise councils. It is estimated that the average unit price for YT in 1992-93 will turn out to be £2,630.

Trade Unions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the extra work required by employers as a result of clause 11 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Clause 11 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill gives individuals a greater right to belong to the union of their choice. There is no reason why this measure should entail any extra work for employers.

Training for Work

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the increase or decrease in the national budget for training for work between 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is unable to provide a direct comparison of planned expenditure on training for work in 1993-94 and 1992-93 as training for work does not begin until 1 April 1993. Details of planned expenditure in 1993-94 will be published in the 1993 departmental report.

In 1992-93 the equivalent training and work experience programmes for adults are employment training and employment action. In 1992-93 planned expenditure for Great Britain on employment training is £807 million and on employment action is £178 million.

Construction Sites (Injuries)

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in how many cases of fatal injury on construction sites in the north-west the victim's identity was unknown for (i) employees, (ii) self-employed and (iii) members of the public in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive has no knowledge of any cases of fatal injuries on construction sites in the north-west during the last five years where the victim's identity was unknown.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful criminal prosecutions took place in each of the last five years as a result of investigations into deaths and major injuries on construction sites in the north-west; and what information he has on how many police investigations were undertaken into deaths and major injuries on such sites in the north-west in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the number of successful and unsuccessful prosecutions taken by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following investigations into fatal and major injuries on construction sites is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HSE does not formally record information on the number of investigations carried out by the police.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average *(a)* fine and/or *(b)* prison sentence for successful prosecutions following (i) deaths and (ii) major injuries on construction sites in the north west in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of (i) hypothermia, (ii) frostbite and (iii) immersion foot were reported on construction sites in the north-west in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Hazardous Substances

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many investigations have been undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive in the north-west under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 in each year since their introduction.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available. Health and Safety Executive field staff monitor compliance with COSHH at premises for which HSE has enforcement responsibility during the course of visits made for a variety of purposes including, for example, preventive inspections and the investigation of complaints, accidents and dangerous occurrences.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people in the London East TEC area seeking a youth training place have received a firm offer.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the total number of young people seeking a YT place who have not had a firm offer is not available.

London East TEC, in common with all TECs, has been asked to use its best endeavours to ensure that it is bringing all its available resources to bear on providing places for young people who are covered by the YT guarantee.

Wages Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff of the wages inspectorate operate in Wales; and how many are office-based in Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are four wages inspectors operating in Wales. Since 1987 wages inspection in Wales has been administered from offices based in Manchester and Bristol.

Wages

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms in Wales have been found to be paying below minimum rates set by wages councils in each of the last 10 years; what is the amount of money calculated to be owed to employees in each of these years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information is provided in the following table.

Wales—Wages Inspection

Year	*Number of establishments underpaying*	*Amount of arrears assessed* £
1982	821	225,486
1983	722	209,493
1984	534	164,156

Year	Number of establishments underpaying	Amount of arrears assessed £
1985	609	198,466
1986	500	210,118
1987	309	101,247
1988	446	100,294
1989	374	112,467
1990	506	150,424
1991	619	271,135

European Agency for Health and Safety at Work

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration has been given to Merseyside as a suitable location for the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's view is that the case for such an agency has yet to be clearly demonstrated. A number of possible United Kingdom locations were considered in 1990 in connection with a possible United Kingdom bid to host an agency; Liverpool was amongst these.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide the latest figures for numbers of full-time employees on adult rates in *(a)* Greater Manchester, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* Cheshire, *(d)* Lancashire and *(e)* the north-west region whose weekly earnings excluding overtime were less than £200 and less than £190 under the headings: manual males, non-manual males and all full-time males; manual females, non-manual females, and all full-time females, giving total numbers of employees in the sample in each case; and what is the number of part-time employees on adult rates in (i) Greater Manchester, (ii) Merseyside, (iii) Cheshire, (iv) Lancashire and (v) the north-west region whose hourly earnings excluding overtime were less than £5·40 and less than £4·80 under the following headings: manual females, non-manual females and all part-time females; manual males, non-manual males and all part-time males, giving total number of employees in the sample in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information available from the "New Earnings Survey" is provided in the following tables. No relevant information is available on part-time men.

Full-time employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey pay period

Percentage with average gross weekly earnings (excluding overtime) below the following amounts: April 1992

	£190		£200	
	Sample number	Per cent.	Sample number	Per cent.
Manual men				
Greater Manchester	592	35·2	713	42·4
Merseyside	246	32·8	291	38·7
Cheshire	229	32·4	268	37·9
Lancashire	377	40·5	449	48·2
North West	1,444	35·5	1,721	42·3
Non-manual men				
Greater Manchester	274	14·9	317	17·2
Merseyside	122	15·2	156	19·4
Cheshire	73	9·8	87	11·7
Lancashire	147	16·3	177	19·6
North West	616	14·4	737	17·2
All men				
Greater Manchester	866	24·6	1,030	29·3
Merseyside	368	23·7	447	28·7
Cheshire	302	20·8	355	24·5
Lancashire	524	28·6	626	34·2
North West	2,060	24·7	2,458	29·4
Manual Women				
Greater Manchester	315	81·0	333	85·6
Merseyside	107	72·8	119	81·0
Cheshire	108	78·3	114	82·6
Lancashire	172	80·8	184	86·4
North West	702	79·1	750	84·6
Non-manual women				
Greater Manchester	677	41·1	789	47·8
Merseyside	344	42·8	396	49·3
Cheshire	247	40·6	282	46·4
Lancashire	306	41·4	363	49·1
North West	1,574	41·4	1,830	48·2
All women				
Greater Manchester	992	48·7	1,122	55·1
Merseyside	451	47·5	515	54·2
Cheshire	355	47·6	396	53·1
Lancashire	478	50·2	547	57·4
North West	2,276	48·6	2,580	55·0

Part time women on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey pay period

Percentage with average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) below the following amounts: April 1992

	£4·80		£5·40	
	Sample number	Per cent.	Sample number	Per cent.
Manual				
Greater Manchester	323	91·0	341	96·1
Merseyside	197	78·5	220	87·6
Cheshire	126	91·3	130	94·2
Lancashire	207	87·7	220	93·2
North West	853	87·0	911	93·0
Non-manual				
Greater Manchester	379	63·7	423	71·1
Merseyside	202	59·2	227	66·6
Cheshire	154	63·6	179	74·0
Lancashire	227	64·1	264	74·6
North West	962	62·8	1,093	71·3
All				
Greater Manchester	702	73·9	7[illegible]	80·4
Merseyside	399	67·4	447	75·5
Cheshire	280	73·7	309	81·3
Lancashire	434	73·6	484	82·0
North West	1,815	72·3	2,004	79·8

Source: 1992 New Earnings Survey

HOUSE OF COMMONS

No-smoking Policy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will introduce a non-smoking policy for all office accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Martin: The Administration Committee's responsibility in respect of no-smoking areas covers only offices occupied by Members and their staff and certain communal areas. I shall nevertheless arrange for the Committee to consider this matter.

HEALTH

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce capitation funding for general practitioner fund holders.

Dr. Mawhinney: A capitation element has been included in the guidance for setting fund holders' budgets for 1993-94. Work is continuing on refining the methodology used.

Dentistry

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the deregistration of adults on NHS dental practice lists from the beginning of the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Between 1 April and 30 November 1992, 4,066,101 adult patients were removed from national health service dental lists. In the same period 5,987,906 adult patients were added. This represents a net-overall increase of 1,921,805.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department has given to NHS trusts concerning the practice of contracting out medicinal and laboratory services to private companies in which trust employees have a direct pecuniary interest.

Mr. Sackville: Revised guidance on standards of business conduct for national health service management and staff was issued on 20 January in circular HSG(93)5, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has had concerning the Royal Marsden hospital; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many petition signatures she has received to date concerning the future of the Royal Marsden hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As at 27 January we had received 390 letters from hon. Members and members of the public and a petition containing approximately 420,000 signatures.

Orthodontic Treatment

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of waiting time for patients seeking orthodontic treatment in Newham.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by specialty for district health authorities and national health service trusts is published in "Hospital Waiting Lists, In-Patients and Day Cases", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Tobacco

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list in order for the United Kingdom, and for each country that has banned tobacco advertising which has been studied by the Department's chief economist, the estimated influence of a ban, restrictions on advertising short of a ban, health warnings, price, and parental example to children; and what estimates were made of the effect of each factor in each country.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to provide estimates for the influence of all the factors. Available information is as follows:

—in England, children whose parents both smoke are two and a half times more likely to smoke than children whose parents do not smoke;

—estimates for the reduction in tobacco consumption associated with a 10 per cent. increase in price range between 2 per cent. and 6 per cent. for the United Kingdom and the countries studied;

—estimates for the proportional reduction in tobacco consumption associated with an advertising ban range between 4 per cent. and 9 per cent. in the countries studied. It is unclear whether these figures would be replicated in the United Kingdom, given the fall in smoking in the United Kingdom from 45 per cent. of the population in 1974 to 30 per cent. in 1990 and the existing controls on tobacco advertising through the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion.

European Year of Older People

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial contribution Her Majesty's Government are making to the European Year of Older People in 1993.

Mr. Yeo: The Department of Health is funding the operation of a secretariat for the year (based at the headquarters of Age Concern England). The total costs for the period to 31 March 1994 are estimated at £291,000, to which the Department of Social Security is contributing £40,000. The Department of Health is also providing an officer on secondment to the secretariat at an annual cost of £18,000. The Department has set up an advisory group for the year, the costs of which currently stand at approximately £3,000, with a further £5,000 anticipated during the next financial year.

It is estimated that the costs of publicity for the year provided through the Department of Health information division will be approximately £135,000.

Grants for specific initiatives forming part of the programme for the year are being considered by a number of Government Departments. It is not possible at this stage to estimate the level of expenditure. The Department of Health has two part-time officers working exclusively in connection with the year at an aggregate annual cost of

£18,500. A substantial further, unquantifiable, level of staff input is being provided by other Government Departments.

The Secretary of State for Health launched the United Kingdom programme for the year on 17 December 1992 in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. The Department of Health contributed approximately £14,000 to this event. Individual launch events were also held in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where additional programmes specific to these parts of the United Kingdom have been developed. The costs of these are being met principally by the Scottish and Welsh Offices and by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland. Together with publicity materials for the year and other core support, this additional expenditure is expected to be in the region of £150,000 in total, with further unquantifiable costs.

The budget of the European Commission for the year is 7·5 mecu (approximately £5·9 million) to which the United Kingdom's contribution is approximately 17 per cent. before abatement.

Health Authorities and Trusts

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department carries out of the requirement for health authorities and trusts to conduct their business in as open a manner as possible; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service management executive monitors regional health authorities and NHS trusts on all aspects of their performance. Regional health authorities monitor the performance of district health authorities, including the way they conduct their business.

Mr. Peter Sutcliffe

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement as to how Peter Sutcliffe, a prisoner held in Broadmoor security hospital, was able to smuggle a letter out of that establishment and make unsupervised telephone calls; and what arrangements will be made at the hospital to prevent such occurrences.

Mr. Yeo: Arrangements for patients' mail and telephone calls in the special hospitals are the responsibility for the special hospitals service authority.

The circumstances in which mail may be opened and inspected, or withheld from patients, are defined in section 134 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Broadmoor hospital policy is that patients may make telephone calls if they have the consent of their clinical team and the intended recipient of the call. All calls are subject to monitoring by the hospital staff.

The authority informs me that they are not aware of any departure from these policies in Mr. Sutcliffe's case.

Nurses, Merseyside

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the North Mersey community national health service trust on the effect of the reduction in numbers of grades C and H nurses in the current reorganisation of district nursing on Merseyside.

Mr. Sackville: None. The management of nursing services at the North Mersey Community national health service trust is a matter for the trust board. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. R. James, for details.

Smoking

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many staff, as full time equivalents, and at what grade were employed in each district health authority within the Mersey region dedicated to smoking cessation work with the general public in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) how many clinic sessions were offered and in which discipline in each district health authority within the Mersey region dedicated to smoking cessation work with the general public in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor A. M. Breckenridge, chairman of Mersey regional health authority, for details.

Breast Screening

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the preliminary results of the breast screening programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We intend to publish a report on the English and Welsh breast screening programme in March 1993 giving data for 1991-92. This report will be published in conjunction with the Scottish report and will cover the three key areas of the programme: acceptability of screening invitation; quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation.

Home Helps and Home Carers (Hampshire)

3. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what were the total number of home helps' and home carers' hours provided in Hampshire in each year since 1987; and, in each year, what was the average number of hours *(a)* per user and *(b)* per pensioner in the county;

(2) what was the charge per hour for home helps/home carers in Hampshire in each year since 1987, expressed in *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* 1987 prices.

Mr. Yeo: The Department does not collect data in the form requested. Information on hours of service received by clients, numbers of clients, and maximum, minimum and flat rate hourly charges made by individual local authorities for home help/home care services is available in "Personal Social Services Statistics—Actuals" published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Copies of this publication covering the years up to 1990-91 are available in the Library.

Young Offenders

54. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds are available and in which financial years to allow local authorities to build more secure places to ensure that persons aged 15 or 16 years are not remanded to prison.

Mr. Yeo: The capital allocation for 1992-93 and 1993-94 to fund additional secure places for juvenile remands is £680,000 and £3,248,000 respectively. Funding for succeeding years has not yet been confirmed.

57. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated need for more places in secure units for juveniles in each county in the east midands.

Mr. Yeo: It is estimated that an additional five to eight secure places will be required by authorities in the East Midlands as a whole for the purposes of implementing the Criminal Justice Act. Because of the small numbers involved it is not practicable to break this estimate down between counties.

The ability of the existing secure facilities in the East Midlands to cater for existing demands, and the implications of plans to develop secure units in adjoining regions, are also being taken into account in developing a capital programme for the region.

General Practitioner Surgeries

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's or health authorities' roles and responsibilities in respect of each stage followed in building a new general practitioner surgery, including how the financing is arranged throughout.

Mr. Sackville: Under their terms of service general practitioners are required to provide proper and sufficient accommodation at their practice premises for the provision of general medical services. Under the cost rent and improvement grant schemes they can apply for financial assistance in purchasing premises or improving existing premises. The details of these schemes, and the procedures to be followed, are set out in the statement of fees and allowances payable to general practitioners.

Family health service authorities have delegated responsibility for managing these schemes within the resources allocated to them in line with local service priorities. Over £126 million were spent on such schemes in 1991-92, an increase, in real terms of some 72 per cent. over 1989-90.

Limited List Prescribing

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has so far been made in extending the membership of the relevant advisory committees in the context of the recent announcement of the extension of the limited list prescribing system to include 10 new categories of pharmaceutical products.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received suggestions from relevant organisations and will announce the names of new members shortly.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement giving details of the different options for reducing the medicines bill to the national health service which she considered prior to the announcement of the extension of the limited list prescribing system and, in the case of each of those options, why it was rejected.

Dr. Mawhinney: The selected list scheme has been in operation since 1986 and has limited the rate of growth in the drugs bill without jeopardising patient care. Extending its scope to additional therapeutic categories was therefore an obvious step to take, so that this effect could continue. We are also re-negotiating the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. We are in discussion with the pharmaceutical industry about other possible ways of controlling the drugs bill, and any proposals which emerge from those discussions will be carefully considered.

NHS Trusts

60. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will undertake a review of the working of the various national health service trusts to gauge how far *(a)* money if following patients about the country, *(b)* trusts are being monitored by regional health authorities, *(c)* what influence such authorities are exerting on trusts and *(d)* what further regulations she expects to bring in on trusts' responsibilities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The increased number of patients treated in 1991-92 (7·2 per cent. in all hospital/units, 8·2 per cent. in national health service trusts) and the successful elimination of two-year waits in all regions is clear evidence that the NHS reforms are working and that NHS trusts are leading the way in improving efficiency and patient care. Regional health authorities are responsible for overseeing health care in their regions, and can exert influence over trusts through district health authorities and their purchasing contracts. There is no reason to expand the existing regulatory framework for trusts.

Regional Health Authorities

61. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to revamp the regional health authority tier in order to bring in new people and new thinking into regional strategic health care; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As our reforms continue to be implemented, we will consider whether any changes should be made in relation to the functions of regional health authorities. We will announce any proposed changes when our considerations are complete.

Hospital Closures

83. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the hospitals for which current plans for closure have been referred to her Department, including the proposed dates for closure.

Mr. Sackville: The following contested proposals to close facilities have been referred to, and are being considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

Clapham hospital
Leavesden and Harperbury hospital

Dates for closure or other changes can be announced only once final decisions have been taken.

Public Subscriptions

85. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidelines *(a)* for health trusts and health authorities when working with appeals raising money for new equipment and building works and *(b)* on openness between trusts and appeals in raising a public subscription.

Mr. Sackville: The Government greatly appreciate local fund-raising activities which supplement national health service funding, and continue to welcome a closer working relationship between the health service and local voluntary and community groups. We believe that the details on fund raising events are best decided at local level, and have no plans to introduce guidelines for NHS trusts and health authorities.

Smoking

87. **Ms. Walley;** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will send a copy of her statement on smoking in the workplace and public places to each hon. Member; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) is freely available in the *Official Report* at column *697* on 26 January 1993.

Hospitals (Brighton)

84. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have taken place between officials from her Department and Brighton health authority with regard to the future of the Royal Alexandra children's hospital, Brighton; and if she will list the dates of and participants at each meeting.

Mr. Sackville: Representatives from South East Thames regional health authority gave me the South East Thames capital investment strategy on 2 July 1992, officials from the Department were present. Discussions are continuing between Brighton Health Care national health service trust and the national health service management executive southern outpost.

88. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the date of the meeting when her Department and Brighton health authority first advised the Rockinghorse Appeal Trust that they no longer intended to proceed with further buildings and development at the Dyke road Brighton site.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Brighton Health Care national health service trust, Brighton health authority and the Rockinghorse Appeal Trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. J. Simmonds, the acting chairman of Brighton health authority, for details.

90. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department agreed with Brighton health authority to bring forward the date of the move of the Royal Alexandra hospital, Brighton from its present site.

Mr. Sackville: The relocation of the Royal Alexandra hospital is part of the Brighton Health Care national health service trust development programme and will be submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for approval in principle later this year.

91. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the funds raised by the Rockinghorse Appeal Trust for the Royal Alexandra hospital will be used to develop children's hospital services in Brighton.

Mr. Sackville: Discussions are on-going between Brighton Health Care national health service trust and the Rockinghorse Appeal Trust.

97. (P) **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will identify how much capital and revenue funding her Department has earmarked for the transfer of the Royal Alexandra children's hospital to the Royal Sussex site;

(2) what capital and revenue funding commitments have been made to Brighton Health Care trust concerning the redevelopment of the Royal Sussex county hospital for each year from 1993 to 2003.

Mr. Sackville: Revenue funding for Brighton Health Care trust is a matter for Brighton health authority and other purchasers. Total capital spending for Brighton Health Care for the year commencing 1 April 1993 is £4·649 million. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Spiers, the chairman, for details.

Chelmsford Hospice

92. (P) **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much extra money the Chelmsford hospice can expect to receive as a result of the Minister of State's announcement on 26 January increasing funding for the hospice movement in the current year.

Mr. Sackville: The funding of individual projects is a matter for discussion and agreement with the health authorities concerned.

Abortion

93. (P) **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the rate of physical complications arising following an abortion after the specified period for the notification of the abortion to her Department.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. For information about the short and long-term sequelae of abortion I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 25 January at column *536*. Other information is given in two published studies; the joint study of the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists entitled "Induced abortion operations and their early sequelae." Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners 1979; 135: 175-180; and Saha A, Savage W and George J. "The Tower Hamlets Daycare Abortion Service Study", October 1992: 49-56. Copies of both papers are available in the Library.

94. (P) **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding the percentage of cases in which a blood transfusion is required following an abortion.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column 536, what specific procedures are required to be undertaken prior to an abortion to bring to the attention of the woman *(a)* the nature and risks of the operation and alternative treatments and *(b)* the way in which the operation affects the foetus.

Mr. Sackville: It is normal clinical practice to inform a patient about the risks of any operation and possible

alternative courses of action. If a woman wishes to have information concerning the foetus we would expect whatever information is appropriate to be provided. The abortion counselling guidance in the Department's circular HC(77)26 is extant.

Birmingham General Hospital

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is proposing to take following the submission to her by South Birmingham community health council of the Audit Commission report into the closure of medical beds at Birmingham general hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The Audit Commission report, along with other evidence, will be taken into account in reaching a decision on the proposed changes to health services in South Birmingham.

NHS (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of capital expenditure in the NHS in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what was the split between hospital building and equipment.

Mr. Sackville: Gross national health service capital expenditure for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was £1,603 million, £1,668 million and £2,303 million respectively.

In 1990-91 capital spending within the hospital and community health services was divided as follows:

	Per cent.
Building and engineering works	61·3
Equipment and furniture	12·8
Vehicles	1·6
Other	24·4

Figures for later years are not yet available.

Azapropazone

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on Azapropazone in cash terms, and as expenditure per 1,000 population in each NHS region and health district in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney *[Holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Azapropazone is currently manufactured by one company. The release of the data requested would indicate the company's trading position and could affect the company's business. It is therefore considered commercially confidential.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pâté de Foie Gras

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 9 November to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), *Official Report*, column *610*, if he will provide the figures for imports of pâté de foie gras for 1992.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not yet available. Provisional data for the whole of 1992 is likely to become available from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in mid-February. Upon receipt of the information I shall write to the hon. Member again.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the controls on the production of pâté de foie gras in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: Pâté de foie gras is not produced in the United Kingdom and there are therefore no specific controls on production methods. Were anyone to propose starting foie gras production, the Government would wish to introduce welfare rules to ensure that force feeding was not permitted.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest number of cattle born after July 1988 that have now been certified as having contracted BSE.

Mr. Soames: At 22 January 1993, 1,197 cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy had been confirmed in Great Britain in cattle born after 18 July 1988. Investigations into many of these cases are continuing but it is clear that most had access to feed containing ruminant protein. All the evidence continues to show the ban on feeding such material to ruminants will ultimately eradicate bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Salmonella

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *687*, whether salmonella testing on eggs and poultry that takes place in the country of origin is to a similar standard as that required in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: There are no harmonised rules for the salmonella testing of poultry within the European Community. A number of member states, including the United Kingdom, have introduced testing programmes of differing standards. With effect from 1 January 1994, all member states will have to comply with the requirements of directive 92/117/EEC which includes rules for the control of salmonella in poultry breeding flocks.

Milk

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the milk quota regulations and administration that will follow the winding-up of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: New EC regulations on milk quotas will come into effect on 1 April 1993. The Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1991 will be amended as soon as the detailed EC rules have been agreed. These regulations will be further amended once a decision has been taken on the future arrangements for carrying out the administrative tasks which are currently performed on behalf of the Agriculture departments by the Milk Marketing Boards.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Italian Government introduced a quota scheme for milk; what was the original allocation for Italy; what it is at the present time; what assessment he has made of the reasons for the delay in implementation of milk quotas in Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Domestic legislation to implement in full the milk quota system in Italy by allocating quota to individual producers was passed by the Italian Parliament in November 1992. When milk quotas were introduced in the EC in 1984, Italy was allocated in total 8·8 million tonnes of wholesale quota and 1·1 million tonnes of direct sales quota. In the current quota year (1992-93) Italy has at its disposal 8·3 million tonnes and 0·7 million tonnes respectively. No satisfactory explanation has been given by the Italian Government for the delay in fully implementing the quota system in Italy. The enforcement of the EC quota regulations is a matter for the EC Commission.

Beef

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for his Department to use the service provided at commercial rates by the data centre for beef.

Mr. Soames: The recently adopted Community requirements for identification and subsidy controls do not require any great increase in the need for centralised computerised systems. The animal data centre would have to demonstrate that it was more efficient and cost effective than other interested organisations to obtain any work that was put out to tender.

Fisheries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the nations exempted from the Fishery Limits Act 1976 to fish in British national waters, together with the dates of exemption.

Mr. Curry: The countries designated under section 2(1) of the Fishery Limits Act 1976 as counties whose fishing boats may fish within British fishery limits, and the dates of their designation, are Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands (1983) and Spain and Portugal (1986) although under the EC common fisheries policy Greece, Italy and Luxembourg have no quotas to fish in United Kingdom waters. Under their Act of Accession to the EC Spain and Portugal are currently limited to western waters. Under annual EC regulations fishing boats from the Faroes, Norway and Sweden may also fish in United Kingdom waters within the terms of bilateral fisheries agreements.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *686-87*, what further information is now available for farmers on CAP reform.

Mr. Curry: On 11 January a booklet on the allocation of quotas under the sheep annual premium scheme was sent to the majority (some 44,000) of sheep producers in England with the first round of allocations; we aim to deal with the second round of allocations to producers during February. An explanatory booklet, "CAP Reform in the Beef Sector" was sent to all registered beef producers on 26 January. In addition, a consultation document was sent to organisations representing the farming industry on 25 January covering aspects of implementation of the quota system in the livestock sector. Copies of all these documents have been placed in the Library of the House. Information on the implications of the integrated administration and control system will be made available as soon as possible.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the impact of GATT on CAP; and if he will make it his policy to get the relevant and appropriate information to the British farmer.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 30 November 1992 at column *59*. My colleagues and I have regularly addressed the relationship of a GATT deal to the CAP in our contacts with farmers.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy, when further reforms to the agricultural industry are being considered, to increase the lead time to represent one seasonal cycle of the particular commodity involved.

Mr. Curry: When reforms are being considered, my right hon. Friend and I make every effort to ensure that the timing of their eventual implementation is as helpful as possible to farmers.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the income levels and prospects of hill farmers, in the light of changes in hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Income levels of hill farmers were fully considered during the recently completed autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. I have nothing further to add to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Lloyd) on 10 December at column *757*.

Slaughterhouses

7. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the effectiveness of veterinary surgeons in identifying ante-mortem diseases including salmonellosis, listerosis and leptospirosis in the course of examining animals at slaughterhouses.

Mr. Soames: Veterinary surgeons are specifically trained to identify clinical signs of all animal disease. In the course of examining animals at slaughterhouses, veterinary surgeons make use of that training, and their experience in hygiene, pathology, bacteriology, parasitology, physiology and animal husbandry to detect diseases and conditions which may present a risk to the handlers of meat and the ultimate consumer, and which may not be detectable by routine post-mortem inspection.

Wool

44. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the withdrawal of the guaranteed price for wool; if he will consider the phasing out of the guaranteed price over two or three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have received a number of representations on this subject. The Government have no plans to reconsider abolishing the wool guarantee on 30 April, which will implement a decision announced more than four years ago.

Shamrock (GB) Ltd.

45. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence his Department has of breach of quarantine regulations at Shamrock (GB) Ltd., and what action will be taken.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry became aware of an alleged breach of quarantine regulations at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. through a "World in Action" documentary, screened on 22 June 1992. A full investigation of the alleged incident has now been completed and it has been concluded that no criminal proceedings can be commenced. The alleged incident took place on 5 November 1991, so by the time the Ministry became aware of it, summary proceedings, which must be started within six months of the incident, were time barred. There was insufficient evidence to commence a prosecution for an indictable offence.

Fishing Industry (EC Funding)

46. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on recent progress in defining how EC objective 6 funding may be harnessed by fishing communities.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 11 January at column *623*.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Recreation

27. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what plans they have to increase recreational opportunities on Church Commission land.

Mr. Alison: While the Commissioners are not planning any special initiatives, they are always prepared to discuss and consider any worthwhile proposal.

Bishops

28. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners for how many bishops the Church Commissioners are currently making financial provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: To total of 44 Diocesan bishops (including the two archbishops) and 68 suffragan or assistant bishops.

Church Buildings

30. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what consideration is given to the use of church buildings for the use of other denominations, cultural or social housing before disposal is decided upon in the open market.

Mr. Alison: When a Church of England church is closed for regular public worship, it first becomes the duty of a committee of the diocese to seek a suitable alternative use for the redundant building. These committees are prepared to consider uses along the lines advocated by the hon. Member and there are, indeed, many examples where redundant churches have been put to such uses.

Redundant Churches (Muslim Communities)

31. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners how many redundant churches in the last five years have been made over to Muslim communities.

Mr. Alison: None.

Clergy (Early Retirement)

32. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will make a statement of the current provision made for clergy taking early retirement.

Mr. Alison: There are two forms of provision which provide an immediate pension. Voluntary retirement may take place up to five years before the minimum normal pension age of 65; pension benefits are based on actual service but reduced for early commencement. Ill health retirement may occur at any age, subject to medical evidence; pension benefits are based on actual plus prospective service.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

39. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received on his proposed changes to legal aid entitlement; and what were the proportions in favour and against these proposals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I have received a number of such representations, the majority of which are opposed to the proposals.

37. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his current estimate of expenditure on legal aid in the Greater London area for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is estimated that net legal aid expenditure in the Greater London area in 1992-93 will amount to £245 million.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what expenditure will be incurred in legal aid during the current year; what were the figures five, 10 and 15 years ago in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Net expenditure on legal aid for the current year is expected to be £1,107·0 million. Net expenditure incurred five, 10 and 15 years ago, at current prices, is as follows.

Net expenditure

	£ million
1977-78	230·6
1982-83	374·4
1987-88	596·8
1992-93	1,107

Poll Tax

40. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many poll tax cases are currently awaiting court hearing.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of summonses issued for the non-payment of the community charge is included in the information supplied to the Library of the House. Not all summonses will result in a court hearing; some subsequently will be withdrawn before reaching court, but in the last recorded quarter 7,700 people attended court in connection with liability orders.

Commercial Court

41. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will take steps to restore the commercial court to full strength; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Three nominations have been made recently to the pool of judges who may sit in the commercial court, bringing the number of nominees up to 11. Additional judges are therefore available for the Lord Chief Justice to deploy there, subject to other demands for judges of the Queen's Bench Division. For a more detailed and wideranging statement of the correct position, the hon. Member is referred to the *Official Report*, 19 January 1993 at column *353-58*.

Crown and Commonwealth

42. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what recent discussions he has had with other Commonwealth Governments about the common constitutional link of the Crown.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad

Ms. Short: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when a High Court judge will be made available in Birmingham to try a civil action arising from wrongful behaviour in the West Midlands serious crimes squad; what waiting period currently applies to civil cases requiring a High Court judge not involving the West Midlands serious crimes squad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It has not been possible to identify the case in question from the details provided by the hon. Member. Most of the unlisted Queen's Bench Division cases being received by Birmingham crown court are being warned for trial during the period 21 April to 30 June 1993. However, if the length of the case referred to is likely to exceed two weeks it is possible that it will be heard after the long vacation.

Inquests (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department by what method inquest juries are selected in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The method used to select jurors to serve on coroners' juries in Northern Ireland is the same as that which applies to the summoning of jurors to serve in criminal cases. That is, the selection is based on a system of random computer selection.

In practice, this means that when a coroner requires a jury to be summoned, he arranges to obtain a list of names taken sequentially from the jury list maintained for the county court division within which the inquest is to be held. That list is compiled by random computer selection of electors resident within that division who are eligible to serve as jurors. A sufficient number of jurors will be summoned to allow a jury to be convened; a coroner's jury is required by statute to consist of between not less than seven and not more than 11 persons.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will re-examine the way in which inquests are conducted in Northern Ireland in the light of the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have no reason to believe that the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine was conducted other than regularly and in accordance with the established practice at inquests. Accordingly, I do not consider that the proceedings at this inquest necessitate a re-examination of the conduct of inquests in Northern Ireland.

Independent Tribunals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he is taking to ensure more people from ethnic minorities in Bradford are appointed to all tribunals under the independent tribunal service; if he will give the present composition of all tribunals serving Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To encourage more ethnic minority practitioners to come forward for consideration, the Lord Chancellor has made widely available to ethnic minority practitioners and representative groups the booklet which sets out the requirements for each appointment and describes the judicial appointments system generally.

The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office those best qualified, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, political affiliation or religion and appointments must be justified on merit. The Lord Chancellor appoints only the legal chairmen of the tribunals under the independent tribunal service.

Information held on the ethnic origin of 36 members of the social security appeal tribunal in Bradford shows that three out of the 36 are from ethnic minorities. Of the 69 members of the panel for the disability appeal tribunal covering Bradford six are of ethnic origin.

Legal Advice

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to introduce a legal advice scheme in county courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have no plans to extend the legal aid scheme to provide a court-based advice service.

Judges

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges have been convicted of a criminal offence in each year since 1972; and what was the nature of the offence.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not readily available. The Lord Chancellor expects that judges will draw information about convictions to his notice. Information is then kept on the individual records of the judge concerned.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 February 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Official Languages

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to reduce the number of languages used within the European Community as official languages.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None.

Philippines (Visas)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications were received for settlement visas for spouses from the Philippines during 1992; and how many were granted.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not available in London. I have asked the British embassy in Manila to provide the answer and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office shortly.

Security Council (United Kingdom Seat)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on discussions he has had on the United Kingdom's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reform and revitalisation of United Nations institutions and the United Nations secretariat is a current subject of discussions in New York and in various bilateral and other meetings. The United Nations special committee on the charter regularly discusses Security Council reform at its meetings. Cuba and Libya have been active in recent years in pressing the case for abolition of the veto. The wish of Japan, currently a Security Council member, to become a permanent member is well known. At Maastricht, we agreed that Britain and France, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, will in the execution of their functions ensure the defence of the positions and the interests of the union without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations charter.

Mr. Sheikh Riaz Ahmad

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the United Kingdom post in Paris has received from the French authorities concerning the case of Mr. Sheikh Riaz Ahmad, a British citizen, of Bradford, about whom the Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member for Bradford, West, on 4 January last; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British Consulate-General at Lille has received a report from the French frontier police on their refusal to allow Mr. Ahmed to land. This indicates Mr. Ahmed was refused entry because he was not able to prove his nationality. Since this explanation is less than satisfactory we are seeking clarification from the French authorities. I am in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman about this case and will write again when I have a further report.

Yugoslav Republics (Embargoes)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the terms of each of the arms embargoes and arms export restrictions currently in force in respect of each former Yugoslav republic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolution 713 (1991) imposes a complete embargo on deliveries of weapons and military equipment to the republics of the former Yugoslavia until the Security Council decides otherwise. Additionally, United Nations Security Council resolutions 757 and 787 (1992) prohibit any trade with Serbia and Montenegro.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following is the information:

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS BUSINESS FOR FEBRUARY 1993

1. The following meetings are planned:

1/2 February: Foreign Affairs Council
8 February: Internal Market Council
9/10 February: Agriculture Council
15 February: Economic and Finance Council

(a) *Foreign Affairs Council—1/2 February*
Open debate on Danish Presidency work programme
Enlargement
EEA
East/Central Europe
Israel
Former Yugoslavia
GATT
Commercial Defence Instruments
Cocoa

(b) *Internal Market Council—8 February*
Completion of the Internal Market including follow-up to Council resolution on making the Single Market work
Sutherland report
Abolition of frontier controls
Regulation of control of conformity of third country imports
Regulation on Community trade mark [poss]
Directive on medical devices
Scientific co-operation in food
Additional control measures (food)
Regulation laying down Council procedures for contaminants in food
Fruit juices and similar products (consolidated version of Dir. 80/181)
Regulation on business registers for statistical purposes
Public Works Directive (amendment and consolidation [poss]

(c) *Agriculture Council—9/10 February*
Commission presentation of 1993/94 price fixing proposals

Common organisation of the market in bananas (8372/92; 4064/93)
GATT agriculture (10534/92)
Transitional measures for Portugal (10181/92; 4064/93)
Aid for durum wheat producers (4305/93)
Aid for sheepmeat producers [poss] (4307/93)
Limit to the production aid for processed tomato products (10495/92)

(d) *Economic and Finance Council—15 February*
The Danish Presidency work programme (open debate)
National actions to promote economic recovery in Europe and review of convergence programmes
7th VAT directive
Follow-up to Edinburgh conclusions on future financing of the Community

3. The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 1-2 February. It will commence with an open debate on the Danish Presidency work programme. On Enlargement, the Council will approve arrangements for the opening session of accession negotiations, and on EEA, the Council will be asked to approve a mandate for the Commission to negotiate with EFTA an additional protocol to the EEA agreement. Ministers will then discuss Irael; East/Central Europe; Former Yugoslavia; the GATT and Commercial Defence Instruments. Cocoa will also be discussed.

4. The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 8 February and will discuss completion of the Internal Market; the Sutherland report and Abolition of frontier controls. Regulation of control of conformity of third country imports will also be discussed. Other agenda items are for clearance as points only.

5. The *Agriculture Council* will meet on 9-10 February. Ministers will discuss the price-fixing proposals for 1993-94; banana market regime; agricultural aspects of the GATT negotiations; transitional measures for Portugal; aid for durum wheat producers and aid for sheepmeat producers. They may also discuss production aid for processed tomato products.

6. The *Economic and Finance Council* will meet on 15 February to discuss the ECOFIN work programme and continue discussions on actions to promote economic recovery and to follow up the agreement of the Edinburgh European Council on the future financing of the Community. There will be an open debate on the Danish Presidency work programme and the proposal to amend the 7th VAT directive (special VAT regime for second-hand goods, works of art, antique and collectors' items) is also scheduled for discussion.

EC Directives

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken and is proposing to take in response to the letter of Commissioner Van Miert of 23 December 1992 concerning the implementation of directives 75/440/EEC and 79/869/EEC.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

In our response we shall set out what has been done in the United Kingdom to implement these directives. In accordance with the usual practice of the Commission, we treat such correspondence as in confidence between the Commission and ourselves.

Environmental Claims

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to bring forward his proposals to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 in relation to environmental claims.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

Many environmental claims are already within the scope of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. We intend to amend the Act to put it beyond doubt that all such claims are covered as soon as parliamentary time permits.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Departmental Administrative Work

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress he has made regarding the location of his Department's administrative work in Cardiff; what influence the market testing procedure will have on such progress; what representations he has had from local authorities, the legal profession and others regarding the ultimate location of this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I have decided that the court procedures for enforcing the payment of unpaid parking charges, arising under the Road Traffic Act 1991, will be carried out at a parking enforcement centre attached to Cardiff county court. About 20 additional staff will eventually be required.

We envisaged that the Lord Chancellor's Department's pay and superannuation unit, consisting of some 40 staff, might be centralised and located in Cardiff. However, the position has been considered again as part of the market testing exercise in this area, and centralisation is now likely to take place in London. No representations have been received on this.

ENVIRONMENT

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Howard: KPMG Management Consultants have been awarded four contracts by my Department over the past 12 months. These are:

Relocation of Department of the Environment headquarters staff in London (awarded 15 April 1992);

Planning Inspectorate executive agency independent business advisor (awarded 13 May 1992);

Department of the Environment Relocation: Consultancy on Advanced Office Support System (awarded 21 May 1992);

Proposal for the Wirral Business Enterprise Centre (awarded 1 October 1992).

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to take account of the representations received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution before the consultation period on discharges licences for the Sellafield site began; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution received approximately 38,000 representations shortly before the statutory public consultation period began on

16 November 1992. The comments made will be taken into consideration by the authorising departments in their determination of BNFL's applications.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters of objection to the application for new discharges licences for the Sellafield site have been received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution from *(a)* statutory consultees, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* individual members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has received approximately 75,000 letters concerning this matter of which it is estimated that more than 50,000 are objecting to the proposals. Of the total received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution there have been eight representations by statutory consultees and over 100 local authorities have written in.

Footpaths

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the procedure for extinguishing footpaths; what simple or local appeal or arbitration procedure exists to deal with requests for diverting or extinguishing footpaths; and what arrangements are made for the legal costs involved.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities have powers to make orders to stop up or divert public paths. Any order made must be advertised since it affects public rights. Although some 70 per cent. of orders are confirmed locally, if there are objections which cannot be resolved, the order may be passed to the Secretary of State for confirmation, and a local inquiry may be held. We are introducing regulations to enable authorities to recoup their administrative expenses from an applicant for an order; otherwise, parties are generally expected to meet their own costs.

Lambeth Council

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance he has offered to Lambeth council to deal with matters raised by the report of the chief executive under section 5 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. The primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud lies with the management of local authorities. They should have good systems of internal control and effective internal audit. The auditor has the responsibility of checking the financial control systems of a local authority.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many submissions were received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on 25 January, in response to British Nuclear Fuel's application for authorisation for the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant, and associated facilities, at Sellafield; how many of these submissions were in support of BNFL applications; and what proportion of the total submissions came from abroad.

Mr. Maclean: On 25 January, HMIP received some 16,000 representations, the majority of which appear to support the proposals, but at present HMIP does not have a detailed breakdown of these figures.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account his decision on the authorisation for the licensing of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield will make of the letter sent to him in October by the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on the British Nuclear Fuels plc proposals to implement a curie equivalence substitution plan for the management of nuclear waste arising from reprocessing of foreign spent fuel at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 27 January, at column *769*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 30 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *859*, if he has yet received the report of the nuclear waste borehole public inquiry in Cumbria.

Mr. Baldry: There will be no report to the Secretary of State in this case. The planning appeals concerned will be decided by an inspector. That is a matter for the Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency, and I have arranged for the chief executive to reply.

Letter from Mr. H. S. Crow to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 1 February 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to provide the reply to your Parliamentary Question about the nuclear waste borehole inquiry in Cumbria, as this is a matter for the Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency.

The planning appeals by British Nuclear Fuels, relating to proposed exploratory boreholes near Gosforth, are to be decided by the Inspector who held the inquiry, as arranged, in November. The Inspector, Mr. P. Burden (who was appointed following the illness of the Inspector originally appointed, Mr. P. Rosser), is concluding his consideration of the case, and I expect his decision to be issued shortly.

Housing Associations

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he has given to the ability of people in low-paid employment to meet the level of rents for housing association properties implied by the proposed reduction in housing association grants by 1995-96;

(2) if he will undertake a full assessment of the consequences of the proposed reduction in housing allocation grant rate to 55 per cent. on the financial viability and viability of the housing association movement and the ability of individual housing associations to attract private funding.

Mr. Baldry: No decision on grant rates for 1995-96 has been taken yet. That decision will be taken in the light of a full consideration of a number of factors, including the likely impact on rents and the ability of housing associations to attract private finance.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to preserve and sustain the current scale and diversity of the housing association movement and to ensure that the housing allocation grant funding levels set by his Department will reflect and further this objective.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's expenditure plans announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement more

than meet the commitment in our manifesto to spend nearly £6 billion through the Housing Corporation over the three years to 1994-95. The value of diversity is certainly one of the factors which we will take into account in making decisions about future levels of housing association grant.

Planning Appeals

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the mechanism for challenging planning appeal decisions and costs thereof; and what proposals he has to change it.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no recent representations about the mechanism for challenging planning appeal decisions. Decisions on the award of costs resulting from a planning appeal may be challenged by seeking leave of the High Court for an application for judicial review. My right hon. and learned Friend has received two recent representations in favour of a simpler procedure, but has no proposals to change it.

Rural Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the desirability of any changes to the legal and financial framework for the provision of rural water and sewerage services.

Mr. Maclean: We expect to complete our consideration in the course of this session.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land has been affected by opencast mining in the last 10 years; how much of such land was green field and how much despoiled or derelict; and of the despoiled or derelict land, how much was subsequently returned to useful purposes.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally. According to statistics compiled by the County Planning Officers Society's committee No. 3, however, during the last four years 6,490 hectares of land received planning permission for opencasting in England, of which 1,309 hectares was derelict. The equivalent figures for Scotland and Wales are respectively 2,525 hectares of which 563 was derelict and 635 hectares, of which 364 was derelict. The 1988 minerals survey shows that between 1982 and 1984 4,041 hectares of land granted permission for opencasting was reclaimed satisfactorily and only 39 hectares reclaimed unsatisfactorily. All permissions for opencasting carry a requirement fully to restore the land.

Housing Benefit Subsidy

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each housing authority the amount of housing benefit subsidy paid to the authority and the amount of housing benefit paid from the housing revenue account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have deposited in the Library of the House a copy of a table showing the information requested by the hon. Member. The table shows for 1992-93 each authority's estimated expenditure on rent rebates debited to the housing revenue account, the amount of that expenditure which is not eligible for subsidy, the estimated contribution from the HRA towards the cost of rent rebates granted and the estimated amount of HRA subsidy claimed on rent rebates.

Residential Homes

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that community care homes, which are occupied exclusively by severely mentally impaired adults, qualify for 100 per cent. rebate under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978, after 1 April 1993; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to exercise his powers under section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make regulations reducing the council tax payable in respect of persons resident in registered charitable residential care or nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Rating (Disabled Persons) Act ceased to apply to domestic accommodation when domestic rates were abolished, and is of no relevance to the council tax.

There are no special council tax provisions for occupied dwellings owned by charities. It is right that charities should continue to receive relief from non-domestic rates, because these are a tax on the premises which a charity needs to conduct its own business. But the council tax is a tax paid by residents, whether directly or through their landlord. There is no reason why some residents should be specially treated simply because their landlord is a charity. Instead we focus help by reference to individuals' needs through the discount and benefit systems.

Registered care and nursing homes will benefit from a number of council tax reliefs. Care and nursing home patients, like severly mentally impaired people, are not counted towards the personal element of the tax. Many registered care and nursing homes will therefore get a 25 per cent. discount. Most will probably have their bill reduced by one valuation band in respect of facilities for disabled residents, and very many are likely to qualify for substantial amounts of transitional relief. Care homes, like other large dwellings, will also benefit from banding arrangements which mean that the bill for the most expensive property in an area is limited to three times that for the cheapest.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the latest developments regarding the establishment of the proposed European Environment Agency; and if it is his intention to bid for the agency to be located in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: During our presidency of the EC Council of Ministers, we made strenuous efforts to overcome the blockages which have prevented the establishment of the European Environment Agency, and at the December Environment Council, 11 Council member states agreed to press the Commission to speed up preparatory work. As a first step, the Commission have called a meeting of senior officials on 9 February.

The United Kingdom has bid for the agency to be located in Cambridge.

Marine Pollution Control

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the whole area of marine pollution control, as recommended by the second report of the Environment Committee of 1991-92 (HC17) on coastal zone protection and planning, in the light of the grounding of the supertanker MV Braer.

Mr. Maclean: The Government response (CM 2011 July 1992) to the Environment Committee report stressed the need for different agencies to deal with various marine pollution control functions and pointed to their good record of close co-operation, particularly over oil and chemical pollution from ships. Lord Donaldson's inquiry will no doubt be considering whether the MV Braer incident should lead to any changes in these views.

Urban Priority Areas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking in his review of urban priority areas to ensure that local authorities which have both prosperous areas and areas of acute deprivation do not lose priority status as a result of the existence of the prosperous areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: In considering information about the incidence of urban needs, we will study results from census and other data at three levels—local authority areas, wards and census enumeration districts, the last covering about 500 persons.

Tyneside Clinical Waste Incinerator

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central of 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, column 836, if he is now in a position to announce his decision on the Tyneside clinical waste incinerator application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The inspector's report on this application, which is the subject of an appeal by Northumbrian Water Group plc, was received by the Secretary of State on 24 September 1992. Together with the report of the assessor, who advised the inspector on technical issues, the report runs to some 200 pages. It raises a number of complex issues, all of which have to be carefully considered before a decision can be issued.

Good progress is being made and the decision will be issued as soon as it is practicable to do so.

Architects (Registration) Acts

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take following the review by Mr. John Warne CB of the Architects (Registration) Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have today published the report of the independent review of the Acts, which was undertaken following a request by the Architects Registration Council of the United Kingdom. I am grateful for the full co-operation which had been given to the review by ARCUK and the profession generally, and to those who responded in the public consultation on this matter.

The review's conclusion is clear: that statutory registration of architects has brought no added benefit to the public, to consumers, or to the profession itself and that there is no reason why architects uniquely amongst the construction professions should be regulated by statute. The established arrangements for self-regulation through the chartered professional institutions provide for satisfactory protection of the public interest, and of consumers. The Government accepts the report's conclusions. I have therefore decided that statutory registration should be abolished at the earliest legislative opportunity.

Until such time as the Acts have been repealed, the legal restriction on the use of the title of architect will remain and ARCUK will continue to perform its registration, enforcement and other functions in the usual way.

International Development and Co-operation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy initiatives he is planning to undertake to promote international development and co-operation in the next six months; what meetings he is planning to attend; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend will continue to play a full part in the work of the European Community and other international fora. We welcome the establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission as envisaged at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio last year. My right hon. and learned Friend is also taking forward the initiatives announced by the Prime Minister at UNCED: the Darwin initiative for survival of species and preparations for an international conference of non-governmental organisations to exchange experience on the practical implementation of sustainable development to be held later this year. He will attend the global technology partnership conference in Birmingham in March, which was also announced by the Prime Minister at UNCED.

Water Charges

80. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what review OFWAT is making of flexibility in infrastructure charges.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The Director General of Water Services has announced his intention to undertake a fundamental review of infrastructure charges as part of the overall review of water company charges in 1994. He will shortly be issuing a consultation paper which will set out the options for change to infrastructure charges.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the funding from urban partnership he intends to provide to projects aimed at benefiting the ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Robin Squire: Each bid for urban partnership funding will be assessed on its merits against the criteria set out in our guidance to local authorities.

Council Debts, Gloucestershire

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the indebtedness of *(a)* Gloucestershire county council, *(b)* Tewkesbury borough council, *(c)* Cotswold district council and *(d)* Cheltenham borough council in each year since 1980.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is as follows:

Total external debt (temporary and longer-term)

Year end	*Gloucestershire £000*	*Tewkesbury £000*	*Cotswold £000*	*Cheltenham £000*
1979-80	16,100	19,900	22,000	26,600
1980-81	20,300	20,500	23,000	28,100
1981-82	21,400	19,900	20,700	26,600
1982-83	25,300	18,600	20,400	n/a
1983-84	23,900	15,300	16,300	n/a
1984-85	23,800	18,200	13,900	n/a
1985-86	45,900	14,900	13,900	n/a
1986-87	53,384	11,740	19,651	n/a
1987-88	66,763	11,720	22,994	n/a
1988-89	92,371	13,522	n/a	30,269
1989-90	104,426	12,727	n/a	29,582
1990-91	121,114	9,327	23,051	33,977
1991-92	124,537	9,327	20,497	40,092

Figures for 1985-86 and earlier have been rounded to the nearest £100,000.

Source: 1979-81 CIPFA Return of Outstanding Debt.
1981-90 CIPFA Capital Expenditure and Debt Financing Statistics.
1990-92 Local authority returns.

Local Government Review

149. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further guidance he is giving to the Local Government Commission for England in relation to sections 17, 18 and 19 of the policy guidance notes published last June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We do not propose to issue further guidance on these matters at present.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will make to transfer assets and liabilities from local authorities which cease to exist as a result of the Local Government Commission's review to existing or new authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Act 1992 provides for the Secretary of State to establish one or more residuary bodies if necessary to take over any property, rights or liabilities, and any related functions from local authorities which cease to exist as a result of the Local Government Commission's recommendations.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from councils in Oxfordshire concerning disparities in the proportion of local authority budgets funded by Government grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Neither of the representations which I received from councils in Oxfordshire addressed the question of disparities in the proportion of local authority budgets funded by Government grant.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the consultation on the local government finance settlement for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 28 January 1993, column 854]:* I regret that the tax base information listed in the exemplifications for Manchester, Stockport, Trafford, Salford, Barnsley, Wakefield, Crawley, Tandridge, Bolsover and Ashfield does not properly reflect boundary changes. Surrey, West Sussex, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire county councils are also affected. There are consequent changes in the authorities' revenue support grant entitlements and, because the tax base is used to apportion certain levies, in the authorities' standard spending assessments. In most cases the changes are not significant. I shall publish revised figures as soon as possible. My Department has today written to the authorities affected explaining the position to them.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidelines the Commonwealth Development Corporation has developed to minimise the environmental impacts of tobacco plantations or processing.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Assessment of the environmental aspects of proposed investments is an integral part of the Commonwealth Development Corporation's project appraisal and approval procedures. CDC has agreed that it should make no new investments in tobacco plantations or processing. Past investments were made in accordance with CDC's environmental guidelines which are currently under review.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Autumn Statement

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish *(a)* the working assumptions on outstanding central Government debt and average interest rates underlying the entries for central Government debt interest in table 2A.3 of the "Autumn Statement", Cm 2096, *(b)* a ready reckoner of the effects on such expenditure of increments of £1 billion in outstanding central Government debt and of increments of one percentage point in average interest rates on such central Government debt, *(c)* the working assumptions on outstanding local authority debt and average interest rates on such local authority debt underlying the entries for local authority debt interest in table 2A.11 and *(d)* a ready reckoner of the effects on such expenditure of increments of £1 billion in outstanding local authority debt and of increments of one percentage point on average interest rates on such local authority debt.

Mr. Portillo: The debt interest projections shown in tables 2A.3 and 2A.11 of the "Autumn Statement" were based on the working assumption that the public sector borrowing requirement is £37 billion in 1992-93, 7 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1993-94, and then falls as the economy recovers.

It is not conventional practice to publish projections of interest rates.

The effects of increments to the stock of debt or to interest rates on payments of debt interest will depend upon the composition of the outstanding debt and upon the average cost of funding.

Ready reckoners for local authority debt interest payments will similarly depend on the composition of local authority debt and the cost of funding.

Antiques

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the VAT revenue in 1991 under the special scheme; what estimate he has made of the sum which would be raised from the proposed 5 per cent. extra VAT on imported antiques under the new EC proposals; what was the estimated cost of raising the VAT under the special scheme; and what is the estimated cost of raising the additional 5 per cent. VAT on imported antiques.

Sir John Cope: There is insufficient information on which to base an estimate of the revenue or the cost of administration of the special scheme.

Applying VAT at a rate of 5 per cent. to imported works of art, antiques and collectors' items would probably raise less than £20 million.

Fuel (Tax Differentials)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of *(a)* the environmental and *(b)* the fiscal effects of his policy on tax differentials between diesel and other fuels.

Sir John Cope: Duty is charged on road fuels at rates which not only raise sufficient revenue but also take account of environmental considerations.

The environmental benefits of diesel rather than petrol consumption are not entirely clear cut. Diesel engines are more efficient than petrol, so they emit less carbon dioxide per mile travelled. But this advantage has to be weighed against higher emissions of nitrogen oxide and particulates (soot/smoke) than from a petrol engine fitted with a three-way catalytic converter.

It is estimated that ending the diesel duty differential with unleaded petrol would yield around £65 million in 1993-94; ending the differential with leaded petrol would yield £555 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision at the last Budget to widen the tax differential between diesel and other fuels on *(a)* the use of diesel fuel and *(b)* on the levels of revenue generated from diesel use.

Sir John Cope: The last Budget increased the duty on diesel and unleaded petrol by 4·5 per cent., in line with inflation. The 7·5 per cent. increase on leaded petrol widened the tax differential between diesel and leaded petrol (duty and consequential VAT) from 4·7 p per litre to 5·8p per litre. The impact of this on diesel consumption is very difficult to quantify. In the short run, however, few motorists will have had time to respond to the wider tax differential by switching to vehicles with diesel engines so the impact on diesel consumption is likely to have been insignificant. Accordingly, we do not expect the real increase on the leaded petrol duty to affect the yield from diesel duty from the present financial year.

Departmenal Employees

Mr. Cann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people over the age of 60 years began employment in each Government Department in 1992.

Mr. Portillo: Approximately 150 people aged 60 and over began employment in the non-industrial home civil service during the period 1 January to 30 September 1992. Information for the final quarter of the year is not yet available.

Details of the numbers recruited into individual Departments could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Premium Savings Bonds

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to maintain the minimum payment for purchases of premium savings bonds for persons under the age of 16 years at £10 after 1 February.

Mr. Nelson: As announced on 12 November 1992, the minimum purchase for those buying premium bonds on behalf of children under 16 rose from £10 to £100 on 1 February. There are no present plans for further changes.

VAT

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what repayments of VAT in respect of VAT relief for bad debts were made in the last financial year for which figures are available; and what sum he estimates will be repaid in respect of subsequent financial years.

Sir John Cope: In order to keep burdens on business to a minimum, claims for bad debt relief are included with all other amounts of tax entered in traders' VAT returns and separate figures are not available.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the 12 month delay on repayment of VAT in respect of bad debts was decided; what representations he has received on this point; and whether he has the matter under review.

Sir John Cope: Section 11(1)(c), Finance Act 1990, provided for a period of two years, beginning with the date of the supply, to elapse to qualify for bad debt relief. Following representations, that waiting period was reduced to twelve months by section 15(1), Finance Act 1991.

Representations regarding the length of the waiting period are received from time to time and the matter is kept under review.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what ruling HM Customs and Excise has made on the VAT liability of controlled circulation magazines mailed to other member states of the EC with a positive rate of VAT; and what are the reasons for this decision.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Since 1 January 1993, under the 6th EC VAT directive as amended the tax treatment of goods supplied by VAT-registered traders to non-VAT registered customers in other member states under the distance selling arrangements, including mail order, has been dependent on thresholds. Each member state has adopted a threshold of either 35,000 or 100,000 ecu. If sales to a member state are beneath that member state's threshold then VAT in the member state of origin is chargeable; in the case of supplies of magazines from the United Kingdom, this would be zero. If sales exceed the threshold laid down by a member state, then all sales to that member state are chargeable at the appropriate rate of VAT in that member state and the trader will need to register for VAT or appoint a tax representative in that member state.

Where supplies are made to customers who are VAT registered in another EC member state, the removal from the United Kingdom may be zero-rated if the VAT registration number of the consignee is shown on the tax invoice, and tax will be due on acquisition by the customer.

These arrangements follow the normal rules that goods are subject to VAT in the member state of destination. Until 31 December 1992 tax was supposed to be paid in accordance with the law in the state where the purchaser was. Since 1 January 1993 the thresholds are a simplification measure so that distance sellers supplying small quantities can apply VAT at the rate applied in the country of origin.

Clearing Banks

Mr. Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current clearing banks' base rate in the United Kingdom; what information he has about the nearest equivalent in the other member countries of the European Community; and what the equivalent figures were on 7 September 1992.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* The clearing banks' base rate in the United Kingdom on 29 January was 6 per cent. compared with 10 per cent. on the 7 September 1992. Commercial bank rates and official rates in other countries are not strictly comparable, so the talble compares three month market interest rates on the dates specified.

Short-term (three months) interest rates

	7 September 1992	*29 January 1993*
United Kingdom	10·3	6·3
Belgium	9·8	8·4
Denmark	11·2	13·0
Spain	13·7	14·0
France	10·5	12·6
Germany	9·8	8·5
Greece	20·0	24·0
Ireland	10·8	24·0
Italy	17·5	12·2
Netherlands	9·8	8·2
Portugal	14·8	16·0

Importers and Exporters (Complaints)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to set up an independent complaints procedure for those importers and exporters who have complaints about administration by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Customs and Excise reviewed its complaints procedure in 1991. As a result it has improved its internal system for handling complaints. Details of how to complain are given in the leaflet "Complaints against Customs and Excise" (Notice 1000). It is intended to introduce an independent tribunal system for customs matters by 1 January 1995, in line with EC agreement.

Bloodstock (VAT)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Prime Minister's reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *21*, in regard to the level of VAT on bloodstock in the United Kingdom and the rates levied in France and Ireland, what submission the Paymaster General has had from the Jockey Club on this subject; and when he expects there to be a ministerial statement on the outcome of his consideration of their submission.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* Representatives of the horseracing industry have made proposals for changes to the rules of racing intended to make ownership more of a business activity and therefore allow some owners of racehorses to register for VAT. Customs and Excise has drawn up a technical memorandum of understanding to be agreed with the industry as soon as possible.

International Co-operation and Development

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what policy initiatives he is planning to undertake in the next six months to promote international co-operation and development; what meetings he is planning to attend; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Over the next six months, my right hon. Friend will continue to work to strengthen international co-operation, in particular with EC and G7 colleagues. He will continue to press for a satisfactory conclusion to the GATT Uruguay

round and to seek to improve the terms of debt relief available to the poorest countries. In the EC, my right hon. Friend will press for progress in implementing the package of measures agreed at the Edinburgh summit to promote economic recovery and in making the single market work effectively. With G7 colleagues he will be working to reduce obstacles to sustainable growth and hence foster employment. My right hon. Friend plans to attend meetings with EC colleagues as well as the EBRD annual meeting in London, the G7/IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington and the Economic summit in Tokyo.

Income Distribution

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to publish data on the distribution of income which follows on from the 1984-85 analysis published in "Economic Trends", November 1987.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* There are no plans at present to update the 1984-85 analysis.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Water Privatisation

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of state for Northern Ireland if he intends to introduce the sale of water services in Northern Ireland in the same manner as in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No decision has yet been taken on how the sale will take place. Options for the method of sale are currently being addressed as part of a consultancy study into a range of major privatisation issues.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he intends to publish the feasibility study currently being undertaken by private consultants into the privatisation of water in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to have the results of the feasibility study into the privatisation of water in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is expected that the consultancy study will be completed by the end of March 1993. The study was commissioned on a confidential basis because of the commercial sensitives of the issues involved. I therefore have no plans to publish it.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the future employment of people working in the water services industry in Northern Ireland is included in the feasibility study at present being undertaken by consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The future employment of staff does not fall within the terms of reference for the consultancy study.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for a period of public consultation following the acceptance of the report by private consultants into the privatisation of water in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Water privatisation will require primary legislation and the proposal for a draft Order in Council will be published for consultation in the normal way.

Trade

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has for the value of trade in each direction between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for the whole of 1992, or for as many months as information is available.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available from United Kingdom Government sources. However, I refer the hon. Member to table E of "External Trade" (September 1992) published by the Central Statistics Office, Dublin, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Education Reforms

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the implementation of the Government's education reforms; and what plans he has to meet representatives of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

Mr. Hanley: I have received a large number of written representations on a wide range of topics related to the education reforms from a variety of sources: boards of governors, teachers, principals, teachers' unions and parents. These have been mainly concerned about the pressures created by the implementation of curriculum and assessment changes and I have taken measures, where necessary, to ease these pressures. I have also met a number of groups on reforms-related matters.

I will be meeting the CCMS in the near future, and as part of the present wide consultation about aspects of implementation I will study carefully any representations which the council or any educational interests wish to make.

Regional Development Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much European regional development fund expenditure there has been in Northern Ireland in each year since 1984-85 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

Mr. Mates: The following amounts were received from the European regional development fund.

£ million

Financial year	*Current prices*	*1984 prices*
1984-85	17	17
1985-86	18	17
1986-87	23	21
1987-88	46	40
1988-89	47	38
1989-90	40	30
1990-91	49	35
1991-92	50	33
1992-93	[1]120	[1]76

[1] Estimated outturn.

WALES

School Governors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school governors there were in Wales on 1 April 1989.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

One-stop Shops

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on one-stop shops for business and technology information dissemination; what proposals he has to grant-aid such one-stop shops; and what arrangements he will make to monitor and evaluate their progress.

Sir Wyn Roberts: An enterprise and business support working group has been set up to consider how the delivery of business and technology advice and support, including information, can be improved. The group includes representatives of training and enterprise councils, local enterprise agencies, local authorities, the development agencies, chambers of commerce and other members of the business community in Wales. Their advice will cover the operation of one-stop shops and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

Business and Technology Information

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the local dissemination of business and technology information; and when he expects to announce pilot projects to further such local dissemination.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government attach great importance to the dissemination of business and technology information. Consequently, my Department is directly involved in the dissemination of business and technology information, along with many other organisations in Wales which do so with my support. These include local enterprise agencies and business advice centres, the training and enterprise councils, colleges and development agencies.

Specific initiatives include the Euro info centre set up with EC support. In addition, the Welsh Office, in collaboration with the DTI and local organisations, is involved in a number of technology transfer and awareness programmes. This work has covered a range of technology in special projects in areas such as expert and open systems; new materials and sensors together with programmes covering world-class manufacturing and best management practices.

These services are being further strengthened by Government and European support. Currently, my Department is supporting technology audits designed to identify commercially viable technology in five Welsh colleges and, through the EC STRIDE programme, support totalling £800,000 is being provided to three colleges and the WDA to enhance the services they provide to industry. Information on European research and technology developments will be disseminated through the relay centre project led by the WDA, which became fully operational throughout Wales in January 1993.

We have set up an enterprise and business support working group to advise us on how the delivery of these services to businesses in Wales can be improved.

Incineration Plants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to give specific financial assistance to local authorities in Wales to monitor emission levels from incineration plants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, operators of almost all incinerators with a capacity of under one tonne per hour require authorisation from their district council. The associated fees and charges are intended, in line with the "polluter pays" principle, to recover the reasonable administration, monitoring and inspection costs of local authorities.

A similar system applies in relation to larger incineration plant subject to the control of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many householders in Wales received home improvement grants during 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and how many have been paid to date in the current financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Home improvement grants under the 1985 Housing Act were replaced in July 1990 by a new renovation grant system. Grants completed under the earlier arrangements are detailed in the table.

Total number of grant completions under the Housing Act 1985

	Number
1989-90	19,818
1990-91	24,866
1991-92	6,394
[1]1992-93	233

[1] April to September 1992 only.
Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Welsh Office Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answers of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *454*, what representations he has had from the British Printing Federation regional office covering Wales in relation to the routeing of responsibility for placing printing of Welsh Office contracts via the Central Office of Information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Certificate of Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils sat the certificate of education in each year since 1985.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of candidates who sat the Certificate of Education from 1985 to 1992 are given in the table.

Number of candidates[1]

	Number
1985	2,611
1986	3,859
1987	6,252
1988	7,514

	Number
1989	8,612
1990	8,336
1991	8,038
1992	8,379

[1] Includes a small number of candidates sitting examinations in centres other than in schools.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the replacement of the certificate of education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This proposed change is an integral part of wider arrangements for the assessment of 16-year-olds, at the end of key stage 4. The changes are being made on the basis of advice which I sought from the School Examinations and Assessment Council. All pupils will in future be required to study each of the relevant national curriculum subjects in accordance with statutory programmes of study to the end of key stage 4. SEAC advised that the certificate of education does not meet those requirements.

Around 7,700 pupils in Wales are currently entered for the certificate of education. Most of those pupils should, in future, be well capable of achievement under the new GCSE arrangements. The minimum attainment level on the national curriculum 10 level scale for the award of a GCSE will be level 4—the performance expected for a typical 11-year-old. Pupils who are entered for the GCSE and who narrowly miss the GCSE award at level 4 will still be awarded a level 3, provided they have displayed evidence of that level of attainment in their examination.

The remainder of pupils expected to achieve levels 1 to 2—level 2 is the performance expected of a typical seven-year-old—in each of the national curriculum subjects will be assessed by teachers' own assessment. These pupils will represent a small minority at age 16 and teacher assessment is considered to be the most appropriate way of meeting their special and individual needs.

All performance at every attainment level will be recognised and recorded on an individual pupil's national record of achievement. The record is being developed by schools to reflect a pupil's total achievement, both academic and non-academic. The NRA is recognised by employers and colleges of further education in their selection of candidates for employment, training and further education courses.

The certificate of education will not be fully phased out until 1996. This phased programme will allow teachers maximum flexibility to manage the adjustment with sensitivity and in accordance with individual pupils' needs.

The full range of approved qualifications under Section 5 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for use by schools in Wales in 1995 will be listed as part of the annual consultation exercise with examining groups and LEAs. This consultation, administered through SEAC, is due to take place very shortly.

Disability (Schools)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered disabled teachers are employed by each local education authority; and what proportion of total teacher numbers this accounts for in each authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the numbers of registered disabled teachers is not held centrally.

Advance Factory Building

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures in terms of *(a)* units and *(b)* square metres to show advance factory building by the Welsh Development Agency by county for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The amount of factory space provided either directly or through joint ventures by the Welsh Development Agency in each county since 1979 is as follows:

Clwyd

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		*Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures*	*Bespoke floorspace—Direct*	
	Number of units	*Area m²*	*Area m²*	*Number of units*	*Area m²*
1979-80	29	13,192	—	—	7,750
1980-81	11	16,258	—	2	3,678
1981-82	135	66,800	—	—	—
1982-83	19	27,975	—	—	1,785
1983-84	12	1,858	—	—	198
1984-85	5	4,645	—	—	96
1985-86	9	13,305	—	—	2,492
1986-87	18	6,317	—	—	1,448
1987-88	10	13,623	—	—	456
1988-89	23	15,497	—	—	2,069
1989-90	16	21,646	—	1	9,290
1990-91	30	13,053	5,946	—	2,880
1991-92	9	3,252	929	—	3,530
[1]1992-93	25	21,535	1,858	—	1,207

[1] To end January 1993.

Dyfed

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	10	3,530	—	—	734
1980-81	5	1,579	—	—	584
1981-82	62	16,400	—	—	—
1982-83	14	5,025	—	—	—
1983-84	44	14,516	—	—	—
1984-85	4	6,503	—	—	536
1985-86	—	—	—	1	273
1986-87	4	465	—	—	—
1987-88	—	—	—	—	389
1988-89	8	2,638	—	—	396
1989-90	—	—	—	—	—
1990-91	24	7,432	—	—	—
1991-92	41	7,989	2,973	—	—
[1]1992-93	10	7,711	—	—	—

[1] To end January 1993.

Gwent

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	35	32,887	—	1	2,730
1980-81	35	20,346	—	1	14,683
1981-82	82	53,900	—	2	9,150
1982-83	35	22,750	—	—	—
1983-84	11	6,745	—	2	10,910
1984-85	1	1,104	—	1	7,662
1985-86	23	6,689	—	2	9,932
1986-87	9	13,053	—	1	12,084
1987-88	8	8,573	—	2	4,419
1988-89	22	27,434	—	1	8,375
1989-90	22	11,055	—	1	24,897
1990-91	20	22,482	4,180	—	6,224
1991-92	12	17,698	9,011	2	18,254
[1]1992-93	5	5,853	8,361	1	16,936

[1] To end January 1993.

Gwynedd

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	17	3,623	—	—	—
1980-81	16	4,088	—	—	202
1981-82	41	9,400	—	—	—
1982-83	43	8,350	—	—	—
1983-84	20	1,174	—	—	215
1984-85	18	1,301	—	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—	—
1986-87	7	1,022	—	—	—
1987-88	8	1,208	—	—	—
1988-89	5	1,842	—	—	—
1989-90	10	1,812	—	—	—
1990-91	33	8,826	—	—	—
1991-92	8	6,085	—	1	9,290
[1]1992-93	23	5,945	—	—	—

[1] To end January 1993.

South Glamorgan

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	31	20,810	—	—	—
1980-81	—	—	—	—	81
1981-82	40	40,500	—	—	—
1982-83	46	7,225	—	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	—	—
1984-85	4	1,858	—	—	—
1985-86	3	3,252	—	2	3,479
1986-87	—	—	—	1	1,110
1987-88	—	—	—	1	1,835
1988-89	—	—	—	—	—
1989-90	—	—	—	—	—
1990-91	—	—	4,645	1	12,077
1991-92	—	—	—	1	8,175
[1]1992-93	—	—	—	—	—

[1] To end January 1993.

Mid Glamorgan

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	14	10,870	—	1	7,880
1980-81	26	15,236	—	4	67,828
1981-82	55	20,100	—	—	1,423
1982-83	37	30,200	—	—	1,599
1983-84	23	8,640	—	—	274
1984-85	4	2,787	—	1	3,030
1985-86	6	557	—	2	7,505
1986-87	3	5,110	—	1	4,316
1987-88	22	12,018	—	4	25,134
1988-89	7	7,590	—	2	27,633
1989-90	47	40,738	—	2	10,824
1990-91	35	35,112	24,805	—	1,022
1991-92	29	16,815	35,488	1	1,858
[1]1992-93	10	6,596	13,656·5	—	—

[1] To end January 1993.

West Glamorgan

	Speculative floorspace—Direct		Speculative floorspace—Joint ventures	Bespoke floorspace—Direct	
	Number of units	Area m²	Area m²	Number of units	Area m²
1979-80	4	1,115	—	2	5,451
1980-81	3	4,181	—	—	268
1981-82	41	22,800	—	—	1,897
1982-83	10	1,350	—	—	—
1983-84	27	27,871	—	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—	591
1986-87	7	3,057	—	—	—
1987-88	11	11,202	—	—	28
1988-89	12	2,770	—	—	—
1989-90	21	17,881	—	—	—
1990-91	12	7,200	2,880	—	—
1991-92	1	929	—	1	16,722
[1]1992-93	85	7,896	—	—	3,530

[1] To end January 1993.

Help Helpline

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Welsh health helpline will be operational outside normal office hours on *(a)* an answerphone and *(b)* an operational basis; and what proposals he has to monitor its effectiveness.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since its inception on 30 November 1992, Health Line Wales has been manned from 9 am to 5 pm every weekday, and an answerphone service operates outside those hours. All calls are monitored, and this information will be part of the evaluation of the service.

Health Service (Catering)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further progress he has to report on guidance to South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the suspended catering contract awarded to Gardner Merchant.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Further guidance will be issued to South Glamorgan health authority as soon as possible.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish an independent environment agency in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *857-58*.

Offshore Emergencies

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are currently being undertaken by his Department to secure access to night-time helicopter coverage to deal with offshore emergencies off the coast of Wales and in the Irish sea between 1994 and 1996.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

Sea King SAR flights at RNAS Prestwick and RAF Chivenor will provide night-time search and rescue helicopter coverage off the coast of Wales and in the Irish sea for the period in question.

Welsh Economy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations he has had for public funding of Cardiff Business School Welsh economic research unit's proposed input-output model of the Welsh economy;

(2) what consultations he has had with the south Glamorgan training and enterprise council regarding public funding for the Cardiff Business School Welsh economic research unit's proposal for an input-output model of the Welsh economy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A request for the Welsh Office to contribute to the funding of the model is being considered.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Professional Boxing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to place statutory controls on professional boxing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to place statutory controls on professional boxing. The responsibility for the management of individual activities rests with the governing bodies of sport.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set up an inquiry into the management of professional boxing and its medical control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans for such an inquiry. The British Boxing Board of Control has considerably enhanced its medical safeguards over the past year.

Tourist Bodies

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether, at the end of the term of office of the present incumbent, he will separate the posts of chairman of the English tourist board and chairman of the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Key: The present arrangement, whereby the chairmanship of the British Tourist Authority and the chairmanship of the English tourist board are held by the same person, has worked well for the past eight years. The bringing together of these two posts has increased the effectiveness and efficiency of the two bodies, which complement each other's efforts on behalf of the tourism industry. I therefore have no plans to separate the posts.

Public Swimming Pools

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the council-owned public swimming pools which have been closed in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Brooke: The Great Britain Sports Council estimate that the number of council owned swimming pools in the United Kingdom increased from around 1,100 in 1982 to 1,300 in 1992. In addition it is estimated that there are another 200 pools available with an element of community use. Closure figures are not readily available.

National Lottery

Mr. Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to set the regime for tax and money for good causes for the national lottery so that the combined total is the same as that for the football pools; and if he will estimate the total of tax and money for other good causes from football pools.

Mr. Brooke: Taxation regimes are a matter for the Chancellor. The amount of pool betting duty paid in 1991-92 was £319·46 million. The pools companies contributed over £20 million to the Football Trust in 1991-92, following the reduction of 2·5 per cent. in pool betting duty introduced in the 1990 Budget. A further reduction of 2·5 per cent. in the 1991 Budget, combined with the 5p levy on every £1 staked by players, yielded over £60 million for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts in the same year.

TRANSPORT

InterCity

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what expectation for surplus revenue has been set down for British Rail's InterCity operations for the next five year planning period.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is currently reviewing the financial projections of all its businesses.

Shipping

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ships were classified in the British Register of Merchant Ships as *(a)* general cargo, *(b)* tanker including ore bulk, oil, *(c)* container ship, *(d)* roll-on roll-off ferry and *(e)* offshore supply vessel in each of the years since 1969.

Mr. Norris: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many United Kingdom registered vessels had crews of which *(a)* over 25 per cent. and *(b)* over 50 per cent. were non-EC nationals in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details for each of the last five years of the number of port state control inspections of *(a)* British registered ships, and the percentage of those failing to meet safety standards and *(b)* foreign ships, with the percentage of all foreign ships entering United Kingdom ports that figure represents, and the percentage of those failing to meet safety standards.

Mr. Norris: The number of inspections of British-registered ships (excluding fishing vessels), and the percentage of those detained for failing to meet safety standards, for each of the last five financial years is as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Percentage detained*
1987[1]	1,086	0·8
1988-89	956	0·2
1989-90	[2]3,894	0·2
1990-91	3,414	0·2
1991-92	3,954	0·2

[1] Calendar year.
[2] Following the Marchioness disaster it was decided to both increase numbers of inspections of United Kingdom ships and revise the statistical basis of their calculation. The figure for 1989-90 onwards reflects this change in policy.

The number of port state control inspections of foreign registered ships, the percentage of all foreign registered ships entering the United Kingdom that this represents, and the percentage of those detained for failing to meet safety standards, for each of the last five financial years is as follows:

Year	Number	Percentage inspected	Percentage detained
1987-88	2,188	34·0	0·8
1988-89	1,830	29·7	2·5
1989-90	1,783	27·7	3·0
1990-91	2,197	31·1	3·8
1991-92	2,397	[1]33·8	5·3

[1] Provisional figure.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vessels exceeding 100 NRT were on the British Register of Shipping in *(a)* 1965, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Steven Norris: Information is not available for vessels of 100 NRT or above. The table gives data for vessels of 100 GRT or above.

Vessels on registers of United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man 100 GRT or more

Mid-year	Number of vessels
1965	4,437
1970	3,822
1980	3,181
1985	2,378
1986	2,256
1987	2,165
1988	2,142
1989	2,053
1990	1,998
1991	1,949
1992	1,747

Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping Statistical Tables.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British registered vessels, at the last available date, had crews of which more than 50 per cent. were Polish nationals; and how many of these ships were *(a)* tankers and *(b)* roll-on roll-off ferries.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available.

Tyne and Wear Metro

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to alter the ownership and control of Tyne and Wear Metro.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that the transport by air of radioactive materials and waste from nuclear installations should not take place over the north-east of England.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No: there are no safety reasons for adopting a policy of avoiding such transport over particular areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the current regulations which govern *(a)* the transport of radioactive material and *(b)* the movement by air of radioactive waste from nuclear installations.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The regulations governing the safe transport of radioactive material by all modes are:

Internationally recommended regulations

International Atomic Energy Agency's Safety Series No. 6: Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Materials 1985 Edition (As Amended 1990).

National regulations for the transport of radioactive materials based on the IAEA safety series No. 6

Road

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) Regulations 1974 (S.I. 1974, No. 1735);

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) Regulations 1985 (S.I. 1985, No. 1729);

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1983 (S.R. 1983, No. 344);

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986 (S.R. 1986, No. 61).

Sea

The Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants) Regulations 1990 (S.I. 1990, No. 2605); Merchant Shipping Notice No. M1432, "The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants in Ships, the 'Blue Book' and the IMDG Code".

Air

The Air Navigation Order 1989 (S.I. 1989, No. 2004); The Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1939); The Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (S.I. 1986, No. 2129); The Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) (Third Amendment) Regulations 1990 (S.I. 1990, No. 2531).

Ports

The Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 37).

Rail

British Rail List of Dangerous Goods (L.D.G.) and the Conditions of Acceptance by Rail on Freight Services and Parcel Services (BR 22426 (1989 Edition)) (Class 7) —British Railways Board.

Inland Waterways

British Waterways Board Terms and Conditions: Dangerous Goods BWB 1981, and Schedule of Dangerous Goods ("The Green Book"), BWB 1981 (Class 7).

International agreements and codes for the transport of radioactive materials based on IAEA safety series No. 6

Road in Europe

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) (Class 7).

Rail in Europe

Convention concerning the International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) Appendix B, Uniform rules concerning the contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM) Annex 1, Regulations concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) (Class 7).

Sea

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG Code) (Class 7).

Air

International Civil Aviation Organisation's Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (Class 7).

The regulations for air transport cover all types of radioactive material.

Oil Spills

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oil spills of over 2 tonnes were recorded for waters around the United Kingdom in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: The published survey of the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea shows that in 1991 there were 95 spills of oil over 1 tonne in United Kingdom waters from all sources (ships, rigs, land-based etc.). Figures are not available for spills in excess of 2 tonnes.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oil spills requiring clean-up operations by the marine pollution control unit occurred in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of all clean up treatments in that year took place in the Bristol channel and south Wales coastal region.

Mr. Norris: None. In 1991, all ship-related pollution incidents reported to the marine pollution control unit were assessed by them and monitored where appropriate (including aerial surveillance). In no case was it necessary to mobilise MPCU's clean-up resources.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oil spills were reported for waters around the United Kingdom (i) between 1980 and 1990 and (ii) in 1990; and how many successful prosecutions were carried out in 1990.

Mr. Norris: The survey of the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea shows that (i) in the period 1983-1990 there were 4,170 incidents of oil spills reported in United Kingdom waters from all sources (ships, oil rigs, land-based etc.). No figures are available prior to 1983. (ii) In 1990 there were 791 incidents. In 1990, there were 22 successful prosecutions.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he has made to implement in his Department the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992.

Mr. Norris: These regulations, in so far as they embrace transport, apply to employers who conduct undertakings from which a radiation emergency is reasonably foreseeable, and first-tier local authorities: the Department therefore has no direct responsibility for their implementation.

MV Braer

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects *(a)* the marine accident investigation branch inquiry into the MV Braer and *(b)* the public inquiry to complete their investigations.

Mr. Norris: It is far too early to give any completion dates for either the comprehensive marine accident investigation branch inquiry into the cases of the Braer accident or the complex Lord Donaldson inquiry on the protection of the United Kingdom coastline from merchant shipping.

Birmingham Relief Road

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further plans he has for consultation in relation to the Birmingham northern relief road in the area of North Warwickshire borough.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The formal non-statutory public consultation has been undertaken for the Birmingham northern relief road. I expect liaison to continue, however, between my Department, its concessionaire Midlands Expressway and those in North Warwickshire borough, as elsewhere.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the line orders in respect of the Birmingham northern relief road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Within the next few months.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many duplicate vehicle registration documents have been issued by the DVLA in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The application form for a replacement vehicle registration document serves either as an application for a duplicate of the original document or, if the vehicle has changed hands without it, for a registration document in the name of the new vehicle keeper. About two thirds of all applications are in the latter category.

The number of applications made in both categories in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1988	1,546,678
1989	1,757,121
1990	1,871,290
1991	2,033,694
1992	2,027,970

Rail Electrification

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has received from British Rail for the electrification of the Manchester-Preston-Blackpool railway lines.

Mr. Freeman: I have received no investment submission from British Rail for the electrification of these lines.

Road Lighting

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when *(a)* the M6 between its junction with the M1 and junction 3 and *(b)* the Coventry eastern bypass will be provided with lighting.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is no case yet for lighting either of these roads. However, a scheme to widen the M6, including the stretch between the M1 and junction 3, is in the Department's road programme, and as part of that scheme we will be reassessing the case for lighting any of the unlit stretches.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has drawn from the use of plastic lighting shields fixed to the central barriers of part of the M6 between Coventry and Birmingham; and what plans he has to extend their use to other motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The plastic vane type anti-glare screen on the section of the M6 in Warwickshire above the central reserve safety fencing was erected as a trial in the mid-1970s. The trial showed that, while the screen was effective in cutting off light from oncoming vehicle headlights, the installation had no significant effect on the number of injury accidents along this length of motorway.

The results of the trial are reported in report No. SS 1058:1976 published by the social survey division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; TRRL report No. SR 327:1977 and TRRL report No. 955:1980. Copies of these reports are in the House Library.

I have no general plans to install anti-glare screens on other motorways. However, should a specific problem of headlight glare be identified due to the alignment of a section of road then the provision of an anti-glare device might be considered.

M6

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the southbound access to the M6 at junction 1 to re-open; and what work is currently being undertaken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The southbound access slip road is expected to re-open on 11 February. Some further overnight closures will, however, be necessary before the works are fully completed in mid-March. The closure of the slip road is to allow strengthening works to be carried out on both carriageways of the M6 between junction 1 and the M1.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the effect on road accident figures of a new junction on the M6 west of Corley services.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Secretary of State has no plans to build a junction on the M6 west of Corley services. Consequently, no such estimate has been made.

Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the report, "Guide to Environmental Best Practice for Company Transport", produced in November 1992 by the Government's Advisory Committees on Business and the Environment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment is to be congratulated on producing this timely and practical advice. Getting the best from company transport fleets will save money, save energy and help save the environment. The guide rightly stresses the importance of companies making the environment a major concern in formulating their transport policies. I urge both businesses and public bodies to do what they can to adopt the best practice approach set out in the guide.

Rail Passengers (Compensation)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to seek to extend compensation payments for railway passengers to cover overcrowding, unavailability of seats and lack of cleanliness on trains.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail has no plans at present to extend the compensation arrangements introduced by the passengers charter. The current arrangements relate mainly to punctuality and reliability which are the factors passengers say are of most importance to them. Where passengers book a seat, compensation may also be available if the seat is not provided.

Young Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to publish a Green Paper on possible restrictions on young drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am considering various options for reducing the high accident rate associated with young drivers. We hope to issue a consultation paper in the summer.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the result of comparisons of injury crashes of drivers aged *(a)* 17, *(b)* 18 and *(c)* 19 years in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The available information for injury accidents involving drivers aged 17, 18 and 19 in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England is shown in the table for 1991. Estimates of accidents within each of the specified age groups are not currently available for Northern Ireland but they are being produced for future reference.

Accidents	*Northern Ireland*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*England*
Involving drivers aged:				
17	—	508	704	8,663
18	—	744	971	12,294
19	—	715	1,117	12,195
TOTAL (17 to 19)	955	1,967	2,792	33,152

Disabled Parking Places

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the action taken in respect of persons who park in spots reserved for disabled people.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Legislation already exists to control the use of parking places reserved for disabled badge holders, both on-street and in local authority car parks, which have been designated by an Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In both circumstances the police and local authority have powers to prosecute offenders and those parked on-street can be issued with a fixed penalty notice. If prosecuted, able-bodied people who misuse such spaces face a fine of up to £1,000. The level of enforcement given to these offences is a matter for individual chief constables and local authorities to determine.

In privately owned and operated car parks, it is for individual operators to take whatever steps they consider necessary to see that reserved spaces are not misused.

M1

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has so far been made on widening the M1; what are the anticipated start and finish dates for the work; and what is the likely cost.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Proposals to widen the M1 between the M25, junction 6A and the M18, junction 32, were added to the road programme by the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", in May 1989. The estimated works cost, at November 1987 prices, was given in "Trunk Roads, England: Into the 1990s" as approximately £1 billion. The work is being carried forward under a number of consultant commissions. We expect to let a construction contract shortly to add a fourth lane northbound between junctions 9 and 10, and work should be completed by the end of the year. Other commissions are at earlier stages. Public consultation has been carried out for two sections between junctions 6A and 15 and the results will be announced later this year. Other consultations are in prospect. Subsequent progress will depend on the outcome of the statutory procedures and the availability of funding.

Liberian-registered Ships

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Liberian Government as to the level of expenditure on inspecting the condition of foreign vessels registered in Liberia in each of the last five years and the frequency with which ships are required to be inspected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None. The Liberian registry is managed on behalf of the Liberian Administration by an American company, International Registers Incorporated, which operates from Reston, Virginia, USA. Details of International Registers Incorporated's expenditure on surveys are not available. We understand that Liberian vessels are inspected at least once a year by classification societies or independent surveyors appointed by International Registers Incorporated.

Company Cars

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative accident rates for company cars and for privately owned cars and of the proportion of road accidents in which company cars are involved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Company-owned cars were involved in 17 per cent. of injury road accidents in 1991. An assessment of the relative accident involvement and casualty rates for company-owned cars is contained in the publication "Car and Driver: Injury Accident and Casualty Rates: Great Britain 1990", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Roads Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is his policy to offer land *(a)* equally advantageous and *(b)* with comparable public access where land is compulsorily purchased as a result of his Department's roads programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 February 1992]:* Where my right hon. Friend is authorised to acquire certain special types of land, such as an open space or common, he is required to follow the provisions of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The compulsory purchase order is the subject of special parliamentary procedure, unless the Secretary of State for the Environment certifies either that equivalent land has been or will be given in exchange; or that the land does not exceed 250 square yards in extent.

British Rail (Redundancies)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many employees British Rail is seeking to make redundant; how many have so far been accepted for redundancy; and how many of those accepted are *(a)* management, *(b)* clerical, *(c)* supervisors, *(d)* drivers and *(e)* guards.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* British Rail expects that some 7,000 staff will be accepted for redundancy as a result of the response to the voluntary severance offer made last November. Final decisions have yet to be made on those to be accepted.

Plutonium

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what forecast has been made of the number of movements of plutonium by air out of Carlisle if the Thorp and Nirex proposals are granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The current usage of Carlisle airport by British Nuclear Fuels (12 to 24 flights per year) is not likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Seat Belts

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what resources have been allocated to provide advice to *(a)* pregnant women and *(b)* parents on the installation and wearing of seat belts and restraints for children.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department provides information of a general nature on the installation and wearing of seat belts and child restraints. Specific advice concerning the installation of particular products is best obtained from the manufacturers or a competent installer.

Road Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance has been issued to road safety officers in the past 12 months; and what discussions and consultations there have been with road safety officers prior to their publication.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department offers frequent guidance and advice to road safety officers on relevant

developments in road safety education, training and publicity. We also alert them in advance to particular road safety campaigns, and hold regular liaison meetings with road safety officer representative bodies to discuss matters of common interest.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent publications have been made available, and to whom, relating to road safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The following publications have been issued in the last three months.

Circular Roads 1/93 Local speed Limits
"Killing Speed and Saving Lives—The Government's strategy for tackling the problem of excess speed on our roads"
The Highway Code

Copies were sent on publication to local authorities, local authority associations, police, interested professional organisations, lobby groups, motoring organisations, and individuals who have requested copies. I also sent copies of the first two documents to Members who have written to me on the subject of speed in recent months.

In addition, a number of leaflets and posters have been issued to road safety officers, the police and motoring organisations dealing with winter driving, drinking and driving, including rehabilitation courses for drink-drive offenders; and seat belts.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the statutory duties of local authorities in respect of road safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety and make contributions towards the cost of measures for promoting road safety taken by other authorities or bodies. They also have duties in regard of speed, pedestrian crossings, street furniture and other safety aspects.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the local authorities which do not employ road safety officers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It is for individual local authorities to assess their own requirement for road safety officers, having regard to the needs of the local community.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what advice he has issued to local authorities on the appointment of road safety officers;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the numbers of road safety officers required per 1,000 population.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is for individual local authorities to assess their own requirement for road safety officers, having regard for the needs of the local community.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Race Relations

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider the proposed reductions in section 11 funding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government remain firmly committed to the reduction of racial disadvantage, and section 11 grant continues to play an important role in our programme. My right hon. and learned Friend and I regret, however, that in the present economic circumstances it is not possible to sustain throughout the next three years the level of expenditure that had earlier been planned.

Persistent Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the full results of his Department's recent survey of police forces, designed to identify the number of persistent juvenile offenders;

(2) how many persistent juvenile offenders were identified by his Department's recent survey request to police forces for details of juveniles known or alleged to have committed 10 or more offences between 1 April and 30 June 1992;

(3) if he will place in the Library full results of the recent survey of social services departments, designed to identify the number of persistent offenders;

(4) how many persistent juvenile offenders were identified by the recent request to social services departments for details of juveniles known or alleged to have committed 10 or more offences between 1 April and 30 June 1992.

Mr. Jack: I intend to place a full report of the results of the survey in the Library as soon as it has been completed. The report will show that the survey, in which all police forces and local authority social service departments in England and Wales were invited to take part, was intended to improve our knowledge and understanding of the extent and nature of the problem of persistent juvenile offending. For this purpose, respondents were invited to provide information about juveniles who were known or believed to have committed ten or more offences in the period between 1 April and 30 June 1992.

Although the results of the survey have improved the level of our knowledge and understanding of the problem, not all respondents (including two of the largest police forces) held their information in a way which allowed them to produce precise numerical data. It is, therefore, evident that the total figure of 106 juveniles identified by this exercise considerably underestimates the extent of the problem.

Seat Belts (Prosecutions)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many successful prosecutions there have been in the last 10 years for breaches of the regulations on the wearing of seat belts in cars.

Mr. Jack: Findings of guilt at magistrates courts for not wearing a seat belt in England and Wales are shown in the following table. From 1 October 1986, the police have been able to issue fixed penalty notices for these offences as an alternative to prosecution and estimates of the number of such notices are also shown.

Year issued	Findings of guilt	Fixed penalty notices
1983	6,909	—
1984	10,935	—
1985	14,115	—
1986	19,211	18,100
1987	7,504	58,400
1988	6,837	71,700
1989	7,275	89,100
1990	8,466	127,200
1991	9,856	122,800

Convicted Murderer (Television Broadcast)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of how the interview with a convicted murderer broadcast on television on 26 January was *(a)* arranged and *(b)* supervised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It would not be appropriate for me to discuss matters which are awaiting trial.

Prisoners (Cell Occupation)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners shared *(a)* three to a cell, *(b)* two to a cell and *(c)* occupied a single cell at the latest available date; and what proportion of each category were (i) convicted and (ii) remand prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The following table shows how many prisoners shared three and two to cells certified as normal accommodation for one person on 18 December 1992. Information is not available for the proportion of convicted and remand prisoners held three or two to a cell, and instead the table provides a breakdown of figures by type of establishment.

Information is not available on the number of prisoners occupying single cells.

Establishment type	Three to a cell	Two to a cell
Local prison	201	4,072
Remand centre	3	570
Adult training prison	6	118
Young offender institution	0	228
Female establishment	0	34
Total	210	5,022

Prison Education

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, columns *715-16*, how many existing providers of education have responded to his request; and when he expects to be able to indicate how many and which organisations will be contracted to provide education in prisons between 1 April and 30 September.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By 1 February 1993, the Prison Service had received responses from 42 local education authorities and 61 colleges and institutions of further education. Existing providers have been offered the option of continuing to provide education services on the present terms until 31 August 1993. Where they are unable or unwilling to do so, contracts will be awarded under the current competitive tender. Decisions are expected to be reached within the next two weeks.

Channing's Wood Prison (Education)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to respond to the letter of 29 December from the hon. Member for South Hams about the tendering for the provision of prison education at HM Prison Channings Wood by Chris Brimecombe and colleagues directors of Vygo, of 42 Churston Way, Brixham, South Devon.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I expect to reply to my hon. Friend this week.

Prison Cells (Capital Cost)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average capital cost of a new prison cell in 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average cost per place for new prisons opening in 1992 was £130,000. This includes both living accommodation and the other facilities needed.

Wolds Remand Centre

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly cost in 1992 of keeping a person in *(a)* the Wolds remand centre and *(b)* a state-run prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average weekly cost of keeping a person in Wolds remand prison from April 1992, when the prison opened, until December 1992 was £626. This compares with an average net operating cost for 1991-92 for all prisons run by the Prison Service of £442 per prisoner per week. This comparison is misleading, since unit costs are higher in the period during which a prison opens and is filling with prisoners, as Wolds was doing in 1992. Wolds is now more than 95 per cent. full.

Seat Belts (Regulations Enforcement)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been issued to police forces concerning enforcement of the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. The enforcement of road traffic law, which would include the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) Regulations 1982, is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Anthony Charles Jeffs

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will intervene in the planned release of Anthony Charles Jeffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. I took the decision in accordance with normal policy and practice for the release of mandatory life sentence prisoners.

Police (Audit Commission Reports)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the changes effected by police forces in England and Wales to

the recommendations made in each of the Audit Commission police papers published since 1988; and if he will give details of the main changes implemented by the police service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The 11 reports which have been published so far are addressed primarily to police authorities and police forces and offer thematic guidance for auditors who review the work of the authorities.

Many of the changes recommended in the reports have been introduced by forces. They are also actively promoted in forces by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and progress in implementation is reflected in published inspectorate reports.

Main changes include:

(a) Increased use of civilians which has released officers for operation duties;

(b) The implementation of a standing offers scheme for the purchasing of police vehicles which has identified substantial savings;

(c) Improvements to police communications rooms through: further civilianisation, more flexible shifts, better technology and increased centralisation;

(d) Introduction of enhanced performance measures including activity sampling;

(e) Improved management structures—more than three quarters of all forces have undergone, or are in the process of carrying out reviews of their management structures, including shift systems.

Police (Education)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 *(a)* the number of graduates recruited and *(b)* the percentage of officers who are graduates;

(2) what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of police officers in each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 who had *(a)* no GCE or GCSE grade A-C passes, *(b)* four or fewer GCE or GCSE grade A-C passes, *(c)* more than four GCE or GCSE grade A-C passes but no A level passes, *(d)* one A level, *(e)* two or more A level passes and *(f)* a degree.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Much of the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information which is available is given in the table. The total number of graduate recruits who began initial training in 1981 was 468. The number of graduate appointments in 1991 was 441, a breakdown of which is shown in the table.

Number of Graduates in Police Forces in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991

Force	*1981 graduates*	*1981 strength*	*Percentage*	*1991 graduates*	*1991 strength*	*Percentage*	*1991 graduate appointments*
Avon and Somerset	89	3,066	2·9	225	3,072	7·3	13
Bedfordshire	10	995	1·0	42	1,090	3·9	3
Cambridgeshire	30	1,135	2·6	75	1,239	6·1	4
Cheshire	37	1,875	2·0	117	1,867	6·3	1
City of London	11	878	1·3	54	809	6·7	7
Cleveland	29	1,497	1·9	81	1,477	5·5	3
Cumbria	32	1,135	2·8	66	1,183	5·6	6
Derbyshire	35	1,805	1·9	109	1,706	6·4	0
Devon and Cornwall	58	2,736	2·1	181	2,876	6·3	15
Dorset	11	1,191	0·9	47	1,280	3·7	4
Durham	24	1,387	1·7	100	1,378	7·3	5
Dyfed Powys	15	943	1·6	45	944	4·8	5
Essex	37	2,653	1·4	115	2,878	4·0	4
Gloucestershire	19	1,144	1·7	62	1,178	5·3	4
Greater Manchester	159	7,010	2·3	535	6,975	7·7	21
Gwent	15	982	1·5	54	995	5·4	1
Hampshire	46	3,093	1·5	198	3,177	6·2	18
Hertfordshire	46	1,590	2·9	102	1,679	6·1	6
Humberside	34	1,985	1·7	112	2,016	5·6	6
Kent	45	2,919	1·5	119	3,039	3·9	8
Lancashire	73	3,213	2·3	239	3,205	7·5	20
Leicestershire	39	1,749	2·2	97	1,808	5·4	8
Lincolnshire	16	1,199	1·3	57	1,198	4·8	5
Merseyside	107	4,748	2·3	323	4,605	7·0	23
Metropolitan	684	25,103	2·7	1,592	28,126	5·7	91
Norfolk	14	1,278	1·1	51	1,419	3·6	5
Northamptonshire	17	1,019	1·7	84	1,156	7·3	3
Northumbria	93	3,378	2·8	268	3,460	7·7	0
North Wales	17	1,309	1·3	89	1,343	6·6	4
North Yorkshire	27	1,370	2·0	79	1,382	5·7	14
Nottinghamshire	50	2,295	2·2	180	2,334	7·7	14
South Wales	59	3,132	1·9	228	3,142	7·3	12
South Yorkshire	61	2,922	2·1	158	2,989	5·3	3
Staffordshire	25	2,122	1·2	89	2,185	4·1	2
Suffolk	13	1,126	1·2	45	1,203	3·7	5
Surrey	36	1,620	2·2	97	1,681	5·8	8
Sussex	76	2,869	2·6	192	2,969	6·5	15
Thames Valley	63	3,131	2·0	216	3,722	5·8	17
Warwickshire	23	943	2·4	74	1,005	7·4	2
West Mercia	18	1,959	0·9	114	2,028	5·6	7
West Midlands	180	6,792	2·7	479	6,893	6·9	42
West Yorkshire	127	5,210	2·4	342	5,143	6·6	2
Wiltshire	13	1,071	1·2	52	1,212	4·3	5
Totals	2,613	119,577	2·2	7,584	125,066	6·1	441

Police National Computer

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which companies are being considered to assist in the project to convert criminal records on to the police national computer; and what is their country of ownership;

(2) what stage has been reached in the project to load United Kingdom criminal records on to the police national computer; and when the project is likely to be completed;

(3) what steps are being taken to seek bids for British companies to put criminal records on to the police national computer;

(4) who are the consultants advising on the project to load United Kingdom criminal records on to the police national computer.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Work is in hand to assess the likely costs and practicality of converting the information contained in the criminal records held on microfiche at the national identification bureau into electronic form for inclusion on the police national computer. Hoskyns Group plc supported by Expert Systems Ltd., is assisting the Home Office in this work. When it has been completed my right hon. and learned Friend will consider how and where the back record conversion process can best be undertaken.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sets of microfiche hold the records on the police national computer.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police national computer database includes an index of the names of all those for whom there is a record at the national identification bureau. These records, which relate to some 5.25 million individuals, are held on microfiche. There is at least one microfiche for each individual.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many names are held on the police national computer records.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The names database on the police national computer holds 5,292,439 records (excluding aliases). The PNC also holds records of 42,480,704 vehicles, including the name of the registered keeper.

Police (Sick Leave)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days per officer for each police force in England and Wales were lost due to *(a)* assault-related sick leave and *(b)* sick leave not due to assaults, in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested for 1990 and 1991 is shown as follows. The figures for 1992 are not yet available.

Force	*Days lost due to assault-related sickness 1990*	*Days sick non-assault 1990*	*Days lost due to assault-related sickness 1991*	*Days sick non-assault 1991*
Avon and Somerset	1,402	29,714	840	30,357
Bedfordshire	582	13,206	831	12,719
Cambridgeshire	213	14,518	589	12,518
Cheshire	1,109	19,027	921	22,041
City of London	37	9,986	6	8,899
Cleveland	731	28,232	610	23,384
Cumbria	169	13,256	358	12,125
Derbyshire	648	18,675	1,135	23,358
Devon and Cornwall	865	26,337	986	28,131
Dorset	406	9,259	325	13,749
Durham	1,191	14,685	1,129	15,825
Dyfed Powys	622	9,703	223	10,801
Essex	629	35,889	454	32,540
Gloucestershire	259	11,531	338	13,148
Greater Manchester	3,708	95,986	3,618	86,936
Gwent	330	10,607	126	13,627
Hampshire	2,170	30,986	930	43,295
Hertfordshire	650	21,668	640	22,647
Humberside	895	26,164	856	20,096
Kent	542	28,917	190	20,324
Lancashire	1,371	51,136	2,422	47,516
Leicestershire	644	23,580	678	24,466
Lincolnshire	670	15,691	758	17,206
Merseyside	4,086	75,330	4,264	87,094
Norfolk	381	17,307	157	15,314
North Wales	623	17,695	810	22,055
North Yorkshire	274	16,047	419	18,948
Northamptonshire	132	14,188	65	15,276
Northumbria	4,296	32,013	3,993	30,281
Nottinghamshire	1,302	2,6934	1,081	26,879
South Wales	2,422	40,948	2,874	46,868
South Yorkshire	1,297	35,065	600	36,728
Staffordshire	1,120	31,696	1,096	34,892
Suffolk	443	8,888	333	8,649
Surrey	811	14,608	641	18,644
Sussex	1,026	29,138	1,708	38,921
Thames Valley	1,144	25,848	761	35,728
Warwickshire	438	11,919	275	13,874
West Mercia	487	24,449	405	25,873

Force	Days lost due to assault-related sickness 1990	Days sick non-assault 1990	Days lost due to assault-related sickness 1991	Days sick non-assault 1991
West Midlands	—	48,785	1,279	64,594
West Yorkshire	2,455	55,160	2,880	61,815
Wiltshire	456	9,829	400	9,293
SUB TOTAL	43,036	1,094,600	43,004	1,167,454
Metropolitan Police	7,598	353,091	10,564	310,343
TOTAL	50,634	1,447,691	53,568	1,477,797

Crime Statistics

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to introduce a common methodology for the reporting of manpower requirements, crime statistics and clear up rates by police force in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each of these matters is dealt with by a methodology which is common to all police forces.

Mr. Allan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage change in levels of recorded crime since 1979; and what has been the percentage change in the total establishment of the police since 1979.

Mr. Jack: The number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales rose by 108 per cent. between 1979 and 1991. Over the same period, the authorised police establishment rose by 7 per cent. whereas the actual police strength, including civilians, rose by 17 per cent. to a total of 172,014.

Police Numbers

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force area in England and Wales in 1971, 1981 and 1991 *(a)* the resident population, *(b)* the police officer establishment, *(c)* total police expenditure, *(d)* the police officer-population ratio and *(e)* expenditure per resident expressed both in current and at 1971 prices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The requested information for 1981 and 1991 is set out in the following tables.

The local government rearrangements of 1974 mean that it is not practicable to provide comparable information for 1971. Expenditure per resident is, therefore, expressed in current and 1981 prices.

Police force	1981 (a) Resident population[1] '000s	(b) Authorised establishment[2]	(c) Total police expenditure[3] (£)	(d) Population per police officer[1]	(e) Expenditure per resident 1981 prices (£)	(e) Expenditure per resident current prices[4] (£)
Avon and Somerset	1,344	3,020	48,099,044	445	35·79	63·88
Bedfordshire	503	975	16,909,020	516	33·62	60·01
Cambridgeshire	584	1,140	18,088,165	512	30·97	55·29
Cheshire	929	1,845	29,723,727	504	32·00	57·11
Cleveland	567	1,474	23,187,854	385	40·90	73·00
Cumbria	468	1,128	17,013,559	415	36·35	64·89
Derbyshire	900	1,767	29,428,613	509	32·70	58·37
Devon and Cornwall	1,378	2,734	46,538,966	504	33·77	60·28
Dorset	595	1,176	19,323,275	506	32·48	57·97
Durham	603	1,355	20,869,896	445	34·61	61·78
Essex	1,389	2,633	41,825,130	528	30·11	53·75
Gloucestershire	500	1,131	16,266,919	442	32·53	58·07
Greater Manchester	2,635	6,941	111,677,941	380	42·38	75·65
Hampshire	1,584	3,084	48,798,089	514	30·81	54·99
Hertfordshire	812	1,568	25,497,169	518	31·40	56·05
Humberside	850	1,972	32,384,102	431	38·10	68·01
Kent	1,463	2,871	48,829,581	510	33·38	59·58
Lancashire	1,366	3,158	50,924,265	433	37·28	66·55
Leicestershire	839	1,727	27,538,409	486	32·82	58·59
Lincolnshire	538	1,182	19,972,458	455	37·12	66·27
Merseyside	1,518	4,607	78,120,172	330	51·46	91·86
Norfolk	693	1,265	19,903,862	548	28·72	51·27
Northamptonshire	526	1,006	15,990,957	523	30·40	54·27
Northumbria	1,443	3,355	53,591,955	430	37·14	66·29
North Yorkshire	663	1,368	22,684,511	485	34·21	61·07
Nottinghamshire	974	2,259	35,952,785	431	36·91	65·89
South Yorkshire	1,302	2,872	44,972,800	453	34·54	61·66
Staffordshire	1,004	2,099	32,304,078	478	32·18	57·43
Suffolk	603	1,124	19,478,036	536	32·30	57·66
Surrey	726	1,602	25,581,395	453	35·24	62·90
Sussex	1,306	2,823	43,746,202	463	33·50	59·79
Thames Valley	1,779	3,107	50,747,135	573	28·53	50·92

1981

Police force	(a) Resident population[1] '000s	(b) Authorised establishment[2]	(c) Total police expenditure[3] (£)	(d) Population per police officer[1]	(e) Expenditure per resident 1981 prices (£)	(e) Expenditure per resident current prices[4] (£)
Warwickshire	470	920	14,956,560	511	31·82	56·80
West Mercia	993	1,921	31,057,520	517	31·28	55·83
West Midlands	2,686	6,684	102,556,453	402	38·18	68·16
West Yorkshire	2,066	5,154	77,772,868	401	37·64	67·20
Wiltshire	522	1,035	16,342,216	504	31·31	55·88
Dyfed-Powys	433	934	13,709,012	464	31·66	56·51
Gwent	435	975	15,013,752	446	34·51	61·61
North Wales	613	1,313	20,060,165	467	32·72	58·41
South Wales	1,295	3,105	49,634,021	417	38·33	68·41
City of London	5	1,022	17,738,644	5	3,547·73	6,332·74
Metropolitan	7,323	26,577	552,223,788	276	75·41	134·61
Total	49,222	120,008	2,047,035,069	410		

[1] Details obtained from HMCIC annual report 1981.
[2] Authorised establishment at 31 December 1981.
[3] Expenditure in financial year 1981-82.
[4] Current is taken to mean 1991-92 prices.

1991

Police force	(a) Resident population[1] (thousands)	(b) Authorised establishment[2]	(c) Total police expenditure[3] (£)	(d) Population per police officer[1]	(e) Expenditure per resident 1981 prices (£)	(e) Expenditure per resident Current prices[4] (£)
Avon and Somerset	1,416	3,085	111,509,219	459	44·12	78·75
Bedfordshire	535	1,117	39,147,522	479	40·99	73·17
Cambridgeshire	664	1,231	47,115,875	539	39·75	70·96
Cheshire	959	1,900	66,959,764	505	39·12	69·82
Cleveland	552	1,502	54,802,204	368	55·62	99·28
Cumbria	492	1,183	45,080,152	416	51·33	91·63
Derbyshire	933	1,825	66,048,347	511	39·66	70·79
Devon and Cornwall	1,497	2,880	117,436,426	520	43·95	78·45
Dorset	658	1,287	52,005,892	511	44·28	79·04
Durham	599	1,389	48,588,804	431	45·44	81·12
Essex	1,465	2,892	115,540,004	507	44·18	78·87
Gloucestershire	531	1,183	44,611,445	449	47·07	84·01
Greater Manchester	2,590	7,057	248,807,274	367	53·82	96·06
Hampshire	1,676	3,202	124,970,146	523	41·77	74·56
Hertfordshire	842	1,680	62,868,458	501	41·83	74·67
Humberside	859	2,025	77,395,755	424	50·48	90·10
Kent	1,525	3,054	128,733,936	499	47·29	84·42
Lancashire	1,395	3,225	122,019,273	433	49·00	87·47
Leicestershire	897	1,827	67,195,772	491	41·97	74·91
Lincolnshire	591	1,206	47,235,365	490	44·78	79·92
Merseyside	1,443	4,706	178,883,939	307	69·45	123·97
Norfolk	750	1,421	54,100,423	528	40·41	72·13
Northamptonshire	580	1,167	45,498,974	497	43·95	78·45
Northumbria	1,432	3,586	132,826,369	399	51·96	92·76
North Yorkshire	726	1,414	51,679,282	513	39·88	71·18
Nottinghamshire	1,017	2,344	82,628,633	434	45·52	81·25
South Yorkshire	1,296	3,016	103,166,171	430	44·60	79·60
Staffordshire	1,041	2,211	82,162,596	471	44·22	78·93
Suffolk	643	1,216	48,068,954	529	41·88	74·76
Surrey	747	1,670	63,420,572	447	47·56	84·90
Sussex	1,417	2,982	106,177,607	475	41·98	74·93
Thames Valley	1,983	3,725	149,413,760	532	42·21	75·35
Warwickshire	483	1,016	39,841,685	475	46·21	82·49
West Mercia	1,081	2,024	77,230,104	534	40·02	71·44
West Midlands	2,615	6,958	250,815,603	376	53·73	95·91
West Yorkshire	2,070	5,295	197,225,852	391	53·38	95·28
Wiltshire	561	1,114	46,214,702	504	46·15	82·38
Dyfed-Powys	471	944	35,149,805	499	41·81	74·63
Gwent	447	1,009	36,682,297	443	45·97	82·06
North Wales	653	1,352	50,700,394	483	43·50	77·64
South Wales	1,309	3,168	118,537,290	413	50·73	90·56
City of London	5	798	40,820,059	5	5,717·05	10,205·01
Metropolitan	7,260	28,439	1,339,605,000	255	103·37	184·52
Total	50,718	126,325	5,018,921,704	401		

[1] Details obtained from HMCIC annual report 1991.
[2] Authorised establishment at 31 December 1991.
[3] Expenditure in financial year 1991-92.
[4] Current is taken to mean 1991-92 prices.

Police (Flexible Shifts)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police forces in England and Wales which are introducing a flexible shift system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Many forces are examining the possibility of introducing alternative shift systems following the introduction of the appropriate amendments to the Police Regulations 1987. The following forces are currently holding experiments with alternative shift systems:

Avon and Somerset
Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Cleveland
Derbyshire
Devon and Cornwall
Dorset
Durham
Greater Manchester
Hertfordshire
Kent
Merseyside
Northamptonshire
Northumbria
Nottinghamshire
South Wales
Sussex
Thames Valley
West Mercia
West Midlands
Wiltshire

Safer Cities Projects

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reinstate the previous level of the safer cities budget for Birmingham to help fund projects for youth and community resources in areas with high juvenile crime rates.

Mr. Jack: No. As part of our crime prevention strategy, the grants budget of the Birmingham safer cities project, together with those of the other 15 longer established projects, has been set at £100,000 in 1993-94 enabling funds to be released for work to be started on a new phase of safer cities projects elsewhere.

Having seen the value demonstrated by Safer Cities, we hope that local communities and interests will be willing to take over the projects and continue their work after Home Office funding for the 16 projects ends in March 1994. Some additional funding from a central budget of £500,000 will be available to Birmingham and the other 15 projects to assist work aimed at leaving in place satisfactory continuing arrangements for the maintenance and development of local multi-agency crime prevention work.

Through the safer cities project, the Home Office has supported a wide range of work in Birmingham focusing on juveniles including schemes providing football coaching and other sporting activities, tackling bullying, promoting junior crime prevention panels and tackling graffiti. These illustrate what can be done often with modest funding. In addition, the Home Office provides funding for three projects in Birmingham organised by the probation service in partnership with the voluntary sector to provide programmes of supervision for young offenders.

Youth Crime

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to deal with car crimes committed by young people and other youth crime in Birmingham and the west midlands.

Mr. Jack: The Government have encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes aimed at tackling youth crime and has funded a number of initiatives. The Home Office safer cities projects set up in Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton in 1989 have all funded schemes aimed at diverting the young away from car crime and other types of crime. We have also established local drugs prevention teams in Birmingham and Wolverhampton with the aim of tackling the spread of misuse, particularly among the young. In addition the probation supervision grant scheme provides funding for nine projects in the West Midlands probation area which, in the main, provide programmes of supervision for young offenders. Three are based in Birmingham, one of which specifically tackles car crime.

The Department of Education announced last month that Coventry and Dudley are to receive £147,000, Solihull £99,000 and Wolverhampton £73,500 under its grants for education support and training (GEST) programme for youth crime prevention schemes in 1993-94. The Department of the Environment's city challenge programme in Wolverhampton is providing funding for activities for young people including a vehicle project to divert juveniles from car crime. In addition Birmingham propose to tackle youth crime, amongst other things, under the city challenge programme once their action plan has received approval.

As part of its programme of action on youth crime for 1993, Crime Concern is planning a series of regional seminars, including two in the midlands, on best practice in diverting young people from crime.

The Government are also considering what means might be needed to reduce offending by the small group of persistent juvenile offenders.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Badgers

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for licences were received in the last year for terrier men to send dogs into badger setts; how many were granted; and to whom.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry received seven applications in the last year for licences to permit terrier men to enter dogs into badger setts for the purpose of fox control. No licences were issued.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost of introducing CAP reform to *(a)* the activities of his Department and *(b)* the British farming industry.

Mr. Curry: The total estimated cost to the Ministry for the introduction of the CAP reform measures is £25 million in 1993-94, falling to £20 million in subsequent years. This represents a small proportion of total programme costs.

There will be higher costs to the British farming industry in the first year, when the Community anti-fraud rules require the submission of a good deal of basic information relating to the farm, but we hope to reduce the costs to farmers in subsequent years.

Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of the costs of enforcing the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

Mr. Curry: The Government have made provision for the cost of enforcing days at sea and extending licensing to vessels of 10 m overall length and below. The estimated cost of these operations is £1·5 million a year for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Fishing Fleet

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce the allocation of fishing days to individual boats under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992; and whether the allocation in 1993 will be retrospective from 1 January.

Mr. Curry: The Government will shortly be laying before Parliament an order which will set out principles governing the allocation of days at sea. This order will clear the way for the issue of provisional allocations to fishermen, and subsequently for the attachment of days at sea conditions to licences. Such conditions will not be retrospective.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to issue 1993 licences to the British fishing fleet.

Mr. Curry: The 1993 fishing licences have been, or are currently being, issued for vessels which require licences.

Agriculture Returns

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, what is the reason for the replacement of acres by hectares as the only acceptable measurement on most returns.

Mr. Curry: Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to units of measurement No. 80/181 EC as amended by Council Directive No. 89/617 EC requires the phasing out of acres by the end of 1994 for these returns.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the current number of full-time equivalent jobs, including family labour, on every 100 acres on farms of *(a)* under 100 acres, *(b)* from 100 to 200 acres, *(c)* from 200 to 300 acres, *(d)* from 300 to 500 acres, *(e)* from 500 to 1,000 acres, *(f)* from 1,000 to 2,000 acres and *(g)* over 2,000 acres.

Mr. Curry: The number of full-time equivalent jobs, including family labour, on every 100 acres on farms in England for the categories requested is shown in the table.

Number of full-time equivalent jobs[1] per 100 acres of total area on agricultural holdings[2]

Total area of holding (acres)	*Number*
Under 100	3·7
100 – <200	1·4
200 – <300	1·0
300 – <500	0·9
500 – <1,000	0·7
1,000 – <2,000	0·6
2,000 and over	0·4
All holdings	1·3

[1] Includes all workers on the holding ie farmers, partners, directors, spouses, managers, regular family and hired workers, seasonal and casual workers with the exception of persons engaged as trainees under an official scheme and not paid AWB rates or more.

[2] Minor holdings are excluded.

Source: June 1992 Census of Agriculture and Horticulture.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the current total labour force employed in agriculture and the equivalent figures for 1991, 1990, 1985, 1980, 1975 and 1965.

Mr. Curry: The total agricultural labour force on holdings in England as at June for each of the years requested is shown in the table:

Total agricultural labour force on holdings in England as at June each year

Year	*Total labour force[1] (thousands)*
[2][3]1965	421·4
[4]1975	503·0
1980	523·8
1985	495·3
1990	455·9
1991	445·0
1992	440·2

[1] Includes all workers on the holding i.e. farmers, partners, directors, spouses, managers, regular family and hired workers, seasonal and casual workers with the exception of persons engaged as trainees under an official scheme and not paid AWB rates or more.

[2] Data for 1965 exclude occupiers or principal partners and their wives.

[3] Workers on holdings of less than 1 acre are excluded.

[4] Data for 1975 exclude spouses (doing farm work) of farmers, partners and directors on main holdings.

Set-aside

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his estimate of the amount of set-aside in the current growing season in each county of England and Wales.

Mr. Curry: The table gives the latest available figures for the amount of land currently set-aside under the five year set-aside scheme in each county in England. Information on land set-aside under the new arable area payments scheme will not be available until growers have to declare the area later this year. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

County	Area (hectares)
Avon	1,390
Bedfordshire	1,774
Berkshire	2,503
Buckinghamshire	5,392
Cambridgeshire	3,855
Cheshire	907
Cleveland	24
Cornwall	1,421
Cumbria	393
Derbyshire	847
Devon	1,595
Dorset	1,565
Durham	970
East Sussex	2,672
Essex	4,067
Gloucestershire	5,552
Greater London	261
Greater Manchester	126
Hampshire	2,750
Hereford and Worcester	1,804
Hertfordshire	2,135
Humberside	1,564
Isle of Wight	57
Kent	4,546
Lancashire	243
Leicestershire	1,517
Lincolnshire	3,354
Merseyside	259
North Yorkshire	2,505
Norfolk	3,126
Northamptonshire	3,986
Northumberland	663
Nottinghamshire	777
Oxfordshire	5,758
South Yorkshire	418
Shropshire	591
Somerset	1,821
Staffordshire	1,177
Suffolk	3,625
Surrey	1,665
Tyne and Wear	414
West Yorkshire	317
Warwickshire	1,751
West Midlands	132
West Sussex	2,449
Wiltshire	3,850
Total	88,565

European Court

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions matters under his jurisdiction have been referred to the European Court; and if he will give details in each case.

Mr. Curry: All European Court of Justice cases since July 1985 involving the United Kingdom are listed in the White Papers on Developments in the European Community published bi-annually. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Fishing Days (Allocation)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he is giving to producer organisations on the management of their quota pending the introduction of days at sea restrictions.

Mr. Curry: The management of quotas allocated to producer organisations (POs) is, in general, a matter for them, operating within a framework of rules which Fisheries Departments lay down in the interests of the United Kingdom fleet as a whole. Days at sea will not have retrospective effect from the date of their introduction. Management of days at sea will be entirely up to the individual fishermen, since the allocations are to individual vessels not to POs.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will announce details of individual days at sea allocation transfer and any possible licence aggregation.

Mr. Curry: The Government will shortly be laying before Parliament an Order which will set out principles governing the allocation of days at sea. This order will clear the way for the issue of provisional allocations to fishermen, and subsequently for the attachment of days at sea conditions to licences. Such conditions will not be retrospective.

Conifer Plantations

Mr. Cynog Davis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to amend guidelines on conifer plantations in the United Kingdom relating to *(a)* siting, *(b)* species composition and *(c)* felling regimes.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans at present to amend the existing guidance on the establishment and management of conifer plantations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many successful claims were made for family credit since April 1992 by lone parents who are employed between 16 and 24 hours a week.

Mr. Burt: Between 7 April and 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available, about 35,000 family credit awards have been made to lone parents working between 16 and 24 hours a week.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents in receipt of income support in March 1992 became ineligible, following the changes to the definition of full-time work from 24 to 16 hours a week in April 1992; and what is this figure as a proportion of the total number of lone parents claiming income support.

Mr. Burt: No one who was working between 16 and 24 hours a week and receiving income support at the point of change has had that benefit withdrawn simply as a consequence of the change in the hours threshold. Many lone parents will be better off because of their decision to claim family credit. Those who chose not to claim family credit may remain on income support under special provisions giving them indefinite protection.

State Pensions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what grounds British subjects who retire to one of the old dominions do not receive the annual uprating of their state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: Regulations prevent the payment of annual pension increases to United Kingdom pensioners living abroad. There are exceptions to this rule under social security agreements with some countries. Our agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand do not alter this. We have no social security agreement with South Africa. In view of the substantial additional cost —about £275 million at April 1992 rates—involved in paying pension increases to all United Kingdom pensioners abroad, there is no prospect of allowing further unfreezing in the present financial climate.

PRIME MINISTER

India

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had during his visit to India concerning human rights abuses in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I raised British concerns about human rights in Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister. He assured me of his Government's commitment to respect human rights and determination to take firm action against wrongdoers.

Democracy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward proposals for an elected second chamber.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Government's progress towards improving democracy in the United Kingdom since 1979.

The Prime Minister: We have implemented policies approved by the electorate in four general elections.

Lord Chancellor's Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward a transfer of functions statutory instrument under the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975 to transfer the legal powers of the Lord Chancellor to a Secretary of State for Justice in a Department of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Transfer of Functions Orders

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1975 Her Majesty's Government have used transfer of functions orders to abolish, create or amalgamate Government Departments.

The Prime Minister: Twelve. They are:

1976/1775	Established the Department of Transport
1979/907	Created the Office of Arts and Libraries
1979/1451	Dissolved the Ministry of Overseas Development
1981/207	Office of Arts and Libraries merged with Department of Education and Science
1981/1670	Civil Service Department changed into Management and Personnel Office
1983/879	Office of Arts and Libraries became a separate Office
1983/1127	Departments of Trade and Industry amalgamated into Department of Trade and Industry
1987/2039	Management and Personnel Office changed into Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
1988/1843	Department of Health and Social Security split into Department of Health and Department of Social Security
1992/1311	Department of National Heritage established
1992/1314	Department of Energy dissolved

Family Policy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what action he proposes to co-ordinate family policy across those Government Departments actively concerned with family policy.

The Prime Minister: We already have proper and adequate co-ordination of family policy across Government Departments. There is frequent consultation between Departments about a range of issues which touch upon the family. In addition an interdepartmental working party—the family law and administration working party—oversees a rolling programme of work directed at improving family law and business.

Moscow (Communications)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the discussions between his security officials and Russian officials over the installation of a secure communications line to Moscow during his recent visit to India.

The Prime Minister: Given the close proximity of the two visits and the fact that we were both staying in the President's residence, it was necessary to discuss Mr. Yeltsin's communications requirements with both the Indians and the Russians. Arrangements acceptable to all concerned were agreed.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has for submission to the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

The Prime Minister: It is too early to say. The first priority is to ratify the Maastricht treaty and put it into practice. Then we will be able to build on the gains won at Maastricht—subsidiarity, inter-governmental co-operation, codification of competences—in the years between now and the next treaty revision.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Financial Assistance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, by industrial sector, the firms and projects which applied for financial assistance under section 8 of the Industry Development Act 1982 in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* the current financial year.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of assistance schemes, including assistance for exceptional projects, are operated under the powers of section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. Only in the case of AEP is comprehensive information recorded centrally.

AEP applications by industrial sector have been submitted as follows:

Sector	*Number*
1991-92	
Engineering	2
Newsprint recycling	1
Pharmaceuticals	1
1992-93 (to end January)	
Computer hardware/software	3
Waste disposal	2
Metal manufacture	2
Newsprint recycling	1
Medical research	1
Entertainment/leisure	1
Commercial property development	1

Details about the individual firms and their projects is commercially confidential.

Teaching Company Partnership Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many projects have been established under the teaching company partnership scheme in each region; and how many students will be placed under the scheme in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Leigh: The regional and territorial distribution of live teaching company scheme programmes is:

	1 April 1992	*31 December 1992*	*+/−*
Northern Ireland	28	38	+10
Scotland	35	30	− 5
Wales	24	27	+ 3
North West	57	50	− 7
North East	64	90	+26
West Midlands	48	54	+ 6
East Midlands	30	41	+11
South West	29	37	+ 8
South East	65	78	+13
London	13	17	+ 4
Total	393	462	+69

Two hundred and twenty-nine graduates began participating as teaching company associates between 1 April and 31 December 1992. By the end of March 1993 a total of about 300 new associates will have been placed in this financial year.

News Distribution

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was asked to report on news distribution; and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading referred the supply of newspaper distribution in England and Wales to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in August 1992. The commission was asked to report back to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade within 12 months.

Denim Cloth

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the quantity and value of denim cloth imported into the United Kingdom from *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* India, *(c)* Hong Kong, *(d)* Italy, *(e)* Germany, *(f)* Belgium, *(g)* Ireland and *(h)* other European Community countries for each year since 1987.

Mr. Needham: The available information on quantity and value of denim imports is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports of denim[1]

Value (£000)

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[2]1992*
United States of America	1,581	916	722	846	678
India	434	214	307	786	2,187
Hong Kong	1,453	655	572	343	409
Italy	5,507	3,275	2,499	1,564	2,603
Germany	8,218	4,775	2,971	4,636	4,348
Belgium/Luxembourg	3,914	817	564	1,146	1,524
Irish Republic	684	2,229	5,654	423	70
Other European Communities	7,963	8,699	6,565	5,484	6,832

Quantity (thousand square metres)

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[2]1992*
United States of America	929	574	472	592	372
India	496	220	311	667	2,426
Hong Kong	1,625	834	835	414	322
Italy	1,842	1,156	813	483	949
Germany	3,971	2,174	1,225	1,950	1,687
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,590	392	243	540	669

	Quantity (thousand square metres)				
	1988	1989	1990	1991	[2]1992
Irish Republic	566	1,485	3,416	424	47
Other European Communities	5,105	5,568	3,034	2,308	2,600

[1]Denim is defined as headings 652.42 and 652.63 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).
[2]January to November.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Ship Building

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce new legislation or proposals to stimulate investment in new ship building to augment the United Kingdom register of merchant ships.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have no plans for additional assistance to shipbuilders. The shipbuilding intervention fund and the home shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme are already available to help shipbuilders construct vessels for any register.

Methyl Bromide

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of methyl bromide have been *(a)* produced within the United Kingdom and *(b)* imported in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is not available. Methyl bromide is not separately identified in United Kingdom statistical classifications.

EC Regional and Social Funds

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will discuss with the European Commission the possibility of upgrading Merseyside from objective 2 to objective 1 status within the framework of EC regional and social funds.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are currently considering which regions, including Merseyside, should be put forward, for special reasons, for eligibility under objective 1 of the EC structural funds.

State Aid for Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Competition Commissioner Karl van Miert about the proposed softer line on state aid for industry in EC countries; and what representations he has made.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has met Mr. van Miert to discuss the coal review. He is looking forward to discussing other issues with Mr. van Miert over the coming months.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to make representations to the GATT to secure that clear and explicit commitments to *(a)* the environment, *(b)* the promotion of sustainable development and *(c)* to raise incomes of the poor in third-world countries are written in to the preamble and articles of the Multilateral Trade Organisation.

Mr. Needham: It is not open to the United Kingdom to negotiate directly on the text establishing the proposed Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO). The European Commission, which negotiates in the Uruguay round of GATT on behalf of the European Community and the member states, has made proposals to include language on sustainable development, including environmental protection, in the preamble of the proposed MTO text.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recommendations have been made by his Department to GATT concerning *(a)* revisions to the disputes procedures of the Multilateral Trade Organisation and *(b)* the accountability of MTO panel members.

Mr. Needham: It is not open to the United Kingdom to negotiate directly on the text establishing the proposed Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO), which is being negotiated in the Uruguay round in GATT. The European Commission acts as sole negotiator on behalf of the EC and the member states. Dispute settlement is not, in any case, part of the MTO proposal, but is covered by a separate draft understanding. No proposals have been made to change this understanding since the draft Final Act was tabled in December 1991. Under the terms of this understanding, dispute settlement panel members would act for, and be accountable to, the Governments who are members of the MTO, acting collectively through a special dispute settlement body.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he has used in reviewing the assisted areas map.

Mr. Sainsbury: The criteria to be used in the review of the assisted areas map were set out in the consultation paper issued in June last year.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for a capital moratorium on payments of regional selective assistance.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to adjust the cost-per-job limits on maximum regional selective assistance in line with inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no such proposals. The scheme is kept under continuous review to ensure the scope for encouraging worthwhile and efficient investment in the assisted areas remain unimpaired.

Regional Development Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much European regional development fund expenditure there has been in the United Kingdom in each year since 1984-85 at *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1984 prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: European regional development fund allocations to the United Kingdom since 1984 are as follows:

£ million

	(a) Current prices	*(b) 1984 prices*
1984	367	367
1985	344	326
1986	342	308
1987	445	386
1988	373	311
1989	343	273
1990	330	253
1991	410	301
1992	482	332

Coal Industry

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that coal production is resumed in the 10 pits currently subject to the court judgment detailing that the modified colliery review procedure should be followed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The resumption of coaling at the 10 pits is a matter for British Coal. However, I do not understand there to be anything in the judgment which either makes the cessation of coaling in these pits unlawful or requires this to re-commence while consultation takes place.

The judgment does not require the modified colliery review procedure to be followed. It requires that British Coal shall not reach a final decision on the closure of any of the 10 pits until a procedure substantially to the same effect as the modified colliery review procedure, including some form of independent scrutiny, has been followed.

I have placed a copy of the approved transcript of the Lord Justice Glidewell and Mr. Justice Hidden's judgment of 21 December 1992 in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals for a statutory extension of the redundancy payment scheme for the miners in the 10 pits scheduled for closure until the consultation and review procedure has been completed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade assured the House on 21 October that no miner at these pits will be disadvantaged as regards redundancy terms. That holds good both during and at the end of the current consultation process, and both before and after the end of March.

Insolvency

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the application of the insolvency laws to Gallidoro Trawlers of Lowestoft.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) wrote about this matter on 22 September 1992; I replied on 18 October 1992.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the insolvency laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* No. Officials in the insolvency service continue to monitor the operation of the insolvency legislation.

Warship Builders

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), 10 December, *Official Report*, column *752*, if he will now make representations to the European Commission that agreement be modified to permit subsidy to those companies which were privatised as warship builders.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Not at present, but I am keeping the situation under review.

Export:Import Ratios

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the export:import ratios in each member country of the European Community in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The figures required are shown in the following table.

EC countries ratios of exports to imports 1991

Country	*Export:Import ratio 1991*
Belgium/Luxembourg	0·98
Denmark	1·11
France	0·93
Germany	1·03
Greece	0·40
Ireland	1·17
Italy	0·93
Netherlands	1·06
Portugal	0·62
Spain	0·64
United Kingdom	0·88

Source: OECD series C.
Note: Export:import ratios relate to total visible trade.

EDUCATION

English

11. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will meet the National Association of Teachers of English to discuss key stage 3 of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: The National Association of Teachers of English has not asked to meet my right hon. Friend.

12. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning standard attainment tests in English at key stage 3.

16. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the implementation of key stage 3 of the national curriculum in English.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received complaining about or asking for changes in the key stage 3 English tests.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Members to the oral answer that my right hon. Friend gave earlier to the hon. Members for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) and for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and to my hon Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan).

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have indicated that they will not carry out the key stage 3 English tests in the current year.

Mr. Forth: Head teachers and school governors are under a statutory duty to implement the national curriculum and its assessment arrangements. I expect all maintained and grant-maintained schools with 14-year-old pupils to administer the English tests to their pupils in June this year as they are required to do.

Nursery Education

13. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of four-year-olds have a local authority nursery place.

Mr. Forth: Eighty-one per cent. of all children in England who were aged 4 on 31 August 1990 and still below five at the end of the year were in maintained nursery or primary schools in January 1991.

Education Funding

14. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from local authorities cutting budgets to avoid capping in 1993-94 and the implications on the position of education.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

15. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received in the last three months from the Association of County Councils on the funding of education services.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from the Association of County Councils about the funding of education services.

Grant-maintained Schools

17. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he received a copy of the annual survey of the grant-maintained schools centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend received a copy of the GSMC survey on 30 November. The survey demonstrated clearly the benefits of grant-maintained status, which enables schools to manage their own affairs and gives them the flexibility to target funding at classroom level. Copies of the survey are available in the Library.

18. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures for the number of grant-maintained schools in both the secondary and primary phases.

Mr. Forth: To date, there are 262 secondary schools and 75 primary schools operating as grant-maintained. A further 49 secondary schools and 14 primary schools have been approved for grant-maintained status; 161 secondary schools and 61 primary schools have applications in the pipeline after voting in favour of applying for grant-maintained status.

NNC and Ofsted Reports

19. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what actions he has taken following the recent presentation of reports by the National Curriculum Council and the Office for Standards in Education.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has sent to primary schools a five-point strategy designed to promote good teaching practice and improved curriculum management in primary schools. He also proposes to ask the new Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority to advise him on the institution of a rolling review of national curriculum subjects.

Students Unions

20. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has received about the future of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on student unions in the course of the Department's consultations.

Newspapers (Essex)

21. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education from which Essex newspapers his press cuttings services provide cuttings for his office.

Mr. Boswell: The Department's press cuttings service is not asked to monitor Essex regional newspapers automatically. However, the Department has other arrangements enabling it to receive press cuttings from all regional papers on request.

National Curriculum

22. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he next plans to meet the chair of the National Curriculum Council to discuss the progress being made in the implementation of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State have regular meetings with the chairman of the National Curriculum Council. Progress in the implementation of the national curriculum is a normal part of the agenda of such meetings.

Youth Service

23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest information he has about English local authority budgets for the youth service in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: Separate information on youth service expenditure for these years is not yet available.

Teacher Education and Training

25. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for the reform of teacher training.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for the reform of teacher education and training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend announced last June a decisive shift to more school-based training for secondary teachers, which is being introduced over the period up to September 1994. He is now considering reforms to the training of primary teachers in the light of the recent advice from the National Curriculum Council and OFSTED on primary education; and he intends that they should be introduced in September 1994. The quality of teacher training is critical to our school reforms and the raising of educational standards. My right hon. Friend will keep under review the possibility that further reform of teacher training is needed to this end.

Voluntary Organisations

26. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from voluntary organisations during the last three months; and what were their major concerns.

Mr. Boswell: Over the last three months we have received a number of representations from voluntary organisations on a range of issues. These included the ending of the Department's initial three-year interim grants scheme to education voluntary organisations in London, and the funding of courses which fall within schedule 2 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Local Management of Schools

28. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to extend the system of local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We issued the consultation paper, "Local Management of Schools: the Future Framework", on 11 January. This seeks views on proposals to extend local managment of schools. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Truancy

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance regarding the connection with bullying has been given to local authorities when using extra money to combat truancy.

Mr. Forth: Under the "Reducing Truancy" component of the grants for education support and training scheme for 1993-94, local education authorities (LEAs) could, if they so wished, include in their bids an element designed to promote whole-school action on bullying. A number of authorities have done so on the basis of schemes designed to meet local needs. Practical advice on bullying was contained in the "Action against Bullying" pack distributed by the Department to all LEAs and schools in July 1992.

Higher Education

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to increase the number of young people entering higher education.

Mr. Boswell: Government policies have led to substantial increases in the number of young people participating in higher education. More than one in four young people now enter higher education compared with only one in eight in 1979. As explained at the time of the autumn statement, the Government's funding for the next three years reflects our assumption that the participation rate of young people in higher education will be maintained at a record 28 per cent. over the next three years, and will rise to about one in three by the year 2000.

School Governors

24. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice and assistance is being made available to school governors in order that they can effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Mr. Forth: All LEAs arrange for training and support for school governors. Authorities either provide this themselves, or may commission it from other organisations. Central Government grant towards LEAs' expenditure is available through the GEST (grants for education support and training) programme. Nationally, expenditure of £10 million is being supported in the current year. This increases to just over £15 million in 1993-94. In addition, department for Education has funded several governor support projects run by diocesan bodies and governor organisations.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish the results of his Department's survey of the membership of school governing bodies conducted in autumn 1992.

Mr. Forth: The results of the survey will be published as soon as possible after they have been received.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions have been made governing the conduct of first governors of grant-maintained schools elected parent governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The instrument of government of a grant-maintained school makes provision for serving governors who become bankrupt, are convicted of certain crimes or who do not attend governors meetings to be disqualified from holding office. Clause 56 of the Education Bill will, if enacted, provide additional power for the Secretary of State to replace any or all of the first governors in circumstances where there is a serious failure of duties, the school has had a bad inspection report and is unable or unwilling to put matters right or where the behaviour of governors has damaged, or appears likely to damage the education of pupils.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what requirements are laid on parent governors in reporting back to parent electors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: There are no specific requirements on parent governors to report back to parent electors. The governing

body as a whole must produce a report and hold a meeting for parents in every school year to inform parents of the governing body's actions over the previous year and to give them an opportunity to discuss these actions.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to monitor changes in articles and instruments of grant-maintained schools' governing bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Changes to the instrument or articles of government of any grant-maintained school can be made only if an amendment order is issued by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what requirements are imposed concerning changes to the membership articles and instruments and the removal of parent governors of grant-maintained school governing bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Amendments to the instrument of government of a grant-maintained school to reflect changes in the composition of the membership of the governing body can be made only if an amendment order is issued by the Secretary of State.

The instrument of government makes provision for serving governors (including parent governors) who become bankrupt, are convicted of certain crimes or who do not attend governors' meetings to be disqualified from holding office. Clause 56 of the Education Bill will, if enacted, also provide power for the Secretary of State to replace any or all of the first governors in certain circumstances. These circumstances are: a serious failure of duties, a bad inspection report coupled with the inability or unwillingness of the school to put matters right, or where there is behaviour by governors such as has damaged, or appears likely to damage, the education of pupils.

Grants (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the reasons why his Department *(a)* did not reimburse Gwynedd county council with the sum paid by way of mandatory education grants, following the completion of form UG 8/91 on 5 October by that authority, *(b)* indicated that provisional payments would be made soon after 9 October and *(c)* delayed payments until January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Form UG 8/91 is a certificate of each local education authority's spending on mandatory student awards in 1991-92, and is used as a basis for adjustments to the specific grant already paid for that year by the Department. Provisional adjustments may be paid after scrutiny of authorities' pre-audit forms due in October, and final adjustments after receipt of audited certificates due on 31 December. Last autumn, however, many authorities' pre-audit forms contained errors, and the Department deferred all adjustments until audited certificates had been received and reconciled. The adjustments will be paid in full shortly.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for what reason his Department has not yet replied to the letter from the treasurer of Gwynedd county council of 30 November and 10 December.

Mr. Boswell: The Department telephoned the county treasurer, and also wrote on 22 December and again on 19 and 29 January.

Secondary Schools (Inspections)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many secondary schools will be inspected over the next four years.

Mr. Forth: Every publicly funded secondary school will be inspected over four years starting this September; nearly 4,000 reports will be published as a result.

Special Needs

27. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the availability of professional services to children with special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: I have this last week, in the Committee stage of the Education Bill, tabled a new clause which puts beyond doubt the ability of local education authorities to continue to provide a range of professional support services to all pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what specific action is currently undertaken by his Department to assist parents who wish to move their child with special education needs from the special school sector to the integrated mainstream school sector.

Mr. Forth: The Education Act 1981 and the Education Bill presently before Parliament place local education authorities under a duty to secure that a child with special educational needs is educated in a mainstream school, so long as certain conditions apply and such integration is compatible with the wishes of the child's parents. Both that Act and the Bill provide for the annual review of statements of special educational needs. Part of the purpose of such reviews is to consider whether the school placement remains appropriate. As a result of a Government amendment the Bill provides for the Secretary of State to make regulations governing those reviews.

Schedule 9 of the Bill provides a new right for parents of children with statements, subject to certain timing conditions, to ask the LEA to substitute a particular named LEA-maintained or grant-maintained school of their choice for the one named in the statement. Subject to certain conditions, the authority will have to comply and regulations may set time limits within which the authority must take action. If the authority do not comply, the parent will have a right of appeal to the tribunal.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the number of INSET courses and the numbers of teachers completing training from them, for teachers of young people with special learning difficulties for 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and that projected for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: All the figures requested are not held centrally. However, this Department provides funds to LEAs under the grants for education support and training (GEST) programme to support them with the costs of such training. In 1992-93, funds were allocated to support the INSET training of 296 teachers of children with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Of these, 206 were teachers beginning new courses.

In 1993-94, the eligibility for grant under the GEST programme has been extended to support teacher training in all areas of special educational needs. As a result, the amount of eligible expenditure to be supported has been increased by nearly 40 per cent. to £10 million in order to meet the expansion in training activities. It is too early to say with certainty how many teachers of children with severe learning difficulties will be trained by LEAs under GEST in 1993-94, but preliminary indications suggest that figures will be comparable with those for previous years.

HEALTH

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many patients were admitted to NHS hospitals for smoking-related diseases in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many hospital beds, on average, on a daily basis, were occupied by patients being treated for smoking-related diseases in the last year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is available only for 1988-89, as given by the Health Education Authority, in its 1991 publication "The Smoking Epidemic". This estimated that 226,000 patients were admitted to hospital in England for treatment of smoking-related diseases and these cases occupied an average of 7,000 beds each day.

Limited List Drugs

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations were received by her Department between 9 April 1992 and 12 November 1992 seeking assurances on behalf of companies in the pharmaceutical industry that there were no plans to extend the limited list regulations; and what was the response.

Dr. Mawhinney: A number of representations were received and the companies were informed that there were no plans at that time to extend the selected list scheme.

Psychiatric Patients (Deaths)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, what timetable is proposed for the inquiry of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Mr. Yeo: The inquiry will produce an initial report later this year.

GP Fund Holders

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the general practices which are fund holding in the area covered by *(a)* the Mid-Staffordshire health authority and *(b)* the South East Staffordshire health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the management of the general practitioner fund holding scheme in these areas. The hon. Member may wish to contact, Sir Donald Wilson, the RHA chairman, for details.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the number of (i) male staff, (ii) female staff and (iii) staff working in wards/units caring for patients suffering from cancer employed at *(a)* University College hospital, *(b)* Middlesex hospital, *(c)* St. Bartholomew's hospital, *(d)* Royal London hospital, *(e)* St. Thomas's hospital, *(f)* Guy's hospital, *(g)* Charing Cross hospital, *(h)* St. Mary's hospital and *(i)* Queen Charlotte's hospital on 25 January;

(2) how many (i) in-patients and (ii) out-patients were receiving treatment for cancer at *(a)* University College hospital, *(b)* Middlesex hospital, *(c)* St. Bartholomew's hospital, *(d)* Royal London hospital, *(e)* St. Thomas's hospital, *(f)* Guy's hospital, *(g)* Charing Cross hospital, *(h)* St. Mary's hospital and *(i)* Queen Charlotte's hospital on 25 January; and what kind of cancer treatment is given at each hospital.

Dr, Mawhinney: The information requested is not held centrally.

Nurses

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to increase opportunities for all enrolled nurses to convert to first level registration.

Mr. Sackville: It is for regional health authorities, in consultation with employers, to plan for enrolled nurse conversion as part of their responsibility for identifying the level of demand for qualified nurses and for allocating appropriate budgets.

In addition, we are committed to increasing the number of places available for enrolled nurse conversion as part of the Project 2000 reforms. Central funding has been made available to facilitate this.

The English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting has been encouraged to develop flexible options which have made it possible to reduce both the length and cost of conversion courses.

Plastic Surgery

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards there are to ensure that all surgeons carrying out plastic surgery are suitably qualified, and to protect those individuals undergoing plastic surgery; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Plastic surgeons securing consultant appointments in the national health service have to meet the requirements of employing authorities' advisory appointments committees. These include representatives of the Royal College of Surgeons who ensure that the experience and training of a candidate is appropriate to the particular appointment.

Self-governing Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the chairpersons and non-executive directors of all self-governing trusts and the annual remuneration paid to each.

Dr. Mawhinney: A list of all trust appointees has been placed in the Library. All non-executive directors are paid

at the rate of £5,000 per annum. The remuneration for trust chairmen is paid in three bands according to the unit turnover in 1988-89.

	£
Band 1 (Turnover in excess of £50 million)	19,285
Band 2 (Turnover in between £20-£50 million)	17,145
Band 3 (Turnover less than £20 million)	15,125

Accidents (Children)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many children received hospital treatment following road accidents who had been *(a)* wearing and *(b)* not wearing seat belts, in each of the last 10 years;

(2) what are the assessed costs to the national health service for treating children injured by *(a)* accidents in the home, *(b)* as the result of motor vehicle accidents where they were passengers and *(c)* suffered as the result of road traffic accidents where they were pedestrians.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. In the "Health of the Nation" White Paper we indicate that the development of information systems in accident and emergency departments is a key measure in our strategy for reducing accidents. From this April a new minimum data set will be introduced in A and E departments which will record both the cause and the nature of patients' treatment, thus enabling such costs to be assessed. In further developing this data set we will consider whether seat belt usage in road accidents should also be recorded.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are employed by the health education authority to promote *(a)* the installation and wearing of child seat belts and restraints and *(b)* child safety in the home.

Dr. Mawhinney: Several staff are employed by the Health Education Authority on child accident prevention, but none exclusively. The authority produces information for parents and the public, and support for health professionals in their role in accident prevention. This includes information on the installation and wearing of child seat belt restraints.

Home Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allocation of funds exist for accident prevention in the home.

Dr. Mawhinney: No information is held centrally about the cost of the continuing efforts and special initiatives by people working in health and social services which help combat home accidents. Direct expenditure by central Government on home safety is by the Department of Trade and Industry whose consumer safety unit allocate about £1 million per annum to home safety campaigns targeted at the general public and at high-risk groups and in addition funds the home and leisure accident surveillance systems.

Chlamydia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding the links between the development of pelvic inflammatory disease and abortions on women infected with chlamydia.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware of medical discussions on the nature and extent of the link between infection with chlamydia and pelvic inflammatory disease in pregnant women including those who undergo a termination of pregnancy.

Articles on this topic have appeared in professional journals in this country and abroad.

Community Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the local authorities who have been offered free consulting time prior to the introduction of community care; what was the basis for their selection; which local authorities have accepted; what was the cost to the Department of this initiative; and which consultancy firms were used in this initiative.

Mr. Yeo: Since September 1992 the community care support force has provided practical assistance to local and health authorities in their final preparations for implementing the caring for people reforms. As part of its programme, it has visited individual local and health authorities, by invitation. The support force has offered authorities assistance, including, consultancy support and expects to have committed, by the end of March when it finishes work, about £250,000 in this form of help to authorities. The support force has used a number of consultancy firms and its work also includes: the production of practical guidance and working seminars on key implementation tasks, an implementation helpline and a regular newsletter.

Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the original estimate of expenditure of the Royal Victoria infirmary, Newcastle, new ward block when the project began; and what is the total expenditure incurred so far.

Mr. Sackville: Based on actual building costs and standards prevailing at the start of construction, the original estimated cost of the new ward block was £23·3 million excluding fluctuations. The contract was completed on time in July 1991 and the cost incurred was £27·2 million including £3·4 million for fluctuations. Fluctuations are the sums paid to reimburse the contractor for increases in labour, plant and material costs as the work proceeds. Four small additional contracts have since been let to provide additional facilities on site.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column 536, what provisions exist for identifying maternal deaths following complications after abortions which occur after the notification form has been passed to his Department.

Mr. Sackville: As with all maternal deaths, district directors of public health assemble confidential information regarding deaths following legal abortion. This information is collected by the Chief Medical Officer and published anonymously in the "Reports on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths", copies of which are

available in the Library. This information is collected independently of the system for notification of abortions under the Abortion Act 1967.

DEFENCE

High Energy Beam Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests are either currently conducted or planned to be conducted by his Department at his Department's site at Dundennan in Scotland into high energy beam weapons in conjunction with the United States Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. A. R. Chisholm to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 2 February 1993.

In today's written answer the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying directly to your question regarding tests on high energy beam weapons at Dundrennan, Scotland.

The tests to which I think you are referring are part of a DRA research programme into the feasibility of using electromagnetic energy for the propulsion of a solid projectile to enhance the armour penetrating performance of tank gunnery. This is a collaborative research programme between the United Kingdom and the United States which has nothing to do with so-called high energy beam weapons. The tests will be carried out at a facility that is still in the process of construction on the MOD range at Kirkcudbright; it is due to be completed by the end of May 1993.

Porton Down

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the source of the biological and chemical nerve agents used in prophylactic research at Porton Down chemical research establishment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the chemical and biological defence establishment (CBDE) under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 2 February 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking him what is the sourse of the biological and chemical agents used in prophylactic research at Porton Down Chemical Research Establishment (Question 6, Order Paper 25 January 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down is to ensure that the UK Armed Forces have effective protective measures (including prophylactic measures) against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work it is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of protective measures against the range of potential chemical and biological agents. This involves the use of small quantities of chemical agents which are largely synthesised as required. Some of the chemical agents are provided from residual stocks originally prepared at Nancekuke and on occasion it is necessary to obtain compounds from external suppliers. In respect of biological agents, these are usually produced from cultures held at CBDE Porton Down although again on occasion it is necessary to obtain culture samples from external sources.

3. The Chemical Weapons Convention which recently opened for signature in Paris allows States Parties to carry out work on protective measures and permits each State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention to have a single small scale facility in which small quantities of Schedule 1 chemicals for protective purposes can be prepared or stored. The United Kingdom small scale facility will be at CBDE Porton Down.

Reservists (Annual Reporting)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many army reservists have not been able to undertake an annual reporting exercise during the last 12 months due to the inability to their units to fund such events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The annual reporting exercise for army reservists was funded centrally by the Ministry of Defence and not by units, but the exercise has been suspended since autumn 1991 as a result of the restructuring of the reserve forces. The suspension will be reviewed once the restructuring is complete.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given by his Department to the level of investment in specialist training and equipment undertaken to date by Dyfed county fire brigade to deal with offshore emergencies in tandem with the search and rescue helicopter squadron at RAF Brawdy within his Department's review of the search and rescue service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The level of investment in specialist training and equipment, by Dyfed county fire brigade is a matter for that brigade.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration was given to the overlapping of circles of coverage in his Department's review of the search and rescue service in the United Kingdom;

(2) what assessment has been made by his Department of the impact of a withdrawal of the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon response times in dealing with coastal and offshore emergencies in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke, North constituency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the open government document "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the average response time taken by Sea King helicopters from RAF Brawdy to reach the scene of a coastal or offshore emergency in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke, North Constituency in each of the last three years; and if he will publish estimated response times for helicopters from *(a)* RAF Chivenor and *(b)* RAF Valley to reach future coastal or offshore emergencies in or near the constituency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on average response time taken by Sea King helicopters from RAF Brawdy for the area and period in question can be provided only at disproportionate cost. For future estimated response times from RAF Chivenor and RAF Valley, I refer the hon. Member to the open government document "The Future Provision of RAF Search and Rescue Helicopters", a copy of which is in the Library of the House and which shows that the civil search and rescue criteria will be met.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what research has been conducted by his Department on the effect of withdrawing the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon established contingency plans drawn up by the Dyfed fire brigade to deal with offshore emergencies;

(2) what assessment has been made by his Department into the effect of withdrawing the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon the training needs of local county fire fighters in tackling offshore emergencies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The RAF search and rescue helicopter flight will continue to assist fire brigades in their training for dealing with offshore emergencies when this flight is transferred from RAF Brawdy to RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the number of lives saved in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke, North constituency in each of the last five years, as a result of the response of the search and rescue helicopter Squadron at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Such estimates are not made. For information on the number of call-outs involving the rescue of people I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 2 November 1992 at column *51-2*.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long a person could be immersed in water at *(a)* 6°C and *(b)* 7°C before experiencing at least a 50 per cent. chance of becoming unconscious; and how rapidly, in percentage terms, their chances of survival would thereafter diminish.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the 1986 report of the United Kingdom civil rescue helicopter coverage working group, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Atomic Weapons Establishment (Accidents)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of the unclassified reports of inquiries into accidents and incidents which occurred at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston on 15 May 1961, 19 December 1976, 23 July 1978, 29 November 1978, 2 December 1987 and 19 February 1991.

Mr. Aitken: It would neither be appropriate nor practicable to place in the Libary unclassified versions of reports into accidents and incidents which occurred at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston over the last 30 years, nor could this information be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Landing Platform Helicopter

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place an order for the landing platform helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 January to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) at column *840*.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which firms have been invited to tender for the main engines for the landing platform helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: Tenders for the main engines form part of the tenders for the landing platform helicopter currently being evaluated by my Department. Details of these tenders are commercially confidential.

Crossley Engines, Manchester

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MOD contracts have been placed with Crossley Engines of Manchester in the past 10 years.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's direct contracts with the Crossley Engines division of NEI Allen Ltd. are for spares and repairs only. Complete engines would normally be supplied on a sub-contract basis through a prime contractor such as a shipbuilder.

To minimise administrative effort, both by my Department and the company, one enabling arrangement was set up in July 1990. This permits nominated officials to order spares from Crossley Engines as and when required, without having to negotiate separate contracts each time. Since July 1990, we have also placed 15 small contracts for special requirements outside the scope of the enabling arrangement.

Data on contracts before 1990 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

B Flight 202

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of call-outs flown by B Flight 202 squadron RAF Brawdy in 1986 and 1992; and how many operations in each year were in response to military incidents.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures in brackets show the number of call-outs that involved the rescue of people, including incidents such as the transfer of sick or injured people from ship to hospital.

Year	*Total Call-outs*	*Military Call-outs*
1986	98 (46)	11 (4)
1992	158 (50)	7 (2)

St Anne's Head and RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which bodies, organisations or individuals he has received objections to, or statements of concern about, the proposed removal of search and rescue helicopters from RAF Brawdy; and how many objections or expressions of concern he has received in total.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has received a number of representations from a variety of sources on the withdrawal of the RAF search and rescue flight from RAF Brawdy.

NATO Status of Forces Agreement

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in the renegotiation with the German authorities of the

supplementary agreement to the NATO status of forces agreement; when he expects the negotiations to be concluded; and when he expects a new agreement to come into force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[pursuant to his reply, 9 December 1992, col. 718]:* The negotiations on the review of the supplementary agreement to the NATO status of forces agreement have now been concluded. The outcome is a good one from the United Kingdom's point of view. The agreement ensures that our forces in Germany will be able to train effectively and that the quality of life of the forces involved has been preserved. Signature of the agreement is likely in the late spring.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentres

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will re-open the jobcentre in Barnoldswick, Lancashire; and if she will make a statement on the criteria used in deciding whether to re-open jobcentres

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 2 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the Employment Service office in Barnoldswick. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The decision to close the office at Barnoldswick in April 1991 was taken only after a full consultation process. The representations we received were considered very carefully and all the relevant factors were taken into account. The office at Barnoldswick had offered only a limited service and did not reflect the full range of services available at our nearby fully integrated office at Colne. It was mainly for this reason that it was decided to close the office.

There are no plans to re-open the office. However, to ensure that local clients have ready access to job opportunities we have provided two vacancy display boards and a freephone facility in the local library.

You also asked what criteria are used when considering the re-opening of offices. A number of factors are taken into account when such decisions are taken and these would apply equally to the initial siting of offices. Such factors include:

—levels of business to be generated.
—number of clients to be served.
—the level of service offered to our clients.
—the proximity of other offices.
—availability of suitable premises.

Other factors may be taken into account when looking at specific locations but the overriding consideration is to provide the best possible service to our clients within available resources. We cannot, I am afraid, provide an office in every location.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Trade Unions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which employers' associations or employers have asked for trade unions to be required to review members' written authorisations to deduction at source of union subscriptions every three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received no such representations. Under proposals in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill it is employers who will be required to seek renewed consent to check-off deductions from their employees every three years.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many individual claimants have registered as unemployed since *(a)* April 1990 and *(b)* November 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the period April 1990 to December 1992, and on the unadjusted basis, about 354,300 people on average per month joined the claimant unemployment count and 313,900 people on average per month left the count. The corresponding figures for the period since November 1990 are 371,600 and 321,600 respectively. Of those becoming unemployed about a quarter leave unemployment within the first month; a half leave within the first three months and two-thirds within six months.

Work Permits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for the last five years the number of employers whose applications for a work permit are refused who ask for a review; and what percentage of those reviews result in a reversal.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research and data collection are carried out by her Department to assess which skills are in short supply to inform decisions on work permit applications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department draws on a range of labour market information and consults employer and professional bodies and other relevant organisations to inform decisions on work permit applications.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average time taken to inform *(a)* tier 1 applicants for work permits and *(b)* tier 2 applicants for work permits whether their applications have been successful.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available in the form requested. During 1992 more than 80 per cent. of work permit applications were decided within eight weeks of receipt.

Employment Training

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been the average administrative cost to her Department of a place on the employment action scheme;

(2) what has been the average administrative cost to her Department of a place on the employment training scheme;

(3) what will be the average administrative cost to her Department of a place on the training for work scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that this information is not available.

Health and Safety Executive

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of reportable accidents in the north-west resulted in a visit by an inspector from the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Unemployment Benefit Disqualification

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes the constituency of Newcastle under Lyme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mrs. Llin Golding, dated 2 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Warley East.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Andrew Faulds, dated 2 February 1993.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Warley East area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Fife Health Board

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the resignation of Mrs. Ann Ferguson from the chairmanship of Fife health board; and what severance or compensation payment was made on her resignation.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has nothing to add to the statements issued by Mrs. Ferguson and by him on 22 January. Any payment made to Mrs. Ferguson at the time her resignation takes effect will be subject to normal rules for reporting expenditure to Parliament.

Sight Tests

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people had sight tests in all health board areas for which figures are available in *(a)* the last 12-month period for which figures are available and *(b)* in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested for each of the financial years from 1987-88 to 1991-92 is shown in the table. Information for the period October 1991 to September 1992, the last full 12-month period for which information is available, is shown separately in the table.

Numbers of National Health Service sight tests[1] in Scotland by Health Board area

Health Board	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*[3]1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992*
Argyll and Clyde	95,153	98,926	36,636	39,703	46,243	48,096
Ayrshire and Arran	80,202	85,746	34,754	34,606	38,236	39,902
Borders	16,123	17,981	7,176	5,240	6,316	7,163
Dumfries and Galloway	29,324	31,007	11,761	11,336	13,637	14,704
Fife	72,534	76,854	24,821	28,556	34,049	35,453
Forth Valley	54,525	58,847	26,276	18,426	21,637	22,354
Grampian	96,777	108,592	30,582	33,367	36,977	39,129
Greater Glasgow	237,924	252,843	131,605	110,697	122,878	128,436
Highland	36,185	36,599	15,841	13,091	15,476	16,073
Lanarkshire	119,371	119,307	47,680	47,983	56,269	58,527
Lothian	162,353	176,902	74,531	56,682	66,297	69,096
Orkney	2,674	2,972	862	873	1,034	1,156
Shetland	7,000	7,069	2,808	2,420	2,834	2,700

Health Board	1987-88	1988-89	[2]1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992
Tayside	83,680	90,498	28,103	28,132	32,642	34,802
Western Isles	4,320	4,467	2,043	1,773	2,073	2,035
Scotland Total	1,098,145	1,168,610	475,479	432,885	496,598	519,626

[1] One person may have more than one sight test in the period.
[2] Since 1 April 1989 free National Health Service sight tests have only been available to children, full-time students under 19, those in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit, the registered blind and partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate from the Health Benefits Unit, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers, and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers. Information is not collected on private sight tests.

Littlewoods Pools

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will visit the Littlewoods Pools operation at Inchinnan, Paisley.

Sir Hector Monro: Littlewoods Pools is located at Hillington, Glasgow. My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to visit Hillington.

Special Educational Needs

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the outstanding appeals under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, relating to children with special educational needs, will be expedited.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Work is proceeding as quickly as possible on complaints to the Secretary of State under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Such complaints are made by parents of children with records of needs alleging that an education authority has failed to discharge its duty.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to issue revised guidance to education authorities on records of needs for children with special educational needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I hope to do so later this year.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce reforms to the records of needs procedure for children with special educational needs, so as to *(a)* provide for an appeal to an independent tribunal and *(b)* specify a time limit for completing records of needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The incidence of appeals against the terms of records of needs—around five per annum—is insufficient to justify the setting up in Scotland of a statutory tribunal to hear them.

The Scottish Office education department has issued guidance specifying the timescale within which a record of needs should normally be completed. Research by Edinburgh university in 1989 showed that over one half of all records of needs in Scotland are completed in under six months and nearly three quarters in under eight months. I regard that as a sound achievement, but I shall continue to encourage education authorities to improve on this performance.

Green Belts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for the protection of green belts in and around urban areas of Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend's policy for protecting green belts is set out in Scottish Development Department circular 24/1985. Our consistent policy has been to maintain and enhance green belts.

EC Committees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings of committees of the EC each Scottish Office Minister chaired during the most recent United Kingdom Presidency.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to meetings of the Council of Ministers. Scottish Office Ministers did not chair any meetings of the Council of Ministers during the United Kingdom presidency. However, my hon. Friend, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, lead for the United Kingdom at the Fisheries Councils on 19 October and 23 November and shared the lead for the United Kingdom at the Fisheries Council on 19 December, and also attended the Agriculture Council on 26 October. My hon. Friend, the Minister for Education for Scotland, attended the Education Council on 27 November. On the occasions where Scottish Office Ministers do not personally attend, they are represented at all meetings of the Council of Ministers by senior officials or by their colleagues in the United Kingdom Government.

Dounreay (Radioactive Leak)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department was informed of the leakage of radioactive liquor at the Atomic Energy Authority's Dounreay nuclear power development establishment on 21 November 1992; what off-site contamination resulted from the leakage; and how many such incidents have been brought to the attention of his Department since 1988.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* A report of this incident was made to my Department on 26 November 1992. No off-site contamination occurred; radioactivity was confined within the immediate plant area.

Since 1988, four incidents involving radioactive liquor have been reported to my Department from civil nuclear installations in Scotland.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to make a statement on the results of his consideration of representations received on the consultation document, "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services;" and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart [*holding answer 20 January 1993*]: My right hon. and learned Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department and for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage announced the outcome of the Government's consideration on 10 November 1992. These announcements covered England, Scotland and Wales. My hon. Friend the Minister for Education and Housing made a separate announcement on 10 November in relation to home-to-school transport in Scotland.

Officials are currently holding detailed discussions with representatives of local government, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, on the practical aspects of implementing the Government's decisions.

European Parliament

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last formally and collectively met members of the European Parliament representing Scottish constituencies; what matters he discussed; when he next plans to meet them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland last met Scottish MEPs formally and collectively on 9 July 1991. Various issues relating to Scotland and the European Community were discussed. There are no immediate plans for a further such meeting.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the work force of the Scottish ambulance service to discuss the efficient operation of services within *(a)* the Argyll and Clyde health board area and *(b)* Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart [*holding answer 14 January 1993*]:My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet representatives of the work force. There are recognised procedures and channels for communication between staff and managers and between trade unions and management on issues relating to the efficiency of the operation of the Scottish ambulance service.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will hold a full public inquiry into the operation of the ambulance service within the Argyll and Clyde health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart [*holding answer 14 January 1993*]: Until my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has reached a decision as to whether a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Mr. Adleigh should be held, it is not appropriate to consider whether any other form of formal inquiry should be undertaken into the service within Argyll and Clyde health board area.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Scotland that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1991-92.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* There is only one ambulance service for the whole of Scotland and the information in 1991-92 is as follows:

	Percent
0-8 minutes	49
14-20 minutes	95

Super-quarries

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what environmental impact assessment has been carried out of the proposal by Redland Aggregates for a super-quarry in South Harris; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* As required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1988, an environmental assessment of the proposal accompanied the planning application by Redland Aggregates Ltd. to the Western Isles islands council. The matter is currently before the islands council, although my right hon. Friend issued a direction in September 1991 requiring the application to be referred to him should the council be minded to approve it. Because of my right hon. Friend's possible involvement in this matter at a later stage, I am unable to comment further.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what planning policy guidance he has issued with regard to super-quarries and aggregate mining; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* National planning guidelines on the working of aggregates in Scotland were issued in 1977. These guidelines, which are still extant, acknowledge the economic potential of coastal super-quarry developments and suggest that they would, in principle, be acceptable if damage to the environment is limited through careful choice of location and detailed site proposals. Following the commitment given in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200) all planning guidance is now being reviewed. In July 1992 a draft national planning policy guideline (NPPG) entitled "Land for Mineral Working" was issued for consultation. This will supersede the 1977 guidelines later this year and will provide the context within which local authorities should prepare up to date development plan policies for mineral working, including super-quarries where appropriate, in full consultation with the local community, and with regard to the economic needs and environmental considerations of their area.

KS Properties Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *457*, what information his Department had on the company named on the mortgage deed filed at Companies House, Edinburgh, when

approving the writing-off by the Scottish Development Agency of moneys due under the mortgage deed from KS Properties Ltd., and on the availability of assets in KS Properties Ltd. for the purposes of repaying the loan.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* My answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *457* related to the writing off of the balance of a loan owed to the Scottish Development Agency by KS Construction Ltd. The Scottish Office has never been invited to approve the writing off of any debt owed to the agency by KS Properties Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which present or past directors of KS Construction Ltd. or KS Properties Ltd. are or have been members of area boards involved with Scottish Enterprise, its predecessor body or any other publicly funded enterprise board or organisation in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* I am not aware that any person whom my right hon. Friend has appointed to any enterprise board or organisation in Scotland is or has been a director of KS Construction Ltd. or KS Properties Ltd. Membership of boards to which my right hon. Friend does not make appointments is generally a matter for the bodies concerned; and information is not held centrally.

Dentistry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate his Department has made of the total fixed capital in the hands of dentists in Scotland, and of return on that capital, over the last three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* No such estimate is made by the Department. The return on capital is one of the factors that the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration takes into account when recommending the target average net income for dentists.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is planning to maintain the current level of NHS dental services in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The Government remain committed to a comprehensive NHS dental service. Health boards in Scotland are responsible for making arrangements for adequate provision of general dental services in their areas. Health boards have been reminded that they may seek approval to employ salaried dentists if they think this is necessary to ensure the continued availability of NHS dental services in their areas.

Engineering Industry

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department has taken to assist engineering manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The Scottish Office Industry Department assists the engineering industry in Scotland by providing advice on exports, technology and best management practice and by providing grant-aid. Grants are available to help companies to introduce new products and processes, to obtain specialist advice and, in certain areas, to undertake capital investment projects.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on Monday 11 January, c. *635*, what financial provision is to be made either by his Department or by Scottish Nuclear Ltd. for the eventual permanent storage or disposal of high-level nuclear waste following its removal from the planned temporary dry stores at Torness and Hunterston.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* As indicated in my earlier answer, no decision has yet been taken about Scottish Nuclear Ltd's proposed dry store for spent AGR fuel. In the circumstances described in the hon. Member's question, financial provision would be a matter for Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applies in determining whether an area should be awarded enterprise zone status; which areas currently meet the criteria; which areas currently enjoy enterprise zone status; if he has any plans to review the criteria; if he has any plans to make further awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Enterprise zones are essentially policy instruments to encourage the physical and economic regeneration of areas with particular environmental, physical and economic problems. Since 1987, following an interim evaluation of the enterprise zone experiment, it has been Government policy that enterprise zone designation is an instrument to be used only in exceptional circumstances, where the costs can be justified and where there are no alternative, more cost-effective measures available.

The case for enterprise zone designation for an area is measured against three basic criteria, broadly the nature and severity of problems in the area; the likely cost-effectiveness of enterprise zone designation compared with other available measures; and the extent to which authorities and agencies can ensure the success of the zone. If these basic criteria are met, the case is considered in greater depth by reference to a range of more detailed issues. Enterprise zone arrangements are, however, kept under constant review. European Commission approval is required for any designation proposals.

Enterprise zones are currently designated in Inverclyde, Invergordon and Tayside in Scotland. Orders were laid before Parliament on 12 January proposing enterprise zone designation for sites in Lanarkshire with effect from 1 February 1993.

My right hon. Friend has no plans for further designations in Scotland other than as set out in the orders for Lanarkshire referred to above.

Renfrewshire Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual cost of renting or leasing the premises of Renfrewshire enterprise in Causeyside street, Paisley; what is the annual cost of providing heating and

lighting for these premises; what is the cost per square foot for each year of these respective charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* These are operational matters for Scottish Enterprise, and I have therefore referred the hon. Member's question to the chairman of Scottish Enterprise.

Small Businesses

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what schemes his Department operates to provide assistance to small businesses; if he will indicate the eligibility criteria for each scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* My Department itself operates the following schemes of assistance to small businesses.

Regional Investment Grant

Available to businesses in development areas with fewer than 25 employees for investment projects. It covers 15 per cent. of the cost of fixed assets to a maximum of £15,000.

Regional Innovation Grant

Available to independent businesses or groups in the development areas with fewer than 50 employees for innovation projects. It covers 50 per cent. of agreed project costs to a maximum of £25,000.

Small firms also have access to a number of schemes designed to meet their needs and funded by the Department of Trade and Industry. Other more widely available forms of assistance such as regional selective assistance are open to small firms and they can also benefit from a full range of schemes operated and delivered through Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the network of local enterprise companies.

Textiles

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of people employed in the textiles industry in *(a)* Scotland *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Renfrew district in each year since 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Textiles industry employment in Scotland, Strathclyde region and Renfrew district 1973-1990

	Scotland	*Strathclyde*	*Renfrew*
1973	68,238	27,762	6,706
1974	65,261	26,983	6,573
1975	57,523	23,731	5,743
1976	55,041	22,842	5,463
1977	54,610	22,547	5,505
1978	51,672	20,918	4,981
1979	48,331	19,286	4,785
1980	43,708	16,612	4,262
1981	36,891	13,050	3,324
1982	31,758	10,544	2,700
1983	30,374	10,415	2,359
1984	30,743	10,367	2,036
1985	31,387	10,494	1,921
1986	31,782	10,695	2,034
1987	30,790	10,873	2,019
1988	29,088	9,794	1,862
1989	27,689	9,350	1,868
1990	25,652	8,854	1,640

Source: Scottish Register of Employment.
Note: The Scottish Register of Employment only holds information for manufacturing units with 11 or more employees.

As the table shows, textiles industry employment in Scotland declined considerably between 1973 and 1990. This decline was, however, accompanied by a significant improvement in labour productivity.

Over recent years the industry has faced particularly difficult trading conditions but levels of activity are likely to increase as the economy recovers.

The Scottish textiles industry has a fine export record and export orders increased between 1991 and 1992.

Whisky

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers employed in Scotch whisky distilling for each year since 1979; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* parliamentary constituency, *(b)* regional/island council and *(c)* district council in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart [*holding answer 21 January 1993*]: Figures from the Scottish Register of Employment relating to plants manufacturing Scotch whisky are as follows:

	Number of employees
1979	22,600
1980	21,900
1981	20,100
1982	18,000
1983	15,900
1984	14,600
1985	12,900
1986	12,300
1987	11,100
1988	10,100
1989	10,000
1990	10,700
1991[1]	10,400

[1]Provisional.

The breakdowns requested are available on the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information if necessary.

Local Government Finance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much each district local authority received in per capita contribution of aggregate external finance in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart [*holding answer 28 January 1993*]: The information is provided in the table for each year since aggregate external finance was introduced. The per capita figures have been calculated using the Registrar General for Scotland's mid-year estimates of total population.

	1990-91 AEF per capita £	*1991-92 AEF per capita £*	*1992-93 AEF per capita £*
Berwickshire	65·86	98·85	105·24
Ettrick and Lauderdale	68·29	101·99	105·69
Roxburgh	78·44	109·74	105·69
Tweeddale	68·43	102·06	105·74

	1990-91 AEF per capita £	1991-92 AEF per capita £	1992-93 AEF per capita £
Clackmannan	87·02	126·51	140·38
Falkirk	84·24	111·87	123·95
Stirling	109·24	137·48	152·56
Annandale and Eskdale	61·68	89·99	94·04
Nithsdale	66·39	94·45	107·16
Stewartry	55·79	90·02	91·88
Wigtown	71·04	103·96	112·01
Dunfermline	78·04	108·21	120·28
Kirkcaldy	75·08	103·59	116·77
North East Fife	79·18	113·13	125·16
Aberdeen City	111·88	142·33	152·89
Banff and Buchan	78·19	103·59	112·09
Gordon	68·94	100·25	109·34
Kincardine and Deeside	71·46	94·46	102·51
Moray	75·22	103·32	119·85
Badenoch and Strathspey	70·88	109·04	104·92
Caithness	75·17	107·17	112·88
Inverness	74·98	99·35	102·79
Lochaber	98·75	136·88	140·15
Nairn	72·38	97·09	101·34
Ross and Cromarty	105·83	138·61	148·05
Skye and Lochalsh	101·44	167·24	173·35
Sutherland	120·86	135·86	146·44
East Lothian	85·76	122·72	134·87
Edinburgh City	111·51	155·83	172·91
Midlothian	84·24	106·41	120·91
West Lothian	76·54	106·98	121·58
Argyll and Bute	111·92	174·76	193·11
Bearsden and Milngavie	76·59	104·78	113·69
Clydebank	143·15	163·64	175·17
Clydesdale	82·88	115·84	127·87
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	78·29	100·49	112·16
Cumnock and Doon Valley	87·46	116·41	127·75
Cunninghame	101·24	125·15	141·52
Dumbarton	88·53	110·54	127·81
East Kilbride	66·01	87·19	97·18
Eastwood	61·30	89·84	94·74
Glasgow City	188·19	212·36	225·91
Hamilton	87·87	116·11	129·61
Inverclyde	105·73	132·72	148·50
Kilmarnock and Loudon	85·51	107·59	118·91
Kyle and Carrick	88·37	113·77	126·18
Monklands	105·31	141·19	160·55
Motherwell	98·25	126·86	143·79
Renfrew	95·91	127·93	140·78
Strathkelvin	89·86	115·71	121·05
Angus	73·58	103·05	112·31
Dundee City	112·31	153·48	169·74
Perth and Kinross	85·78	113·60	120·59

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each local authority in Scotland the proportion of local authority finance *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding housing, derived from (i) central Government, (ii) business rates, (iii) rents, fees and charges and (iv) poll tax in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* The information requested is given in tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows proportions of local authority income in 1992-93, excluding housing and table 2 shows the proportions including housing. The proportions shown in respect of community charges are inclusive of community charge benefit receipts from central Government. Figures on income from rents, fees and charges on services other than housing are not available centrally.

Table 1

	(1) Revenue support grant and specific grants 1992-93 per cent.	(2) Non domestic rate income 1992-93 per cent.	(3) Community charges 1992-93 per cent.
Borders	78·1	10·7	11·2
Central	61·6	22·1	16·3
Dumfries and Galloway	75·4	12·3	12·3
Fife	62·5	22·1	15·4
Grampian	69·0	19·5	11·4
Highland	72·3	17·0	10·7
Lothian	55·5	24·7	19·7
Strathclyde	66·9	18·6	14·6
Tayside	69·0	17·1	13·9
Berwickshire	72·5	14·5	13·0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	58·3	21·4	20·3
Roxburgh	62·6	17·1	20·2
Tweeddale	69·8	14·8	15·4
Clackmannan	47·1	25·4	27·5
Falkirk	51·1	38·1	10·8
Stirling	39·6	32·2	28·1
Annandale and Eskdale	49·8	18·5	31·7
Nithsdale	54·1	21·2	24·7
Stewartry	63·1	15·7	21·2
Wigtown	63·7	10·9	25·4
Dunfermline	50·5	27·3	22·2
Kirkcaldy	49·7	25·8	24·5
North East Fife	60·9	13·9	25·2
Aberdeen City	40·1	36·7	23·2
Banff and Buchan	48·3	31·4	20·3
Gordon	69·9	14·1	15·9
Kincardine and Deeside	71·8	18·0	10·2
Moray	64·9	22·5	12·6
Badenoch and Strathspey	56·4	20·9	22·7

	(1) Revenue support grant and specific grants 1992-93 per cent.	(2) Non domestic rate income 1992-93 per cent.	(3) Community charges 1992-93 per cent.
Caithness	67·2	19·6	13·2
Inverness	51·1	31·5	17·5
Lochaber	54·4	29·7	15·9
Nairn	67·2	9·4	23·4
Ross and Cromarty	63·4	17·1	19·6
Skye and Lochalsh	72·7	10·2	17·1
Sutherland	73·3	8·9	17·8
East Lothian	49·2	25·0	25·8
Edinburgh City	46·1	22·7	31·2
Midlothian	64·5	13·2	22·4
West Lothian	65·3	20·3	14·4
Argyll and Bute	59·9	17·4	22·7
Bearsden and Milngavie	63·9	9·7	26·4
Clydebank	56·9	19·8	23·3
Clydesdale	53·8	15·0	31·2
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	55·1	21·3	23·6
Cumnock and Doon Valley	64·1	12·8	23·1
Cunninghame	48·4	29·3	22·4
Dumbarton	38·1	18·0	44·0
East Kilbride	41·9	21·2	37·0
Eastwood	75·5	9·3	15·1
Glasgow City	45·2	31·8	23·0
Hamilton	53·6	16·9	29·6
Inverclyde	62·1	13·5	24·4
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	57·9	18·7	23·4
Kyle and Carrick	44·1	19·2	36·8
Monklands	60·3	13·8	25·9
Motherwell	60·6	18·0	21·4
Renfrew	48·7	19·4	31·9
Strathkelvin	57·8	10·3	31·9
Angus	65·5	18·3	16·2
Dundee City	51·7	25·1	23·2
Perth and Kinross	54·8	23·4	21·9
Orkney	77·1	15·3	7·6
Shetland	61·5	33·4	5·1
Western Isles	89·3	6·6	4·1

Table 2

	(1) Government grant 1992-93 Percentage	(2) Non domestic rate income 1992-93 Percentage	(3) Housing (Rents, fees and charges) 1992-93 Percentage	(4) Community charges 1992-93 Percentage
Borders	78·1	10·7		11·2
Central	61·6	22·1		16·3
Dumfries and Galloway	75·4	12·3		12·3
Fife	62·5	22·1		15·4
Grampian	69·0	19·5		11·4
Highland	72·3	17·0		10·7
Lothian	55·5	24·7		19·7
Strathclyde	66·9	18·6		14·6
Tayside	69·0	17·1		13·9
Berwickshire	33·7	6·7	53·5	6·0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	31·7	11·7	45·6	11·0
Roxburgh	30·6	6·8	54·7	8·0
Tweeddale	40·5	8·6	41·9	8·9
Clackmannan	23·0	12·4	51·2	13·4
Falkirk	20·8	15·3	59·5	4·3
Stirling	22·3	17·9	44·2	15·6
Annandale and Eskdale	30·0	7·7	49·2	13·1
Nithsdale	27·2	10·6	49·8	12·4
Stewartry	32·7	7·2	50·3	9·8
Wigtown	31·2	4·8	52·9	11·1
Dunfermline	25·3	13·7	50·0	11·1
Kirkcaldy	23·6	12·3	52·5	11·6
North East Fife	38·4	8·8	37·0	15·9
Aberdeen City	21·1	19·3	47·5	12·2

	(1) Government grant 1992-93 Percentage	(2) Non domestic rate income 1992-93 Percentage	(3) Housing (Rents, fees and charges) 1992-93 Percentage	(4) Community charges 1992-93 Percentage
Banff and Buchan	23·5	15·3	51·4	9·9
Gordon	49·8	6·6	36·3	7·4
Kincardine and Deeside	50·5	9·2	35·2	5·2
Moray	33·8	11·7	48·0	6·5
Badenoch and Strathspey	39·6	10·6	38·3	11·5
Caithness	37·1	7·3	50·7	4·9
Inverness	29·2	13·6	49·6	7·6
Lochaber	45·5	10·6	38·2	5·7
Nairn	38·0	4·2	47·3	10·4
Ross and Cromarty	45·0	7·1	39·8	8·1
Skye and Lochalsh	61·8	5·0	24·8	8·3
Sutherland	45·6	3·7	43·4	7·4
East Lothian	25·6	13·0	47·9	13·4
Edinburgh City	29·2	14·2	37·1	19·6
Midlothian	39·3	8·0	39·1	13·6
West Lothian	35·1	10·9	46·3	7·7
Argyll and Bute	38·2	10·8	37·0	14·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	47·8	7·2	25·6	19·4
Clydebank	27·3	9·3	52·6	10·9
Clydesdale	29·1	8·1	46·0	16·9
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	37·5	14·5	31·9	16·1
Cumnock and Doon Valley	26·4	5·3	58·8	9·5
Cunninghame	25·9	15·6	46·6	11·9
Dumbarton	20·7	9·8	45·5	24·0
East Kilbride	36·1	18·9	10·0	33·0
Eastwood	59·8	7·4	20·9	11·9
Glasgow City	24·4	14·4	50·7	10·5
Hamilton	24·7	7·8	53·8	13·6
Inverclyde	29·4	6·3	52·9	11·4
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	27·3	8·8	53·0	11·0
Kyle and Carrick	26·1	11·3	40·8	21·6
Monklands	25·6	5·9	57·1	11·1
Motherwell	25·7	7·8	57·6	9·1
Renfrew	25·0	9·9	48·6	16·4
Strathkelvin	35·6	6·3	38·4	19·6
Angus	35·3	9·9	46·1	8·7
Dundee City	22·9	11·2	55·6	10·3
Perth and Kinross	31·8	13·5	42·0	12·7
Orkney	73·5	14·4	4·9	7·2
Shetland	60·3	28·6	6·7	4·4
Western Isles	85·3	5·9	5·1	3·6

1. Column 1 consists of Revenue Support Grant, Specific Grants and Housing Support Grant.
2. Column 3 includes standard rental income from unrebated rents.

Forestry Sales

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in respect of Forestry Commission plantations sold since October 1991 *(a)* those in respect of which access agreements have been concluded and *(b)* those in respect of which access agreements have not been concluded, indicating the reasons why access was not given in each case.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* The arrangements for securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission were introduced in October 1991. The Commission has sold 18 areas of forest land since then, in addition to those sales which were too far advanced in October 1991 to be included for consideration under the new arrangements.

An access agreement has been concluded in respect of one of these areas, Steam Mills in Gloucestershire. Access agreements were not concluded for the other areas, which are listed, for the reasons given.

Newbridge and Chirk By-pass, Clwyd
Newport-Worcester Trunk Road, Gwent
These were sales for highway improvements.
Ifton Quarry, Gwent
Valley Woods, West Glamorgan
These were sales which arose from the exercise of reserved powers in the title, eg a landlord's right to resume possession of a leased area.
Blackwater Copse, Dorset
Markshall, Suffolk
Penyrallt (land at), West Glamorgan
These sales were to former owners under the offer-back procedures.
Barton Manor Woods, Isle of Wight
Fishpond, Hampshire
Oxendean, Borders
Oxlease, Hampshire
Patervan, Borders
Tall Boys, Hampshire
These areas were subject to third party rights, eg where the access to the area was over land owned by a third party who was not willing to join in an access agreement.
Dromore, Dumfries and Galloway
Glenscripesdale (part), Highland
These areas were sold to Scottish Natural Heritage.
Corrieour, Tayside

Mount Pleasant, Highland

The local authorities decided not to take up the offer of an access agreement for these areas.

Court Procedures

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to remove the need for witnesses in a trial, including police officers, to provide oral evidence to prove facts where the facts have been included in a statement submitted to the defence and the defence has served no counter-notice challenging their validity; and if he will estimate the saving in police time consequent on such a provision.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* A similar proposal was made in part VI of the Scottish Law Commission's number 137—"Evidence: Report on Documentary Evidence and Proof of Undisputed Facts in Criminal Proceedings". We are considering that proposal as well as seeking to identify other means of minimising unnecessary court attendance by witnesses. The time saved by such a proposal would depend on the use made of counter-notices and it is not possible to predict that.

Hospitals

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many applications have been received from units or hospitals seeking trust status; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many expressions of interest have been received from units or hospitals seeking trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Two trusts are currently operational. These will be joined by a further 15 in April 1993. Twenty-three other hospitals/units have expressed an interest in trust status and are currently developing possible applications.

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the duration, frequency and geographical coverage, of monitoring activity undertaken by or on behalf of his Department in Shetland or coastal waters around Shetland, following on from the grounding of the MV Braer on 5 January; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Extensive monitoring and sampling is being carried out covering sea and fresh water, sediments, fish, air, livestock and wildlife. Wherever appropriate, studies include control samples elsewhere in Shetland as well as from areas potentially affected by the oil spill. The information already available is copious: for example, on 28 January the marine laboratory in Aberdeen made available to local interests an 11-page bulletin reporting on seawater, sediments and fish monitoring, of which I have sent a copy to the hon. Member. Longer-term monitoring will be co-ordinated by the ecological steering group, which is to be chaired by Professor William Ritchie.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of capital expenditure in the national health service in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what was the split between hospital building and equipment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Expenditure on capital in the national health service in each of these years was as follows:

Year	*£ thousands*
1990-91	183·065
1991-92	254·300
1992-93	[1]262·360

[1] Estimate.

Information on the split between hospital building and equipment is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Paisley Pattern

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote the Paisley pattern; what steps he intends to take to encourage the development of the industrial manufacture of Paisley pattern goods in the town; and what resources are currently available to propagate the importance of the town's role in the worldwide commercial heritage of textiles.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The local enterprise company, Renfrewshire Enterprise, is involved in a number of ways in the promotion and development of Paisley pattern. I consider that the actions which it has taken and is taking are likely to have a useful impact. If the hon. Member wishes details of Renfrewshire Enterprise's activities in this respect I know that the company will be pleased to provide further information.

The resources which Renfrewshire Enterprise and other interested bodies choose to devote to the propagation of the importance of Paisley's role in the worldwide commercial heritage of textiles is a matter for those bodies.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Reform

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will make a statement on progress towards improving the working of the House of Commons;

(2) what proposals he has to reform the House of Commons.

Mr. Newton: Reform of the working of the House of Commons is being taken forward by following up the recommendations of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House.

Discussions through the usual channels are seeking to identify an acceptable basis as to when the House can take decisions on the Select Committee's report.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 February 1993

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Accommodation

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the schools in Northern Ireland which have located Portacabin-type accommodation units on their sites, showing in each case the number of such units in use and the number of years that have elapsed since the first such unit was placed on site.

Mr. Hanley: There are over 1,300 schools in Northern Ireland and information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the latest estimate of schools with temporary classroom units on site is as follows:

Number of schools	*Number of temporary classroom units*
550	1—5
80	6—10
45	11—15
25	over 15

Care in the Community Fund

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money will be made available through the care in the community fund.

Mr. Hanley: The total amount of funds to be transferred from social security to the community care budget held and managed by health and social services boards will be £24·63 million in 1993-94, rising to £65·28 million in 1994-95 and to £100·33 million in 1995-96. A further sum of £4·822 million, over and above the transfer sum, will be made available to health and social services boards in 1993-94 to help operate the new arrangements.

Independent Living Fund

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland have received payments from the independent living fund for each of the last three years.

Mr. Hanley: I understand that the information requested can be provided only in terms of the average numbers—based on quarterly counts—who received payments, and is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1990	748
1991	1,217
1992	1,929

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money in total was paid out to people in Northern Ireland under the independent living fund.

Mr. Hanley: I understand that the amount paid up to December 1992 was £10·787 million.

DEFENCE

AWE Aldermaston

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will order an independent safety investigation into the Aldermaston atomic weapons establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We have no plans to order an independent safety investigation at the Aldermaston atomic weapons establishment, which is already subject to independent inspection under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Safety is, and will remain, of paramount importance at the establishment.

Southern Lebanon (Helicopter Deployment)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what charge will be raised from the Foreign Office by his Department for the deployment of three RAF Wessex helicopters from Cyprus on 23 January to southern Lebanon.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Final figures are still being collected in Cyprus, but it is anticipated that the charge, based on extra cost, will amount to some £20,000.

Health and Safety

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of official information on health and safety issues at *(a)* the atomic weapons establishment and *(b)* the Defence Research Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is my Department's policy to make available all information required in order to comply with health and safety legislation at the atomic weapons establishment and the Defence Research Agency.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to changing his policy relating to the release of official information on health and safety issues at *(a)* the atomic weapons establishment and *(b)* the Defence Research Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We have no plans to change our policy.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received relating to the release of information concerning health and safety issues at Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others on this subject.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current health and safety arrangements at Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The current health and safety arrangements at Aldermaston are designed to ensure that the well-being of the work force, and the safety of the site and the surrounding environment are and will continue to be of paramount importance.

RAF Ground Training

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *536-537*, if a decision has now been taken on the proposal to rationalise Royal Air Force ground training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has consulted thoroughly with the trade unions on the proposal to concentrate training at RAF Cosford, RAF Halton and, subject to further review, RAF Locking. No issues have been raised which call into doubt the viability of the proposal and I have therefore decided that it should be implemented as I set out on 6 November.

Every effort will be made to find alternative employment for the staff affected by these organisational changes and action will be taken to assist those involved in relocation. The personal preferences of staff will be carefully and sympathetically considered and all possible measures will be taken to minimise civilian redundancies. Where redundancies do occur, all staff will be entitled to the appropriate periods of notice or pay in lieu and to compensation in accordance with the relevant pension scheme. The MOD redundancy and outplacement service and the relocation scheme will be available for staff wishing to make use of these services.

Attack Helicopter

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the procurement of an attack helicopter for the British Army.

Mr. Aitken: We have previously advised the House of our intention to order a complete attack helicopter weapons system to replace the Lynx in the anti-armour role; and to procure the aircraft, together with an associated support package "off the shelf" through a prime contractor, following competition. I am pleased to announce that the invitation to tender, which will initiate this competition, is being issued to potential bidders today.

St. Anne's Head and RAF Brawdy (Winds)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the annual percentage of winds of at least *(a)* 5 knots, *(b)* 10 knots, *(c)* 15 knots, *(d)* 20 knots, *(e)* 25 knots, *(f)* 30 knots, *(g)* 35 knots and *(h)* 40 knots recorded at St. Anne's head and RAF Brawdy during each of the last six years;

(2) what was the annual percentage of winds coming from each point of the compass recorded at St. Anne's head and RAF Brawdy during each of the last six years;

(3) what was the annual percentage of winds coming from each point of the compass at speeds of at least *(a)* 5 knots, *(b)* 10 knots, *(c)* 15 knots, *(d)* 20 knots, *(e)* 25 knots, *(f)* 30 knots, *(g)* 35 knots and *(h)* 40 knots recorded at St. Anne's head and RAF Brawdy during each of the last six years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These matters are delegated to the Meteorological Office under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 2 February 1993.

I am responding to your three written Parliamentary Questions concerning the wind at St. Anne's Head and RAF Brawdy for each of the last six years.

The figures that follow all refer to RAF Brawdy as information from St. Anne's Head is not available for the period requested. Wind directions are given in 30 degree sectors, e.g. 'east' will be for winds from directions between 075° and 105°. Wind speeds are in knots. The information is based on hourly mean winds (i.e. winds averaged over an hour).

Q12 *Percentage of winds above specified wind speed*

	Wind speed							
Year	*5 knots*	*10 knots*	*15 knots*	*20 knots*	*25 knots*	*30 knots*	*35 knots*	*40 knots*
1987	88·9	57·1	27·4	9·0	2·3	0·7	0·1	0·0
1988	90·4	61·7	32·1	12·8	3·9	1·0	0·3	0·0
1989	90·5	59·1	32·2	12·8	4·1	1·0	0·2	0·1
1990	92·5	63·9	36·3	14·6	5·2	1·6	0·4	0·1
1991	90·5	58·7	29·9	12·7	4·8	1·3	0·3	0·0
1992	89·4	59·9	32·0	12·1	3·4	0·8	0·2	0·0

Q13 *Percentage of winds in each 30 degree sector*

	Wind direction											
Year	*North*	*030*	*060*	*East*	*120*	*150*	*South*	*210*	*240*	*West*	*300*	*330*
1987	10·2	7·0	5·5	7·9	10·2	8·6	6·0	10·7	11·5	7·9	5·7	7·9
1988	10·1	8·0	3·2	4·6	6·6	7·7	6·3	11·4	15·1	12·4	7·8	6·9
1989	9·3	10·8	4·2	5·5	7·1	6·0	5·7	14·1	13·8	9·0	7·4	7·0
1990	7·2	8·8	4·1	3·6	6·1	6·4	6·5	14·2	16·2	11·5	9·2	6·3
1991	9·0	9·7	5·0	6·4	10·6	7·3	5·9	12·1	14·6	8·1	5·6	5·7
1992	9·8	9·4	3·3	4·6	5·5	5·7	7·4	16·5	15·9	10·1	6·5	5·5

Q14 Information is available giving percentages for winds exceeding the same thresholds as in Q12, but for each wind direction separately. These are considered too bulky for publication but are being sent to you directly.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will commission independent financial advisers to carry out costings comparisons of the bids of Rosyth and Devonport dockyard managements with respect to the future maintenance requirements of Trident submarines.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's work on future refitting arrangements, including assessments of the various proposals put forward by the dockyard contractors, has, for some considerable time, been informed by the use of independent consultants. They will continue to advise on all appropriate aspects of proposals under consideration.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Finance and Services Committee

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what arrangements will be made in respect of answering hon. Members' questions relating to the work of the Finance and Services Committee.

Mr. Tony Newton: I intend to amend the question rota shortly to take account of the establishment of the Finance and Services Committee. After consultation with the House of Commons Commission, I have agreed that oral questions to the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee should be included in the same "slot" as questions to the Member answering for the House of Commons Commission. The Chairman, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), will respond in particular to

"questions concerning the estimates for House of Commons expenditure (which will be prepared under his Committee's supervision), the financial performance of Departments of the House, and the financial implications of any new or expanded services which may be proposed by the committees appointed under Standing Order No. 125 (Domestic Committees)" (Official Report, 11 February 1992 column *452*).

The oral questions to the Commission and the Finance and Services Committee will be printed in one combined order created by the random selection process. They will be taken every sixth Monday, at 3.15 pm. In order to reflect the changes in direct responsibility for House services, ten minutes will be allocated to the new combined slot, and questions to the Lord President of the Council will follow at 3.25 pm.

In addition, questions for written answers may also be tabled to the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee concerning the exercise of the responsibilities of the Committee.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what VAT treatment has been agreed between the British Bankers Association and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise with regard to the VAT treatment of supplies of non-executive directors' services made by investing institutions to investee companies.

Sir John Cope: There has been no specific agreement concerning non-executive directors' fees. These fall to be treated in the same way as management fees which are included in the list of guidelines agreed between Customs and the British Bankers Association. Where a director is appointed to the board of the United Kingdom investee company as a condition of a loan, any charges for the director's services are part of the consideration for the loan, an exempt supply. Alternatively, where the investor acquires shares and exercises the right to appoint a director, Customs take the view that there is no supply for VAT purposes, as any shares are supplied to the investing institution by the investee company. In either case, any associated VAT incurred by the investing institution would not be recoverable.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the net revenues raised by the increase in VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. in June 1979 in the first full year thereafter, in cash and current prices.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* As shown on page 31 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1979-80 £430 million was expected to be raised from unifying the rates of VAT at 15 per cent. in 1980-81.

Bank Fees

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what VAT liability is applied to arrangement fees charged by a bank to its customers in connection with a debt for equity exchange by that bank.

Sir John Cope: The VAT liability of arrangement fees charged by banks depends strictly on the terms of the contracts between the parties. Without further details, it is difficult to be precise about the liability. Arrangement fees charged by the banks in respect of loans or other forms of credit form part of the consideration for the loan, an exempt supply. Moreover, where a borrower issues shares in return for loan capital, any arrangement fee would also be exempt from VAT. In either case, any associated VAT incurred by the bank would not be recoverable.

Charities

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of VAT receipts to Her Majesty's Treasury from charities in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) on 28 January 1993 at column *791*.

Commuters (Tax Relief)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate such information as he has available about tax relief for people commuting to and from work by rail, for OECD countries.

Mr. Dorrell: No OECD country allows tax relief specifically for rail travel to and from work. But the following countries allow various levels of tax relief for journeys to and from work by public transport:

Germany
Netherlands

The following countries allow various levels of tax relief for home-to-work travel by any type of transport:

Austria
Belgium

Denmark
France
Japan
Luxembourg
Norway
Sweden

Remaining OECD countries either do not allow any tax relief for travel to and from work, or the information is not available.

Regulatory Bodies

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Securities and Investments Board concerning the future of LAUTRO and FIMBRA and their proposed successor bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Recognition of a self-regulatory organisation is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board. It would be inappropriate for the Treasury to be involved in drawing up detailed plans for the Personal Investment Authority. Nevertheless, I welcome the progress made so far and see imporant advantages for investor protection if the PIA were established to regulate private investor business with the support of firms who do business in that sector.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to seek to reform the Financial Services Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has asked the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to review how SIB carries out its regulatory responsibilities.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms of his Department's budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94.

Sir John Cope: The Treasury's budget includes expenditure on certain Bank of England services, United Kingdom coinage, Parliament and Privy Council in addition to the running costs of the central Treasury. The percentage change between 1992-93 and 1993-94 based on the latest 1992-93 forecast outturn is:

(a) −4·1 per cent. in real terms; and
(b) −1·4 per cent. in cash terms.

Tax (1981 Budget)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the net revenues raised by the tax changes introduced in the 1981 Budget in the first full year thereafter, in cash and current prices.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* An estimate of revenues in cash terms is contained in table 2 of the 1981-82 "Financial Statement and Budget Report". An estimate in current prices can be obtained using the series for the GDP deflator published in the 1993 "Economic Trends" annual supplement. Both are available in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Seat Belts

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to ensure co-ordination between the Home Department and the Department of Transport regarding the campaign on the wearing of seat belts scheduled for February.

The Prime Minister: The campaign is a matter for the Department of Transport. It has consulted the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers, who support the campaign.

Needle Exchange Schemes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if he will co-ordinate ministerial consideration of a centrally funded approach for needle exchange schemes to work towards the elimination of illegal needle and syringe disposal.

The Prime Minister: There are about 300 needle exchange schemes. In 1988, general guidance on such schemes was issued to health authorities including advice on the disposal of used equipment.

The Department of Health issued further guidance when it made £1·4 million central funding available to health authorities in 1992-93 to expand the number of such schemes based in pharmacies. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, managers of such schemes must take all resonable steps to ensure that the waste is handled and disposed of safely and legally.

India

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his discussions with the Indian Prime Minister on the status of Kashmir and the human rights of Kashmiri people during his recent visit to India.

The Prime Minister: I discussed the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister. I restated our view that the best way forward is through dialogue between India and Pakistan; improvement in human rights and a genuine political process in Kashmir; and an end to all external support for violence in Kashmir. Mr. Narasimha Rao assured me of his determination to hold elections in Kashmir as soon as possible and of his commitment to respect for human rights.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Prime Minister what were the full terms of the agreement reached with the Indian Government during his visit on the importation of Scotch whisky.

The Prime Minister: During my visit to India, I took the opportunity to urge the Government of India to accelerate the liberalisation of its import regulations, which would include such products as Scotch whisky. We are continuing to press for an early resolution of this matter.

Secretaries of State (Powers)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland have equal delegation of powers.

The Prime Minister: The powers of the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland reflect the different constitutional positions of Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the principal responsibilities of *(a)* the Secretary of State for Wales, *(b)* the Secretary of State for Scotland and *(c)* the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the principal differences of those responsibilities; and what changes he is planning to make to the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The principal responsibilities of the Secretaries of State are set out in the list of ministerial responsibilities, a copy of which is in the Library. A review of a wide range of aspects of governance of Scotland, including the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Scotland, is under way. The Government will make an announcement to the House about the results of the review once it is complete.

Cabinet Office Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms of the Cabinet Office budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: The percentage reduction in spending plans for the Cabinet Office, excluding the Office of Public Service and Science, between 1992-93 and 1993-94 is expected to be *(a)* 23·9 per cent. in real terms, and *(b)* 21·8 per cent. in cash terms. The reduction is due mainly to the fact that capital expenditure is expected to be less in 1993-94 than in 1992-93.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will bring forward proposals for procedures for the House to scrutinise the way in which its decisions on proposed European Community directives and regulations are reflected in voting in the Council of Ministers when the proceedings of the Council become public; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements are being made within the European Community for the implementation of the decision by the Edinburgh conference that votes cast in the Council of Ministers will be published; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As agreed at Edinburgh, the Council secretariat will make arrangements to publish the record of the vote, including explanations of the vote where delegations request these, whenever a formal vote is taken in Council. This information will be provided to the House.

Royal Family

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister which members of the royal family have carried out engagements overseas on behalf of the Government in each year since 1989.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The information is as follows:

1989
The Queen
The Duke of Edinburgh
The Prince and Princess of Wales
The Queen Mother
The Duke and Duchess of York
The Prince Edward
The Princess Royal
The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester
The Duke and Duchess of Kent
Princess Alexandra

1990
The Queen
The Duke of Edinburgh
The Prince and Princess of Wales
The Princess Royal
The Princess Margaret
The Duke of Gloucester
The Duke and Duchess of Kent
Princess Alexandra

1991
The Queen
The Duke of Edinburgh
The Prince and Princess of Wales
The Prince Edward
The Princess Royal
The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester
The Duke and Duchess of Kent
Princess Alexandra

1992
The Queen
The Duke of Edinburgh
The Prince and Princess of Wales
The Prince Edward
The Princess Royal
The Princess Margaret
The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester
The Duke and Duchess of Kent
Princess Alexandra

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions overseas visits have been made by members of the royal family in each year since 1989 at the request of Government Departments.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The number of overseas visits made by members of the royal family at the request of Government Departments, including the British Overseas Trade Board, in the years concerned was as follows:

	Number
1989	41
1990	28
1991	35
1992	41

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments have requested members of the royal family to carry out engagements on behalf of the Government in each year since 1989.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecutions

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions were brought by the Crown prosecution service arising out of investigations by the

Metropolitan police in each inner and outer London magistrates court in the latest month for which the information is available; what was the number for the same month one year ago; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available in the form requested. Figures are held for whole Crown prosecution service areas rather than for individual magistrates courts.

The Crown prosecution service does record the number of cases received in each area, which includes cases received for advice. The year ending figures for the periods indicated are as follows:

	September 1991	*September 1992*	*Percentage change*
Inner London	148,117	146,555	−1·05
London North	80,663	79,881	−0·97
London South and Surrey	63,113	60,373	−4·34
Total CPS	1,603,002	1,569,996	−2·06

The figures include cases received from police forces other than the Metropolitan police, for example, British Transport police, and in respect of London south and Surrey, the Surrey police. No concluded assessment of the reasons for the change have yet been made.

HEALTH

Drugs

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give, by specialism, the membership of the committee considering the list of drugs purchasable over the counter;

(2) if a dermatologist will be invited to give evidence on the application of dermatological drugs to be considered by the committee on drugs purchasable over the counter; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The membership of the Committee on Safety of Medicines is given in the table. In accordance with the requirements of the Medicines Act 1968, we seek and take account of the Committee on Safety of Medicines' advice before deciding whether it is safe for a prescription-only medicine to be reclassified so that it may be supplied over the counter. If a dermatological medicine currently restricted to supply on prescription only were to be proposed for reclassification to allow it to be supplied over the counter, the Committee on Safety of Medicines' advice would be sought. It would be open to the Committee to obtain any additional specialist advice it considered necessary.

Committee on safety of medicines (CSM)

Professor M. D. Rawlins BSc MD FRCP(Lon) FRCP(Ed) FFPM (Chairman)
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Newcastle University

Professor A. M. Breckenridge MD MSc FRCP FRCPE FRSE
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Liverpool University

Dr. Kathleen L. Costeloe MA MB BChir FRCP
Consultant Paediatrician, St. Bartholomew's Medical College

Dr. Janet H. Darbyshire MSc (Epidemiol) MBChB FRCP
Head of the MRC's HIV Clinical Trials Centre, Brompton Hospital, Hon. Consultant in Thoracic Medicine and Hon. Senior Lecturer in Epidemiology, Brompton Hospital

Professor D. S. Davies BSc PhD CChem FRSC
Professor of Biochemical Pharmacology, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, London

Professor Anne Ferguson BSc MB ChB PhD FRCPath FRCP(Glas) FRCP(Lon) FRCP(Ed)
Professor of Gastroenterology, University of Edinburgh and Western General Hospital

Professor A. T. Florence DSc FRSC FRSE FRPharmS
Dean of the School of Pharmacy, London University

Professor A. M. Geddes MB ChB(Ed) FRCP(Lon) FRCP(Ed)
Head of Department of Infection, University of Birmingham Medical School and Consultant Physician, East Birmingham Hospital

Professor E. C. Gordon-Smith FRCP FRCPath
Professor of Haematology, St. George's Hospital Medical School, London

Professor K. Gull BSc PhD
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Manchester

Professor H. S. Jacobs BA MD FRCP
Professor of Reproductive Endocrinology, The University College and Middlesex Hospital School of Medicine, London

Dr. W. A. Jerrett MB BCh FRCGP
General Practitioner, Glamorgan

Dr. B. J. Kirby MB ChB FRCP
Consultant Physician, Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital

Miss Gillian C. I. Lachelin MD MA MB BChir FRCOG
Reader and Hon. Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, University College Hospital Medical School, London

Professor M. J. S. Langman BSc MD FRCP
Professor of Medicine and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Birmingham University

Professor D. H. Lawson MD FRCP(Ed) FRCP(Glas)
Consultant Physician, Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Visiting Professor Strathclyde University

Dr. A. V. P. MacKay MA BSc(Pharm) MB ChB PhD(Cantab) FRCPsych FRCP(Edin)
Physician Superintendent and Consultant Psychiatrist, Argyll and Bute Hospital

Professor J. M. Midgley BSc MSc PhD CChem FRSC FRPharmS
Professor of Medical and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, University of Strathclyde

Professor B. K. Park BSc PhD
Professor of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, University of Liverpool

Professor J. C. Petrie MB ChB FRCP(Ed) FRCP FFPM
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Aberdeen

Professor Alain Li Wan Po BPharm BA PhD MRPharmS MPS(N.I.) MRSC
Head of School of Pharmacy, and Professor of Pharmaceutics, Queen's University, Belfast

Professor Anne E. Tattersfield MD FRCP
Professor of Respiratory Medicine, University of Nottingham

Drugs (Product Licences)

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has received from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry regarding product licence information supplied to the Medicines Control Agency being made available for use by other sections of her Department including the section responsible for the management of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: Product licence information supplied to the Medicines Control Agency is not available for use by other sections of the Department. Officials have received a letter from the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry on this matter and will be replying shortly.

Hospital Beds, West Midlands

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, column 689, on the west midlands, what information she has on the number of hospital beds at the dates given.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table. The number of beds, however, is not a good indicator of patient activity over the period in question as my earlier reply indicated. As in my earlier reply to the hon. Member, figures for 1991-92 are provisional. Validated figures will be published shortly.

Total available beds in West Midlands RHA

	1979	*1990-91*	*[1]1991-92*
West Midlands	36,263	26,591	24,774

[1]Provisional.

Dentistry

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been de-registered on the initiative of dentists in Norfolk in the past 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally for the period required. Between 3 July 1992 and 22 January 1993 dentists informed Norfolk family health service association of the deregistration of 14,637 adults and 57 children.

During the 12 months 1 December 1991 to 30 November 1992, 111,390 adults and 53,347 children left the register of national health service dental patients in Norfolk and 177,356 adults and 58,457 children were added. At 1 December 1991, 413,797 patients were registered with dentists in Norfolk. At 30 November 1992, 484,878 patients were registered—a net increase of over 71,000.

Road Accidents

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the most recent figures available for the total annual cost to her Department of road-related accidents.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Pamphlets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pamphlets the national health service management executive has published in the last year; if she will list the title, the recipients and the cost of each pamphlet; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* In the 12 months to 21 January 1993 the national health service management executive prepared and issued 57 pamphlets, leaflets and brochures to managers and staff in the NHS. The table gives the project number, description, cost and to whom it was sent.

National Health Service Management Executive

Table of pamphlets, leaflets and brochures issued to managers and staff in the national health service in the 12 months to 21 January 1993

Key: P = Print, D = Design, A = Artwork, Del = Delivery charges, T = Typesetting, Dist = Distribution and Mailings, F = Fulfilment, HLOS = Health literature ordering service

Project/Project description	*Category*	*Cost (£)*	*Sent to*
C50/018 Purchasing for patients issue 6 (DCED)	P	1,076·00	—
C50/027 Sharing developments issue 3 (DCED)	A, T, P	4,906·80	—
C50/029 GP Computer survey booklet (NHSIS)	D, A, T, P	7,930·00	—
C50/034 Purchasing for patients issue 7 (DCED)	P	966·00	—
C50/042 Sharing developments issue 4 (DCED)	D, A, P	5,214·65	All sent to NHS managers
C50/042 Sharing developments issue 4 (DCED)	P	1,034·00	All sent to NHS managers
C50/048 IMG News issue 7 (NHSISA1)	P	1,762·06	All sent to NHS managers
C50/051 Purchasing, Teaching and research booklet (DCED)	P	2,179·00	All sent to NHS managers
C50/052 NHS Reg. of Comp. Apps. Info. guide (NHSISA1)	D, A	1,727·25	—
C50/052 NHS Reg. of Comp. Apps. Info. guide (NHSISA1)	P	2,798·00	—
C50/057 Purchasing intelligence brochures (DCED)	P	2,179·00	—
C50/068 'This is the IMG' advert leaflets (NHSISA1)	P	566·00	—
C50/069 IMG News issue 8 (NHSISA1)	P	2,389·40	—
C50/070 Purchasing for patients issue 8 (DCED)	P	1,098·00	—
C50/073 (EOR) Outpatients computer prog. booklet	P	9,470·00	—
C50/074 EOR booklet (EOR)	A, P	996·00	—
C50/076 Clinical audit leaflet (NUR)	D, A, T	507·60	—
C50/076 Clinical audit leaflet (NUR)	P	593·38	—
C50/083 Working for patients leaflet (NHSRIU)	A, T, P	1,149·15	—
C50/085 Purchasing for patients issue 9 (DCED)	P	1,045·00	—
C50/088 Local voices publication (PMB3B)	P	2,827·00	—
C50/092 Total quality management project	P	2,500·00	—
C50/093 IMG News issue 9 (NHSISIA1)	P	2,178·93	—
C50/100 Purchasing for patients issue 10 (DCED)	P	1,113·00	—
C74/007 Demonsrtrably different IT (CEM-ME4)	P	8,000·00	—

Project/Project description	Category	Cost (£)	Sent to
C50/104 Alliances for health booklet (DCED)	P	4,885·00	—
C50/105 Clinical coding booklet (L4G)	P	495·00	—
C50/108 HC92 MFG booklets (Wessex RHA)	P	6,838·00	—
C50/110 Rec. Broch. for Leeds admin. Staff (PRIME 1)	P	15,900·00	—
C50/113 IMG News issue 10 (NHSISA1)	P	2,627·00	—
C50/120 Local voices brochure reprint (PMD3B)	P	987·00	—
C50/121 IMG Aim booklet (NHSIS)	A, P	1,695·00	—
C70/006 Health service research strategy booklet	A, D, T	7,584·63	—
C70/006 Health service research strategy booklet	D	3,525·00	—
C70/006 Health service research strategy booklet	P	8,700·90	—
C71/001 Hermes publicity leaflet	D, A, P	2,231·00	—
C71/003 Nursing perspective leaflet issue 1	A, P	504·00	—
C71/004 Nursing perspective leaflet issue 2	A, T, P	1,046·00	—
C71/005 C71/RM update issue 3	A, P	1,876·00	—
C71/013 Risk assessment and RM brochure and leaflet	P	5,480·00	—
C71/014 Nursing perspective leaflets 1 and 2 reprints	P	1,476·00	—
C71/017 Ernst and Young RM booklet	P	2,805·00	—
C71/023 Business planning for medical records booklet	P	2,996·00	—
C71/024 Mental health systems survey booklet	P	3,296·00	—
C71/025 RM in the community health services booklet	P	2,995·00	—
C71/026 Casemix management systems survey booklet	A, P	4,067·00	—
C73/009 VFM Update March 1992	D, A, T, P	2,440·00	—
C74/007 Demonstrably different II brochures	A	325·48	—
C74/007 Demonstrably different II brochures	D, A, T	41,891·11	—
C74/007 Demonstrably different II brochures	D	587·00	—
C74/007 Demonstrably different II brochures	P	11,695·00	—
C74/008 Ref: The First Six months booklet	P	24,830·00	Managers and women
C74/009 Women in the NHS—Opportunity 2000 leaflet	D, A	2,106·78	—
C74/009 Women in the NHS—Opportunity 2000 leaflet	P	8,007·35	—
C74/010 Ambulance and other patient trans serv pub	P	4,247·00	NHS managers and women
C74/011 NHS Trust finance manual	D, A, T	4,512·00	—
C74/018 Women in the NHS booklet	A, T, P	8,871·25	—
C74/019 NHS women's implementation guide	P	5,857·82	—
C76/004 RMU design consultancy/catalogue printing	D	32,579·81	—
C76/004 RMU design consultancy/catalogue printing	Del.	40·28	NHS managers
C76/004 RMU design consultancy/catalogue printing	P	18,361·83	—
D70/007 NHSME annual report and broadsheet	—	97,208·88	—
D71/014 Purchasing for the charter booklet	—	2,338·25	—
D72/003 Total quality management projects pub.	—	20,000·00	—
D72/013 Report on 6 maternity units	—	9,642·60	—
D73/001 NHS women's implementation guide	—	15,005·95	Women and managers
D73/001 Women's employees guide to opportunity 2000	—	60,632·41	Over 500,000 women and to NHS managers
D73/016 Celebration of success book	—	31,938·36	Senior NHS managers
D73/016 Reprint of opportunity 2000 booklet	—	6,932·50	NHS managers
D74/001 VFM update 7	—	3,055·00	NHS managers
D74/003 Ward materials management	—	711·00	NHS managers
D74/005 VFM summary report nursing skill mix	—	759·50	NHS managers
D76/001 Disp management summary booklet	—	8,769·88	NHS managers
D80/014 First steps for the NHS (Focus Book)	—	45,000·00	NHS managers
D89/003 NHS reg. of comp. Applications (IMG)	—	1,924·00	NHS managers
D89/004 Queue action reprint (CMME4)	—	2,235·00	—
DX89/006 Grad. Rec. NHS finance function (FCIB4B)	—	6,616·76	Personnel and finance
D89/009 Secondments Oxford seminar (91/92)(Prime 2)	—	1,900·22	NHS managers
D89/015 Ambulance and other pat. trans. booklet (HPU)	—	1,542·00	NHS managers
D89/018 IMG News issue 11 (IMG)	—	2,339·13	NHS managers
D89/021 Total quality management (CMME4)	—	22,815·00	NHS managers
D89/035 Purchasing for health newsletter	—	28·78	NHS managers
D89/037 IMG News issue 12 (IMG)	—	2,578·40	NHS managers
D89/041 Data interchange standards booklet (IMG)	—	1,775·00	NHS managers
D89/042 Local voices SR (PMD3B)	—	1,022·00	NHS managers
D89/053 IMG News issue 13 (IMG)	—	1,967·98	NHS managers
D89/054 Health service indicators leaflet (FCIB8)	—	1,408·83	NHS managers
D89/056 Data quality review (IMG ME (C))	—	2,518·56	NHS managers
D89/058 this is the IMG reprint (IMG)	—	1,938·00	NHS managers
D89/066 Data quality review No. 2 (CCSU)	—	1,300·00	NHS managers
D23/017 "This is the IMG ME" booklet	—	1,938·00	NHS managers
D90/002 ME News Feb 92 (TRANS 91/92)	—	7,375·90	—
D90/003 ME News March 92 (TRANS 91/92)	—	6,022·59	—
D90/004 ME News April 92	—	7,463·48	—
D90/005 ME News May 92	—	8,984·19	—
D90/006 ME News June 92	—	8,463·69	—
D90/008 ME News July 92	—	10,585·87	—
D90/009 ME News August 92	—	9,500·00	—
D90/010 ME News September 92	—	8,933·46	—
D90/011 HOTN News inserts	—	998·75	—
D90/012 ME News October 92	—	11,000·00	—
D90/013 ME News November 92	—	11,000·00	—

Project/Project description	Category	Cost (£)	Sent to
D90/014 ME News December 92	—	12,000·00	—
D90/015 ME News January 93	—	12,000·00	—
C33/010 "This is the IMG" booklet reprint	P	8,067·00	NHS managers
C33/016 IMG literature translations and print	P	3,485·00	—
C90/016 January 1992	P, DIST, Photos	7,861·19	Throughout the NHS

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Restructuring)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with *(a)* the Association of County Councils, *(b)* the Association of Chief Police Officers, *(c)* the Police Federation and *(d)* others with regard to proposals to restructure the police force and police authorities in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no discussions relating to police organisation in Nottinghamshire. He is considering a range of issues relating to the future structure, organisation and funding of the police service generally.

My right hon. and learned Friend does not yet have firm proposals for change, but when he does, he will consult interested parties before final decisions are reached.

Fire Services, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the capacity of fire authorities in Nottinghamshire to cope with fire, emergency and other demands in 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The standard of service provided by the Nottinghamshire fire and rescue service was last examined in the course of an inspection of the service by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services between 19 and 23 October 1992. I expect the report of that inspection to be published shortly. It is for Nottinghamshire county council, in the light of its standard spending assessment, to set a budget for 1993-94 which will allow it to comply with its duties under the Fire Services Act 1947 as a fire authority, and with the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover.

Young Offenders

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders in the east midlands and in England and Wales were under 21 years of age in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 20 January 1993, at column 252.

Car Crime

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reduce car crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the question from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 16 December 1992 at column 208.

Vehicle Entry Devices

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to curb the use and sale of vehicle entry devices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans at present to ban or control the sale of vehicle entry devices.

It should be stressed, however, that it is already a criminal offence, under section 25 of the Theft Act 1968, to carry equipment for use in connection with any burglary or theft. This covers vehicle entry devices, and upon conviction an offender is liable to imprisonment for up to three years.

Many people, such as locksmiths and garage owners, have a legitimate need for equipment such as skeleton keys, and this would make it extremely difficult to prohibit their sale. These devices are also often no more effective in gaining entry to locked vehicles than other more rudimentary tools, like screwdrivers or shaped pieces of metal, and often require some skill on the part of the user to work effectively.

Moreover, inquiries by the Home Office crime prevention centre and the Association of Chief Police Officers have not found any evidence of the widespread misuse of skeleton car keys. In particular, the Association of Chief Police Officers has reported that these devices have not been found in the possession of offenders charged with either theft of or from a vehicle.

We do not, therefore, see a need at present for legislation to control the possession, sale or advertising of skeleton car keys, but we shall continue to monitor the situation closely.

We are aware, however, that devices which are capable of deactivating electronic car alarms and central locking systems have recently appeared on the British market. We are actively looking into their availability and effectiveness, with a view to assessing what action may be required. Manufacturers too are aware of the existence of these devices and are working to improve the security of their products accordingly.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the percentage clear-up rate for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 calculated solely on the basis of those charged and found guilty.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available.

Guilty Pleas

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 *(a)* the number of those people who appeared in court who entered an initial plea of guilty and *(b)* the percentage of all those who appeared in court which the figure in *(a)* represents.

Mr. Jack: The readily available information which is collected in selected sample weeks in February, June and October of each year for proceedings for indictable offences, including either-way, at magistrates courts, is given in the table.

Information for 1985 and earlier years is not available. Information on the type of plea for committals for trial dealt with by the Crown court by circuit, is published annually in the command paper "Judicial statistics, England and Wales". Table 6.7 of the 1991 issue (Cm 1990) gives data for 1990. Information for police force areas is not available.

Table A

Defendants pleading guilty at a summary trial as a percentage of all those proceeded[1] against at magistrates' courts for indictable offences by police force area, 1986 and 1991

Police force area	*1986*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	60	44
Bedfordshire	58	57
Cambridgeshire	75	46
Cheshire	66	52
Cleveland	71	50
Cumbria	69	64
Derbyshire	63	50
Devon and Cornwall	64	62
Dorset	[2]74	52
Durham	59	45
Essex	64	54
Gloucestershire	72	59
Greater Manchester	62	51
Hampshire	68	53
Hertfordshire	63	56
Humberside	69	59
Kent	66	47
Lancashire	65	46
Leicestershire	71	53
Lincolnshire	63	53
London, City of	[2]60	[2]48
Merseyside	50	48
Metropolitan Police District	55	44
Norfolk	59	52
Northamptonshire	[2]69	50
Northumbria	57	46
North Yorkshire	67	60
Nottinghamshire	65	52
South Yorkshire	64	58
Staffordshire	74	52
Suffolk	73	78
Surrey	72	52
Sussex	75	58
Thames Valley	66	51
Warwickshire	[2]57	[2]53
West Mercia	62	58
West Midlands	59	48
West Yorkshire	63	53
Wiltshire	68	57
Dyfed-Powys	[2]60	52
Gwent	72	45
North Wales	60	50
South Wales	61	52
England and Wales	62	51

[1] Includes proceedings where the defendant is committed for trial to the Crown Court or the case is withdrawn or discontinued.

[2] Based on less than 200 persons proceeded against; percentages based on small numbers are less reliable and subject to greater error.

Roads (Policing)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent figures available for the total cost of policing the roads in the United Kingdom; what these figures include; and how they are created.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1991, approximately 8 per cent. of the total police strength in England and Wales was deployed on specialist traffic duties. The proportion of non-specialist officers' time spent on traffic matters is not recorded. The total costs could not be reliably estimated.

Police Staff

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilian staff have been employed by each police authority in England and Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The table shows police and civilian strength from 1992. The information for 1979 to 1991 can be found in the appendix to the annual reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, copies of which are in the Library.

Police and Civilian Strength—1992
As at 31 October

Force	*Police*	*Civilians*
Avon and Somerset	3,068	1,097
Bedfordshire	1,129	387
Cambridgeshire	1,262	448
Cheshire	1,888	543
City of London	801	310
Cleveland	1,490	461
Cumbria	1,192	413
Derbyshire	1,803	581
Devon and Cornwall	2,918	1,045
Dorset	1,317	561
Durham	1,390	542
Dyfed-Powys	966	268
Essex	2,923	1,067
Gloucestershire	1,154	378
Greater Manchester	7,084	2,508
Gwent	1,008	318
Hampshire	3,269	1,078
Hertfordshire	1,690	583
Humberside	2,027	692
Kent	3,099	1,103
Lancashire	3,203	1,075
Leicestershire	1,846	671
Lincolnshire	1,188	486
Merseyside	4,687	1,621
Norfolk	1,419	454
North Wales	1,369	459
North Yorkshire	1,411	461
Northamptonshire	1,197	431
Northumbria	3,578	1,229
Nottinghamshire	2,343	738
South Wales	3,182	1,076
South Yorkshire	3,013	924
Staffordshire	2,196	740
Suffolk	1,240	520
Surrey	1,684	604
Sussex	3,007	971
Thames Valley	3,843	1,457
Warwickshire	1,007	334
West Mercia	2,061	917
West Midlands	6,935	2,444
West Yorkshire	5,095	1,861
Wiltshire	1,257	490
Metropolitan	27,804	14,459

Filmed Interviews

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the procedure which has to be followed by any person or organisation wishing to film an interview with a convicted prisoner *(a)* for

research purposes, *(b)* for other private purposes and *(c)* for publication or broadcast; and at what level the decision is taken in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Requests to interview a prisoner must be made to the governor of the holding prison or the public relations branch of the Home Office. Applications from the media must be made in writing giving details of the requirements of the interviewer and the justification for the interview to take place.

If the interview is allowed to take place for research purposes or private purposes, a signed undertaking is required that none of the material gathered will be used in any publication or broadcast. Requests for interview for the purposes of publication or broadcast are considered by the public relations branch in conjunction with officials or governors, and where necessary after consultation with Ministers.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who gave permission for the filming of an interview with Dennis Nilsen which was subsequently broadcast on television;

(2) to whom permission was given for the filming of the Nilsen interview; what were the terms of the written request for permission; and what written conditions were placed on the permission granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on Tuesday 2 February.

Appeal Cases

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases he referred to the Court of Appeal following an investigation by C3 division at his Department in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of cases referred under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in respect of conviction

	Number
1992	
February	—
March	2
April	—
May	—
June	—
July	3
August	—
September	1
October	1
November	—
December	—
1993	
January	4

Notes:

(a) In addition, one case was referred in October 1992 in respect of sentence only.

(b) One case was referred in January 1992 and one other in October 1992 under section 17(1)(b) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were referred to the Court of Appeal following investigation by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is provided in the table:

In respect of conviction	*Number of cases*	*Number of defendants*
(a) Under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968		
1988	2	2
1989	3	6
1990	7	20
1991	10	12
1992	8	11
In respect of sentence		
1988	23	23
1989	6	6
1990	3	3
1991	4	8
1992	1	1
(b) Under section 17(1)(b) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968		
1990	1	1
1991	2	2

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of alleged miscarriage of justice cases which were held by C3 division at his Department in 1992 or for the latest data available.

Mr. Jack: At the beginning of 1992, 171 representations were under consideration, 790 new representations were received during the year, and 783 representations were concluded; 178 representations were under consideration at the end of 1992.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average time taken to investigate an alleged miscarriage of justice by his Department during 1992 or for the latest year available;

(2) how many cases which are currently being examined by C3 division of his Department, at the latest date available, have been outstanding for more than 12 months.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available in the form requested. On the latest available information, the average time taken to deal with representations about an alleged miscarriage of justice is 41 days, but much depends on the complexity of the case and the extent of police or other inquiries that may be required to assess the representations made. Further representations may be received while a case is under consideration, prolonging the conclusion. At 1 February, there were 27 cases which had been under consideration for more than 12 months.

Frankland Prison

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inquiry into the incident at Frankland prison involving a sexual assault by an inmate on a women prison officer while carrying out her official duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Serious assaults in prisons are usually investigated by the police. The incident at Frankland, involving a sexual assault on a woman prison officer by an inmate, was immediately referred to Durham constabulary, which is conducting an inquiry. Its findings are not yet known.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the national safety standards for prison officer staff; and what procedures are being followed by his Department to ensure that these were complied with at Frankland prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The safety of all prison staff is always a prime concern in designing procedures within establishments. Arrangements reflect local conditions and I am satisfied that all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of staff are taken at Frankland. The nature of the work and the inmate population inevitably involves some element of risk.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officer staff have been employed at Frankland prison for each year of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Staffing figures for Frankland prison are available for the last seven years as shown in the table. Before 1986, staffing records were not centrally kept. Further information is not therefore readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Date	*Staff*
1 April 1986	354
1 April 1987	376
1 April 1988	378
1 April 1989	388
1 April 1990	399
1 April 1991	404
1 April 1992	401

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many local authority areas help and advice is provided to young people who are cautioned; and how many *(a)* aged under 18 years and *(b)* aged over 18 years received such assistance in each of the past three years in each local authority area.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Squatting

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to tighten up the law on squatting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: As my hon. Friend knows, we are firmly committed to introduce legislation to tighten up the law on squatting. It is important that any new provisions deal effectively with this clearly unacceptable activity while striking the right balance between the criminal and the civil law. Any new provisions must also be both fair and enforceable. We have been giving very careful thought to the form which legislation might take and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms of his Department's budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is no change in real terms between the Home Office's estimated outturn for 1992-93 and its planned expenditure for 1993-94, but there is an increase of 2·75 per cent. in cash terms.

Privatisation

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to privatise parts of his Department over the next year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have given approval for advisers to be engaged in preparation for the privatisation of DTELS, formerly the Directorate of Telecommunications. The aim is to privatise during 1993-94 by means of a trade sale.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has about the percentage contribution to gross domestic product provided by manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom; and how this compares with percentages in the other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is in the table.

Manufacturing industry[5] as a percentage of gross domestic product in European Community countries

	1989
United Kingdom	[1]19·8
France	21·3
Germany	31·1
Italy	23·2
Belgium	23·3
Netherlands	20·2
Luxembourg	28·4
Denmark	15·8
Ireland	[2]22·3
Spain	26·9
Portugal	[3]29·2
Greece	[4]15·3

[1] Latest year 1987.
[2] Latest year 1979.
[3] Latest year 1986.
[4] Latest year 1988.
[5] Manufacturing is defined according to the International Standard Industrial Classification Division 38.
Source: OECD National Accounts.

United Kingdom manufacturing share of GDP can also be derived from figures published in "UK National Accounts, the Blue Book". These have the attraction of being more up to date. The United Kingdom national accounts data are, however, not directly comparable with data show in the above table and published by the OECD. A reason for non-comparability is that blue book data shown output at factor cost. OECD estimates show output at market prices. Taxes and subsidies are included in estimates at market prices, but are netted out in factor cost estimates.

Funeral Costs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to require all funeral directors to publish an itemised price list covering all costs associated with arranging a funeral; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: No. Whilst I strongly support price transparency, and would welcome an amendment to the code of conduct of the National Association of Funeral Directors in this direction, I do not think it would be appropriate for the Government to prescribe to the funeral industry how it should prepare its estimates and invoices.

British Telecom

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the results of the OFTEL consultancy study into the accounting separation of BT activities to be complete; and if he will place a copy in the Library as soon as it is complete.

Mr. Leigh: I understand from the Director General of Telecommunications that a preliminary consultancy report has now been received by OFTEL, and that BT's reactions are currently awaited. Any wider consultations and decisions made in the light of the report will be a matter of public record, with copies of the relevant documents available in the library of the House.

Clean Coal Technology

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much funding has been given to research into clean coal technology in the United Kingdom for each year since 1985; and what corresponding information he has for Japan and the United States.

Mr. Eggar: The comparative coal research expenditure figures available for the United Kingdom, Japan and the USA since 1985 cover the period 1985 to 1990 and are as detailed. Specific figures for clean coal technology research are not known, but most of the expenditure detailed is believed to be focused on the development of clean coal technology for power generation.

Coal R&D expenditure in United Kingdom, United States of America and Japan
Period 1985 to 1990

	1985 £ million	*1986* £ million	*1987* £ million	*1988* £ million	*1989* £ million	*1990* £ million
United Kingdom	122·3	118·2	58·2	45·5	43·8	45·8
United States of America	179·5	170·8	140·7	243·7	245·3	472·2
Japan	159·9	152·7	159·2	175·9	137·3	134·5

Notes:

1. United Kingdom R&D expenditure on April-March financial year basis. Annual figures converted to 1990-91 base and inclusive of expenditure by DEn, DTI, DOE, SERC, CEGB, British Coal and British Gas.
2. Figures for USA and Japan extracted from IEA publication, "Energy policies of IEA countries—1991 reviews". Figures are published in 1991 $US which have been converted to £UK using the IEA average exchange rate of $1·764 to the £ for 1991.

Offshore Licences

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *822*, which organisations specifically requested that their advice and response to his consultation on the 14th round of offshore licences should be treated in confidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Consultation of other Departments and interested bodies took place on the understanding that the information provided would be treated in confidence. This is our established practice with regard to consultation on blocks offered for licensing.

Exceptional Projects Scheme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the oral statement of the Minister for Industry of 26 January, *Official Report*, column 972, (1) what consultations he has had with organisations representing United Kingdom business in relation to the suspension of section 8 assistance to exceptional projects scheme;

(2) what consultations he has had with the European Commissioners responsible for *(a)* competition and *(b)* industrial policy in relation to the suspension of section 8 assistance to exceptional projects scheme.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* Only two projects have been able to satisfy the stringent criteria for demonstrating exceptional national benefit in five years. In these circumstances we did not hold consultations with organisations representing United Kingdom business on our decision to suspend the assistance for exceptional projects facility. The AEP facility required approval from the European Commission. We did not consult any Commission officials about the suspension I have announced.

Steel

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations on competition grounds he has made to the European Commission about the proposed merger of the steel tube interests of the main Italian Ilva, German Mannesmann and French Usinor, steel companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I understand the proposed joint venture between Ilva, Mannesmann and Usinor Sacilor, to combine their stainless steel seamless tube operations, is likely to fall for investigation by the European Commission under the merger control regulation. Mergers which qualify for investigation must be notified to the European Commission and member states have the opportunity to comment on them. The United Kingdom passes comments to the EC Commission on all notified cases. If the proposed joint venture between the three steel companies is notified the United Kingdom will assess its competition implications and submit comments in the usual way.

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the United States Government following their announcement that they will be imposing a 105 per cent. levy on imported British steel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The provisional anti-dumping duties of 109·22 per cent. on British Steel exports of steel plate are unwarranted and wholly disproportionate.

The actions, brought by the protected United States steel industry, cannot help efforts to secure a much-needed multilateral steel arrangement.

The President of the Board of Trade has written to United States Commerce Secretary Ron Brown urging him to focus on these matters at the earliest opportunity. The issue was also raised at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 February.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his policy for tourism.

Mr. Key: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 13 November, *Official Report*, columns *997-98*. I believe that the case is now much less strong for central Government funding of the promotion of tourism in England. The English tourist board has done a great deal over the years to raise standards, to improve access to information, and to show the industry how their products can be developed and marketed. As the industry matures, and the regional tourist boards develop, it is appropriate for other bodies to carry on many of the ETB's central activities. That is reflected in the allocations of Exchequer grants for tourism over the next three years.

However, I also believe that central Government support for the regional tourist boards should continue. I believe that this support should be targeted much more closely than at present on areas where the industry would not fully exploit tourism potential unaided and where this would assist with economic regeneration. The English tourist board is currently working on proposals for support to the regional tourist boards.

Historic Royal Palaces Agency

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration was given to repeating the assertion of his accountability for the policy, operations and resources of the Historic Royal Palaces Agency, contained in the 1990-91 review of the agency, in its 1991-92 report, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Historic Royal Palaces Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Beeton. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Beeton to Mr. Toby Jessel, dated 28 January 1993:

I am writing to confirm our recent conversation about your Parliamentary Written Question on the Secretary of State's accountability for the policy operation and resources of the Historic Royal Palaces Agency.

The statements about this in the two documents you referred to derived from the Agency's Framework Document, which is it's Constitution, and was the basis upon which the Agency was established in 1989. That document was to be reviewed after 3 years. This is now in hand and I understand that no changes to the Secretary of State's above stated responsibilities are proposed. I am certainly not seeking any.

You also asked me whether the rumour that Bushy Park might be transferred to the Agency was true. I said that the question had been considered when the maintenance of Bushy Park had been put out to contract as to whether the same should happen at Hampton Court. It was decided then that merged management would not be appropriate and I do not expect this question to be raised again, at least until the present maintenance contract at Bushy Park expires, which is several years from now.

Badgers

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many individuals have been convicted under the Badgers Act 1973.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Information is given in the table for the years 1979 to 1991 which is provisional. Data from 1973 to 1978 are not available.

Number of persons convicted under the Badgers Act 1973, 1979 to 1991[1]

England and Wales

Year	*Convictions*
1979	24
1980	20
1981	26
1982	23
1983	50
1984	38
1985	25
1986	67
1987	55
1988	41
1989	53
1990	26
[1]1991	17

[1] Provisional.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Russia (Biological Weapons)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column 705, to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), what research assistance has been given to Russia in connection with ending biological weapons programmes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has not provided Russia with research assistance in connection with ending biological weapons programmes. Under the terms of a trilateral agreement reached between the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia on 11 September 1992, various measures to monitor compliance with the 1972 biological and toxic weapons convention are envisaged including an examination of ways to promote co-operation in the conversion of biological weapons facilities.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in respect of the resumption of the UN-sponsored talks on Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is in regular contact with the United Nations Secretary General about Cyprus, as about other issues, through the British ambassador to the United Nations. The Government welcome the agreement by all parties to resume talks in March, and will continue actively to support the efforts of the United Nations.

Deported Palestinians

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government are taking with regard to the continuing situation of the deported Palestinians.

Mr. Hogg: We have made our views very clear to the Israelis, most recently in a meeting between European Community Foreign Ministers and the Israeli Foreign Minister in Brussels on 1 February. The Israeli Government have now taken a helpful step in the right direction. We are urging on all concerned that it should be their top priority to resume the peace process.

World Television Service

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which sections of the world BBC World Service television is not broadcast; and when he expects the coverage to be complete.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: BBC World Service television, which is a commercial enterprise, is now available in Europe, most of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Canada, and is on course to achieve its target of world coverage by the end of this year. A service to Australasia is expected to begin soon, and negotiations are under way for services in Latin America and Japan, and for rebroadcasts in the United States.

Government Communications Headquarters

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recruitment policies at Government communications headquarters, and which groups which are excluded on grounds of ethnic origin or parents' country of origin.

Mr. Hurd: No groups are excluded on grounds of ethnic origin. Members of staff at GCHQ must be British citizens, must never have held citizenship other than of the United Kingdom and colonies, and must not hold any nationality or citizenship in addition to British citizenship. As regards parents of applicants, the requirement is that each parent must always have been a Commonwealth citizen as defined by the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from other Governments about employment practices at Government communications headquarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: To the best of my knowledge, there has never been a representation from another Government about employment practices at GCHQ other than in the context of the consideration by members of the International Labour Organisation of the question of staff representation at GCHQ.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applicants for employment at Government communications headquarters in the last five years have been refused on the grounds that their parents came from Ireland; and if he will make it his policy not to bar applicants on such grounds.

Mr. Hurd: No applicant would be refused simply on the ground that their parents came from Ireland. What matters is whether the parents hold Commonwealth citizenship as defined by the British Nationality Act 1981. Figures are not kept on how many applications have been refused on that ground.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Motoring Offences

Mr. Adley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the most recent figures he has available showing the total annual cost of magistrates court hearings arising from motoring offences.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. L. J. Ferry

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the dates in 1992 when maintenance cheques were received by Hertford county court in respect of Mrs. L. J. Ferry and the dates on which they were remitted to Mrs. L. J. Ferry.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Maintenance payments in respect of Mrs. L. J. Ferry in 1992 were received by the Hertford county court and remitted to Mrs. L. J. Ferry according to the list:

Payment received by the Court	*Payment remitted to Mrs. Ferry*
20 January 1992	22 January 1992
11 February 1992	18 February 1992
17 March 1992	24 March 1992
24 April 1992	24 April 1992
27 May 1992	27 May 1992
15 June 1992	19 June 1992
28 July 1992	28 July 1992
24 August 1992	24 August 1992
25 September 1992	29 September 1992
27 October 1992	27 October 1992
26 November 1992	26 November 1992
30 December 1992	30 December 1992

EDUCATION

Lingua Programme

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *541*, if he will state the reasons underlying

the decision by the Council of Education Ministers to limit the eligibility for pupil exchanges under the Lingua programme to pupils attending educational establishments supported by public funds.

Mr. Boswell: Given the limited resources available, the Council of Education Ministers wished to target public funds narrowly. I will write to my hon. Friend.

Teachers (Non-contact Time)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has of the average weekly non-contact time of teachers in *(a)* secondary schools and *(b)* primary schools in (i) 1985 and (ii) 1990.

Mr. Forth: The available information on teachers' non-contact time is derived from staffing surveys conducted in secondary schools in 1988 and 1992, and primary schools in 1987. The tables show the actual amount of teachers' non-contact time during pupil timetabled lesson time in the survey week. They are averages for all teachers in the sector, including head teachers.

	Teachers' average non-contact time (hours)
Maintained Nursery and Primary schools	
1987	2.0
Maintained Secondary schools	
1988	4.2
1992	4.7

Environment and Development Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for complying with the commitment in "Agenda 21" of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to update or prepare strategies for integrating the issues of environment and development into education to undertake a review of curricula to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach.

Mr. Forth: In schools the national curriculum gives ample scope for pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of the environment and how it affects our lives. Several of the national curriculum subjects include studies relevant to education about, for and through the environment.

In further and higher education, an expert committee was appointed by the Department and the Welsh Office in 1991 to advise on the future development of environmental education: its report was published on 2 February 1993. Its recommendations are being brought to the attention of those to whom they are addressed.

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures are available comparing Government assumptions about the levels of local authority expenditure on schools with the actual expenditure in the current year and planned expenditure for next year.

Mr. Forth: Education's share of the overall level of spending by local authorities which the Government assumed for the 1992-93 local authority grant settlement is £18,787 million. The equivalent figure for 1993-94 is £16,854 million; this represents an increase of 2·6 per cent. after taking account of the transfer of responsibilities, notably for further education. The Government do not make assumptions about the amount local authorities will spend on schools. Information about authorities' actual expenditure in 1992-93 and planned expenditure next year is not yet available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of herds of cattle which have been restocked with calves from overseas BSE-free herds in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: This information is not available. While Customs and Excise statistics record numbers of animals imported into the United Kingdom each year, no record is kept of the reason for importation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the outcome of experiments attempting to transfer spongiform encephalopathies from BSE-infected material to mink.

Mr. Soames: The mink experiment is incomplete and no results are yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many suspected BSE cases have been placed under restriction each week since 20 November 1992.

Mr. Soames: The information requested for Great Britain is as follows:

Week ending	*Number of Form A's served*
27 November 1992	840
4 December 1992	940
11 December 1992	955
18 December 1992	925
25 December 1992	816
1 January 1993	549
8 January 1993	1,062
15 January 1993	993
22 January 1993	987

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the possibility of diagnosing rapidly cattle infected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy but not yet clinically ill; and what plans he has to introduce surveys to quantify the extent of subclinical bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cows and cattle.

Mr. Soames: Research aimed at developing a test for bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the live animal is in progress and remains a high priority, but no such test has yet been produced or is likely to be available in the near future. Surveys of the live cattle population for bovine spongiform encephalopathy cannot therefore be carried out.

Parkhurst Forest

Mr. Berry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the public meeting to discuss the Forestry Commission's plans for Parkhurst forest on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Curry: The public meeting held in Newport, Isle of Wight, on 14 January was arranged by the Forestry Commission so that the local forest district manager could discuss the proposed felling at Mark's corner in Parkhurst forest with interested members of the public. This area is a site of special scientific interest which consists largely of old oak trees; the site is particularly noted for its lichens. The felling proposals form part of a long-term management plan for the area which was agreed with the Nature Conservancy Council, now English Nature, in 1989. The felling is designed to reduce the denser stands of oaks and to thin the beech and sweet chestnut trees, in order to allow more light to reach the stems of trees carrying rare lichens. This will create a more open woodland structure similar to that associated with the traditional management of pasture woodland.

Most people at the public meeting accepted that some trees should be felled, and many helpful and positive comments were made. The Forestry Commission agreed to implement many of the suggestions, including the request that fewer trees should be felled and that a conservation ride should be created. The Forestry Commission invited the meeting to set up a friends of Parkhurst forest body in order to improve liaison between the commission and the local residents.

I understand that my hon. Friend recently met the Forestry Commission's regional director and discussed the management of Parkhurst forest with him.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Care Allowances

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of raising the level of the invalid care allowance to that of *(a)* retirement pension and *(b)* two-thirds of average earnings.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 18 November 1992 at col. *252*.

Sickness and Maternity Benefits

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to investigate the payment of sickness and maternity benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, North West (Mr. Robinson) on Monday 1 February.

Child Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in 1993-94 of introducing a disregard for the first *(a)* £5 and *(b)* £10 per week of maintenance raised under the Child Support Act 1991 where the parent with care is in receipt of income support.

Mr. Burt: Latest estimates of the costs in 1993-94 of a disregard of maintenance in income support are £60 million for a £5 disregard and £115 million for a £10 disregard. These figures take no account of possible behavioural changes.

Hospital Visits

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications were received in 1991-92 by the Benefits Agency in *(a)* Woolwich and *(b)* Bexleyheath from parents for assistance with travel and other costs associated with visiting their sick children in hospital; and how many were refused.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Pensions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to ensure that existing pension provisions are maintained in the event of a partial or complete takeover of a British company by a foreign company or financier.

Miss Widdecombe: A review of the legal framework within which occupational pensions schemes operate, is currently being carried out by the Pensions Law Review Committee. That review will take into account the rights and interests of scheme members, pensioners and employers. Decisions on whether any legislative changes are appropriate will be made in the light of the committee's report.

Industrial Diseases

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to implement the recommendations of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council that emphysema and chronic bronchitis in underground coal miners should be prescribed as an industrial disease.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 14 December 1992 at column *76*.

Personal Injuries (Damages)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average time taken to reply to solicitors pursuing claims for damages for personal injuries with information on state benefits paid to clients, prior to the setting up of the compensation recovery unit at Hebburn; what is the current time taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The operation of the compensation recovery unit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. David Clelland, dated 2 February 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what was the average time taken to reply to solicitors pursuing claims for damages for personal

injuries with information on state benefits paid to clients, prior to the setting up of the Compensation Recovery Unit; and what is the current time taken.

Prior to the setting up of the Compensation Recovery Unit a record of response times to requests for information on state benefits was not maintained. The information you request is therefore not available.

Since the setting up of the Compensation Recovery Unit in 1990 a record of all requests for information on state benefits has been maintained. However, I should explain that it is not possible to break this down into individual groups such as solicitors pursuing personal injury claims.

For the six months ending on 31 December 1992 the average response time to all enquiries was 20·5 working days and approximately 90% of all enquiries were dealt with within the unit's target of 30 working days.

The issue of Certificates of Total Benefit paid, which is the main business of the unit, is being achieved within the statutory time limit of four weeks in 99·97% of all cases.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Miss Alison Freda Leahy of 18 Grove close, Totnes TQ9 5EP, reference NA 17 10 86 D, will hear the result of her application for disability living allowance submitted last May.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 2 February 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when Miss Alison Freda Leahy will hear the result of her application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA), submitted last May.

According to our records Miss Leahy claimed DLA in February 1992 and a decision was made on 13 April 1992. Unfortunately the letter informing Miss Leahy of the outcome of her claim does not appear to have been sent to her and for this I offer my sincere apologies.

I can confirm that Miss Leahy has now been notified of the decision. I have replied to you separately in greater detail about her case.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Road Accidents

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total annual cost to his Department of people unable to work and in receipt of benefit as a result of road accidents.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Allowances (Carers)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will examine ways of relaxing the present link between invalid care allowance and attendance allowance or medium/higher rate care component disability living allowance to enable more carers to qualify for the carer's benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

"Community Care: Carers"

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the recommendations for improving financial support for carers proposed by the fifth report from the House of Commons Social Services Committee of 1989-90, "Community Care: Carers", have been implemented since its publication.

Mr. Scott: The earnings limit for invalid care allowance has been raised since the report, from £20 to £40 in April 1992. Subject to parliamentary approval we intend to raise the limit again, to £50 from April this year, and to introduce a £15 disregard for all carers in the income-related benefits. Since October 1991 the carer premium in the income-related benefits has been extended for eight weeks after caring ceases.

WALES

Pupil Assessment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are his reasons for phasing out the Welsh Joint Education Committee certificate of education;

(2) if he will list the organisations he consulted prior to his decision to phase out the certificate of education; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultations he has had with the Welsh Joint Education Committee concerning his proposals to phase out the certificate of education; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make a statement on the introduction of the national curriculum and its associated assessment procedures in relation to less academic candidates.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 2 February.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many special educational needs pupils moved from segregated special schools to integrated mainstream schools in each local education authority area of Wales for the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs moving from special schools cannot be identified separately. However, the following table shows the number of pupils with statements transferring from independent or maintained special schools to mainstream schools in each local education authority area in Wales for 1991.

	Number
Clwyd	13
Dyfed	4
Gwent	2
Gwynedd	—
Mid Glamorgan	3
Powys	3
South Glamorgan	14
West Glamorgan	6

Departmental Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms of his Department's budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The total public expenditure provision for programmes within my responsibility in 1993-94, £6,316 million, is 8·7 per cent. more than the original planned provision for 1992-93, £5,809 million. This is an increase of 5·8 per cent. in real terms.

Included in these figures are additional resources in 1993-94 in respect of (i) the transfer from the Department for Education of responsibility for university funding in Wales; (ii) the transfer from the Department of Social Security to local authorities of responsibility for enhanced support for those who need it for care in their own homes or in residential or nursing homes; (iii) the transfer from the Department of Employment of responsibility for training; and (iv) the new treatment of superannuation costs for civil servants.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the proportionate increase in the numbers of administrative and management staff in the national health service; and what proposals he has to limit the increase in numbers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No such representations have been received. Staffing levels are the responsibility of health authorities and national health service trusts and they require sufficient numbers to manage an annual expenditure in Wales of nearly £2 billion in an effective and efficient way for the benefit of patients.

Cash Limits

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for changes to the cash limits for his Department in the current financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit on class XVI, vote 4 will be reduced by £6,000,000 from £156,095,000 to £150,095,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 5 will be increased by £4,746,000 from £501,172,000 to £505,918,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 8 will be increased by £1,876,000 from £1,276,914,000 to £1,278,790,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 9 will be increased by £40,000 from £59,123,000 to £59,163,000. The local authority capital cash limit—WO/LACAP—will be reduced by £2,162,000 from £451,334,000 to £449,172,000. The Housing for Wales cash limit—WO/HFW—will be increased by £35,000,000 from £121,469,000 to £156,469,000.

The reduction in the cash limit for vote 4 of £6,000,000 reflects a lower than expected demand for places on the TEC programmes mainly for unemployed young people. This reduced requirement will permit a corresponding increase in the provision for industrial expansion through regional selective assistance grants. The increase will be secured by means of a supplementary estimate on class XVI, vote 3.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 5 comprises (i) the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement of £4,709,000 for capital expenditure as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, cols 698-702, and (ii) a transfer from class XIII, vote 1 of £37,000 in respect of part-time training for career registrars.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 8 comprises (i) additional provision of £1,555,000 to cover the interest element in the charges of NHS trusts; (ii) additional resources of £298,000 in respect of changes to the external financing limit for the NHS trust and (iii) a transfer from class XIII, vote 3 of £23,000 in respect of the NHS Estates Agency.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 9 represents a transfer from class VI vote 1 of £40,000 to cover the capital costs associated with the transfer of responsibility to the Welsh Office of training in Wales.

The decrease of £2,162,000 in the WO/LACAP cash limit represents the net effect of (i) a reduction of £5,162,000 to take account of prior-year capital grant adjustments, partly offset by (ii) an increase of £3,000,000 in respect of the special package of housing measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1992 autumn statement.

The WO/HFW cash limit will be increased by £35,000,000 to take account of the special package of housing measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1992 autumn statement.

The net increase represented by these changes will be charged to the reserve and will not add therefore to the planned total of public expenditure.

Environment Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish an independent environment agency in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 15 July 1992 at column *857-58*.

TRANSPORT

Rail Lines (Disposal)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to put the Merseyside Wirral and Northern lines in the same category as the Chiltern line and Isle of Wight lines in respect of disposal.

Mr. Freeman: It is our intention under the Railways Bill to franchise all passenger services currently run by British Rail.

British Rail

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the cash ceiling for public service obligation grant to British Rail for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend announced on 8 May 1992 that the ceiling had been set at £1,040 million. This figure has been increased to £1,150 million in the light of revised forecasts. British Rail's external financing limit for 1992-93 is not affected.

Transport Projects

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which EC countries take pollution and congestion into consideration as investment criteria when allocating funds in new transport projects; and if he will outline the principal features of the criteria used in each case.

Mr. Freeman: Investment appraisal procedures vary markedly in their sophistication and scope between countries. All countries undertake some form of environmental assessment of transport schemes, as required by EC directive 85/337/EEC. There is no general agreement on the appropriate techniques for valuing environmental impacts; consequently few countries attempt to value them directly.

My officials are taking part in the EC EURET project "Cost Benefit and Multi Criteria Analysis for New Road Construction", which is surveying the appraisal methodology in use in member states for new road construction, with the ultimate objective of establishing a co-ordinated evaluation method to be made adaptable for use at Community level. The project is due to be completed this year and the final report published early next.

Road Maintenance (Cost)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the most recent figures available for the cost per mile of road maintenance in the United Kingdom; and how the figure is calculated.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1991-92 the average cost of maintenance for the United Kingdom road network was £10,400 per mile. This figure is calculated from information collected by the Department of Transport, Scottish Office, Welsh Office and the Department of Environment (Northern Ireland). It is based on all types of maintenance expenditure, including structural, routine and winter, on all roads, both national and local.

Road Damage

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has carried out into the relative damage caused to road surfaces by different classes of road vehicles; and if he will give specific details for *(a)* motor cars of 1300 cc engines and *(b)* loaded 20 ton commercial vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The research commissioned by the Department is recorded in the following two reports, copies of which are being made available to the Libraries in both Houses:

(a) "Relative Damaging Power of Wheel Loads in Mixed Traffic" (TRL Laborstory Report 979, Crowthorne, 1981).

(b) "Trends in Axle Loadings and Their Effect on Design of Road Pavements" (TRRL Research Report 138, Crowthorne, 1988).

The results of that work have broadly confirmed and extended the original work on this topic undertaken in the United States of America between 1958 and 1961.

All motorcars, whatever the size of their engine, cause negligible road wear and tear compared with commercial vehicles.

The relative wear and tear caused by fully laden commercial vehicles in the 20-tonne range is indicated by the following vehicle wear factors expressed as the number of standard 80KN axles.

	Factors
Two axle rigid (maximum gross weight 17 tonnes)	3·14
Three axle rigid (maximim gross weight 26 tonnes)	3·44
Three axle artic (maximum gross weight 26 tonnes)	4·50

Freight

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has undertaken into the environmental effects of freight travelling by *(a)* road and *(b)* rail; and how these are taken into consideration as investment criteria when allocating funds in new transport projects.

Mr. Freeman: Research carried out by the Department into the environmental effects of freight travelling by road includes the "Lorries in the Community" study, undertaken by the Department in association with the Civic Trust and the County Surveyors Society, and the lorry management study, from which the resulting guidance was published in 1990.

The means by which environmental considerations are taken into account in the Department's investment appraisal procedures are explained in the Department's publication "The role of investment appraisal in road and rail transport" (1991).

The Government pay freight facilities grants to encourage private companies to use rail in cases where there are wider environmental and other benefits. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday announced substantial enhancements to this scheme, together with a new scheme, similar in concept, to contribute towards track charges for freight flows which would otherwise travel by road.

These measures, together with our proposal for a lorry weight concession for combined transport—on which we shall be consulting widely—will help to encourage wider use of intermodal rail freight services.

Transport Costs

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to quantify the respective real costs, including all associated and indirect demands, on public funds of *(a)* road and *(b)* rail transport in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Levels of public expenditure on road and rail transport are set out in the Department of Transport's annual report.

No comprehensive information is available on the effects of road and rail transport on other public expenditure programmes or on taxation, although costs such as policing are included in the track costs calculation for roads.

Road Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent publications have been made available, and to whom, relating to road safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The following publications have been issued in the last three months:

Circular Roads 1/93 Local speed Limits,

"Killing Speed and Saving Lives—The Government's strategy for tackling the problem of excess speed on our roads"

The Highway Code

Copies were sent on publication to local authorities, local authority associations, police, interested professional organisations, lobby groups, monitoring organisations, and individuals who have requested copies. I also sent copies of the first two documents to Members who have written to me on the subject of speed in recent months.

In addition, a number of leaflets and posters have been issued to road safety officers, the police and motoring organisations dealing with winter driving, drinking and driving, including rehabilitation courses for drink drive offenders; and seat belts.

The DVLA has also distributed leaflets on seatbelts, the highway code, speed and cycling with vehicle excise duty reminders. The transport research laboratory regularly publishes research reports on road safety topics.

Fatalities and Injuries

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatalities and serious injuries occurred per passenger mile, for each of the last five years for which figures are available for *(a)* the roads and *(b)* the railways.

Mr. Freeman: The figures requested are given in the table:

Fatal and serious injuries per billion passenger miles

Year	Road		Rail	
	Fatal	Serious injuries	Fatal	Serious injuries
1991	10·9	124	2·3	3·9
1990	12·6	145	1·4	4·8
1989	13·0	153	1·3	5·5
1988	13·2	166	2·7	6·9
1987	14·0	177	1·6	3·9

Departmental Investment Priorities

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account his Department takes in determining its transport investment priorities of the comparative safety risks associated with *(a)* road and *(b)* rail travel.

Mr. Freeman: Investment appraisal on roads is carried out using a well-established set of values for casualty reductions. The increased funding for local safety schemes indicates the high priority which is given to proven cost-effective measures for reducing road casualties.

All railway investment includes the cost of meeting relevant safety standards. Where alternative road and rail schemes are compared the safety benefits of any transfers from road to rail are taken into account in assessing the case for grant support.

Road Congestion and Accidents

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates his Department has made as to the total cost to industry of *(a)* road congestion and *(b)* road accidents.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: (a) The Department does not make an estimate of the total cost of road congestion as it does not believe there is a reliable method of making such an estimate. However, for each road scheme the contribution which it makes to reducing congestion is a central part of the assessment. This is in line with the objective of the roads programme to assist in economic development through the reduction of transport costs.

(b) The best available estimate of the loss of productive capacity in the economy as a whole from road accidents is £1·8 billion per annum. This applies to all sectors, not industry alone as usually defined.

Underground and Rail Systems (Deaf People)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to ensure that underground and rail systems have appropriate electronic boards or visual displays capable of notifying deaf and hearing people of changes to scheduled services or safety and security alerts.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is jointly funding with the passenger transport executives a project to produce guidelines on facilities for people with disabilities in transport terminals and interchanges. These guidelines, which are due to be published shortly, will include advice on the use of visual displays to meet the needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Railways Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he expects in the current structure and practice of national negotiations and conciliation practises within the railway service consequent to the implementation of the Railways Bill; and what assessment he has made of the consequent desirability of maintaining a single structure of training and qualifications for various grades of personnel other than the means of funding such internal training and supervision of operating standards.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The existing national arrangements for those parts of the business that remain in BR will be unchanged, subject to any renegotiation found to be necessary after privatisation. Arrangements for negotiation and conciliation with employees in those parts of BR that transfer to the private sector will be for the new owners and employees.

The Railway Industry Training Council, a voluntary body, already has private sector representation. There is no reason why its work should not continue after privatisation.

Accident Prevention

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's budget for accident prevention.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* Safety and accident prevention are a high priority throughout the Department and many of the Department's activities are designed to enhance safety. It is not therefore possible to give a separate figure for the Department's budget for accident prevention.

SCOTLAND

Constitutional Change

13. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on constitutional change in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Our review of constitutional arrangements is well advanced. We will report to the House once the results of the review are complete.

34. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further stock he has taken on the future government of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our review of constitutional arrangements is well advanced and I hope we will be able to report to the House in a few weeks' time.

Long-term Care (House Sales)

14. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland to this date have had their homes sold as assets to pay for a placement in long-term care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Statistics on the number of residents in long-term residential care who have sold their former dwellings in order to meet the cost of long-term care accommodation are not held centrally.

Stobhill Hospital

15. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of Stobhill hospital.

Mr. Stewart: Greater Glasgow health board is conducting a review of all its acute and maternity services. Stobhill hospital features as part of that review. I look forward to receiving the health board's recommendations in due course.

Holyrood House

16. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many days, in each year since 1987, the Palace of Holyrood House was occupied by the sovereign.

Sir Hector Monro: In recent years Her Majesty and other members of the royal family have made regular use of the Palace of Holyrood House. In addition the Lord High Commissioner is in residence for some 10 days each year. The palace was also a very successful venue for the European Council last December.

Construction Industry

17. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small businesses in the construction industry have ceased trading in Scotland in the last three months.

Mr. Stewart: Comprehensive figures on the number of business failures involving small firms in the construction sector in Scotland are not available.

Skye Bridge

18. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress towards the completion of the bridge to Skye.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Because of the very stormy weather conditions recently experienced, the planned floating-out and sinking operation for the bridge caissons has been delayed. The contractor intends to mobilise his resources quickly for this critical operation as soon as an appropriate weather window becomes available. It is not expected that the target of completion by mid-1995 will be affected.

NHS Trusts

19. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses in making appointments to the boards of NHS trusts.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend appoints NHS trust non-executive directors for the personal qualities that they have and their ability to make an effective contribution, individually and collectively, to the trust's work.

25. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria were used by him in selecting the members of the three hospital trusts in Ayrshire.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend appoints NHS trust non-executive directors for the personal qualities that they have and their ability to make an effective contribution, individually and collectively, to the trust's work.

Oil Spillage (Shetland Islands)

20. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the rate of progress of cleaning up the oil spillage in the Shetland Islands and its effect on wildlife and agriculture.

Sir Hector Monro: Very good progress has been made in cleaning up the visible oil pollution from the wrecked tanker MV Braer. Comprehensive arrangements have been put in place to monitor the immediate and longer term effects. My right hon. Friend outlined the steps taken by the Government in his statement of 11 January. The ecological steering group has been set up and will certainly be monitoring wildlife and agriculture.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of long-term unemployed *(a)* adults and *(b)* persons aged 16 years to 24 years recorded by jobcentres covering the east end of Glasgow; and what percentage of the total unemployment in these centres these figures represent.

Mr. Stewart: Within the constituencies of Glasgow, Shettleston and Glasgow, Provan in October 1992 there were 1,090 persons aged less than 25 who had been unemployed for more than a year. This represents 33 per cent. of the unemployed in this age group. There were 3,660 persons aged over 25 who had been unemployed for more than a year, representing 55 per cent. of the unemployed in this age group.

Scottish Enterprise (Charter Statement)

22. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the charter statement of Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise has recently published a charter standard statement outlining the body's

commitment to serving the economic and environmental needs of Scotland and to enhancing the skills of its people. The local enterprise companies are developing parallel statements; and two have already been published. My right hon. Friend had emphasised the importance of the citizens charter in his strategic guidance to Scottish Enterprise, towards the end of 1991; and the Government warmly welcome the action which Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies are taking to put citizens charter principles into practice.

Scotch Whisky

23. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what forecast he has made as to the production of Scotch whisky in 1993.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has made no such forecast.

Seed and Ware Potatoes

24. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the contribution of the seed and ware potato industries annually to Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Potatoes are an important feature of Scottish farm production which are renowned for their high health status and quality.

Total production is normally in excess of 1 million tonnes annually and worth an estimated £70 million. This represents some 4·5 per cent. of total farm output.

Local Authorities (Employment Practices)

26. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement as to the availability of advice from the Scottish Office to local authorities on their employment practices.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no locus in the employment practices of local authorities and has therefore offered no advice on the subject. However, the national code of local government conduct, issued in April 1990, includes guidance on conduct by councillors in employment matters.

30. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue a guidance note for councillors in Scottish local authorities on good practices in employment.

Mr. Stewart: The national code of local government conduct, issued in April 1990, includes guidance on conduct by councillors in employment matters. My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue any further guidance to councillors in Scottish local authorities.

Private Medical Insurance (Advertising)

27. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has recently given to health boards and NHS trusts on permitting private medical insurance to include hospitals in advertising material.

Mr. Stewart: No advice about permitting private medical insurance companies to include hospitals in advertising material has been offered to health boards and NHS trusts, but in July 1991 the Department of Health wrote to all United Kingdom health insurers advising them of the statutory framework and management controls governing the conduct of private practice in NHS hospitals.

Stranraer Harbour

28. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to assist the improvement of facilities at Stranraer harbour for foot passengers and berthing of vessels.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Stranraer is a commercial harbour and, as such, falls within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Improvements to facilities at commercial harbours are a matter for the owners.

HLCAs and Wool Price Guarantee

29. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the effect on hill farmers of the reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowances and the ending of the wool price guarantee scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: I have received representations on both matters from several hon. Members, farmers and a number of bodies representing farmers and crofters. In responding to these representations, I have pointed out that a number of recent decisions will result in farmers and crofters receiving for 1992 an additional £4·05 per ewe in the sheep annual premium payment, £1·80 more than the reduction of £2·25 in the hill sheep compensatory allowance.

Written Questions

31. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many written parliamentary questions he has answered in the current Session.

Mr. Lang: As at Tuesday 3 February my ministerial colleagues and I have answered 1,261 written parliamentary questions in the current Session, 166 of which I have responded to personally.

Legal Aid

32. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the change in costs of civil legal aid over the latest five years.

Mr. James Douglas-Hamilton: The gross expenditure on civil legal aid in 1987-88 was £15·7 million. This had risen to £16·6 million in 1991-92. Estimated expenditure in the current year is £23·5 million, a rise of 43 per cent. over the previous year.

Inward Investment

33. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the value of inward investment to Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Stewart: Figures prior to the establishment of Locate in Scotland in 1981 are not available.

From April 1981 to March 1992 Locate in Scotland has recorded planned inward investment in Scotland by companies, totalling some £4·6 billion.

Edinburgh

35. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made on the role of Edinburgh *(a)* as a key financial centre and *(b)* as a venue for major international conferences.

Mr. Stewart: Edinburgh has a well-established reputation as a business and financial centre of international standing. The city is the acknowledged focus of the Scottish financial services sector which contributes some 15 per cent. to Scottish gross domestic product—twice the European Community average. Edinburgh's status in the international conference market has been strongly enhanced by its success in hosting the meeting of the European Council in December 1992 and will be further strengthened by the completion of the Edinburgh international conference centre in 1995.

Local Government Finance

36. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of COSLA to discuss the funding of local government.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the convention on 18 January as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters. Further such meetings will be held later this year on dates to be arranged.

Planning Procedures

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the mechanism for challenging planning appeal decisions in Scotland and costs thereof; and what proposals he has to change it.

Mr. Lang: On 3 September 1992 I met representatives of Borders regional council to discuss a number of issues, including the planning appeal system and the award of costs in appeal cases. There are no plans to change the appeal system at present.

Head Injury Deaths

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have died from head injuries in Scotland in each year since 1980.

Mr. Stewart: The figures requested are given in the table.

Deaths from head injuries, Scotland, 1980-91

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Fracture of Skull and face (ICD 800-804)												
Male	156	127	122	144	102	85	90	77	70	56	63	61
Female	42	38	44	34	43	34	33	34	16	21	23	23
Intracranial injury (excluding skull fracture) (ICD 850-854)												
Male	184	185	176	177	203	199	195	216	200	194	193	202
Female	79	68	57	67	68	69	67	81	59	93	65	65

The figures include those deaths coded to the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) codes 800-804 and 850-854. The General Register Office for Scotland uses only a restricted code list for nature-of-injury codes. Deaths from head injuries classified to ICD 9 codes such as 870-904 (laceration and open wound) and 910-929 (superficial injury, contusion and crushing with intact skin surface) are not included, but are likely to be few in number.

Dundee Sheriff Court

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases were scheduled for each sitting of Dundee sheriff court during the most recent three-month period for which figures are available; how many of these cases come to trial on the day for which they were first scheduled; in how many of these cases the defendant pleaded guilty on the day scheduled for trial; and how many of these cases were cancelled and re-scheduled for another day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comprehensive information is not collected in the form requested and is not readily available. Information on the outcome of cases set down for trial in the sheriff courts is collected centrally on a quarterly basis. The figures for Dundee sheriff court for the quarter ended 31 December 1992 are as follows:

	Summary trials	*Sheriff and jury*
Cases set down for trial	379	19
Trials proceeding	73 (19 per cent.	4 (21 per cent.)
Trials disposed—no evidence led—including guilty pleas	152 (40 per cent.)	13 (68 per cent.)
Trials adjourned—new dates fixed	152 (40 per cent.)	2 (10 per cent.)
Trials adjourned—lack of court time	2 (0·5 per cent.)	0

Prisons Ombudsman

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to create a post of a prisons or prisoners' ombudsman; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Proposals to revise the procedures under which prisoners in Scotland are able to make requests and complaints and to air grievances were contained in a report of a Scottish prison service group entitled "Right and Just" which was published for comment in September 1992.

Comments on the recommendations made in the report are being considered and an announcement on the introduction of procedures, which will contain an independent element, will be made in due course.

Flood Damage

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to visit the storm and flood-damaged areas of north Tayside to assess the amount of public aid required to restore the area; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Education and Housing and I have visited Perth and the surrounding area to assess the damage at first hand. The Government have triggered the Bellwin scheme to assist Tayside authorities with expenditure incurred by them in dealing with the effects of the flooding. We have also arranged for special assistance to be provided for the repair of flood defences for agricultural areas.

Shetland (Oil Pollution)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance is being given by the Government to animal welfare organisations active in saving wildlife in the aftermath of the oil spillage from MV Braer.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The Scottish Office has made the following offers, under the special grant environmental programme, of financial assistance for rescue and care of wildlife:

The Hillswick Wildlife Centre: £5,000 for rehabilitation of seals and otters.

The Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: £5,000 for care and treatment of oiled birds.

In addition, Scottish National Heritage is providing grant of £10,000 for rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife as well as contributing practical advice and assistance to this work.

The European Commission has offered to match this overall support with £20,000. The EC and SNH support is to be paid to voluntary groups in the light of advice from the Shetland wildlife response co-ordinating committee.

Hospitals

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contact, consultation meetings or discussions the Minister for Health at the Scottish Office has had with Tayside health board on the subject of hospital services at *(a)* Stracathro, *(b)* Arbroath infirmary or *(c)* other hospitals in Angus.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Health and Home Affairs met the chairman and general manager of Tayside health board on 29 January. The board reported on its progress with the review of acute services and outlined its remaining work programme.

Nursing and Midwifery

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing and midwifery jobs were lost between September 1989 and September 1991; and if he will provide a breakdown by health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Information on nursing and midwifery posts is not available centrally. The table shows the changes in whole-time equivalent of qualified nurses and midwives employed in the NHS in Scotland between 30 September 1989 and 1991.

National Health Service qualified nursing and midwifery staff, by health board: change in whole-time equivalents from 30 September 1989 to 30 September 1991

Health Board	*Difference in WTE 1989-91*
Scotland	−10·4
Argyll and Clyde	133·9
Ayrshire and Arran	131·7
Borders	−33·6
Dumfries and Galloway	40·8
Fife	94·3
Forth Valley	81·2
Grampian	28·4
Greater Glasgow	−636·2
Highland	57·8
Lanarkshire	66·4
Lothian	−112·9
Orkney	13·5
Shetland	19·8
Tayside	95·6
Western Isles	0·2
CSA	8·7

Sheriff of Grampian and the Islands

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many judgments the Sheriff of Grampian and the Islands, sitting at Peterhead, has had avizandum for a period in excess of two months; if he will specify the date on which avizandum was made in respect of each case; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* The sheriff of Grampian, Highland and Islands who sits at Peterhead currently has three cases awaiting judgment in which avizandum was made more than two months previously. The dates on which avizandum was made are as follows: 12 February, 19 August and 28 August 1992. Judgment in each of the three cases has been prepared in draft form and will be finalised and issued by 12 February 1993.

Incontinence

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children suffer from incontinence.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Health Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the cost of administration expressed as a percentage of total expenditure for *(a)* Tayside health board and *(b)* the Scottish health service in each year since 1978.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Year	Tayside health board: Administration costs £'000s	Tayside health board: Total expenditure £'000s	Tayside health board: Per cent.	Scottish health service: Administration costs £'000s	Scottish health service: Total expenditure £'000s	Scottish health service: Per cent.
1978-78	[1]3,543	79,193	4·47	81,528	[2]865,767	9·42
1979-80	[1]4,123	92,795	4·44	72,680	[2]1,024,002	7·10
1980-81	[1]5,032	119,718	4·20	92,408	[2]1,329,420	6·95
1981-82	[1]5,482	130,440	4·20	101,288	[2]1,494,720	6·78
1982-83	10,491	139,313	7·53	132,032	1,622,742	8·14
1983-84	12,432	147,606	8·42	138,192	1,726,950	8·00
1984-85	12,124	156,199	7·76	141,829	1,852,563	7·66
1985-86	12,761	163,452	7·81	153,452	1,963,711	7·81
1986-87	13,759	177,530	7·75	162,400	2,081,844	7·80
1987-88	14,573	187,458	7·77	174,541	2,274,155	7·67
1988-89	15,452	212,164	7·28	189,606	2,509,327	7·56
1989-90	16,797	230,949	7·27	205,975	2,728,323	7·55
1990-91	18,680	257,114	7·27	230,766	2,982,854	7·74
1991-92	21,290	303,794	7·01	263,529	3,650,330	7·22

[1] Administration costs for 1978-78 to 1981-82 relate to headquarters administration only. Hospital and community administration costs are not held centrally.
[2] Community health service administration costs for 1978-79 to 1981-82 were not identified separately in health board accounts.

Burglaries

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* burglaries of a dwelling, *(b)* burglaries other than a dwelling and *(c)* burglaries in total were recorded (i) in each police force area and (ii) in total for Scotland in each year between 1979 and 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The available information collected centrally is given in the table.

Number of cases of housebreaking[1] recorded by the police in Scotland, 1979-91

Police Force	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Central	2,854	3,222	3,583	4,321	3,875	3,865	4,048	3,871	3,792	3,723	3,928	4,110	4,881
Dumfries and Galloway	975	1,045	1,568	1,712	1,416	1,295	1,203	1,171	1,150	1,100	1,147	1,602	2,065
Fife	2,776	3,433	3,831	3,916	4,092	4,448	4,874	4,972	5,364	5,506	5,826	7,120	8,278
Grampian	3,763	4,004	5,155	5,651	5,136	5,316	5,530	6,576	7,255	5,665	5,097	5,470	6,343
Lothian and Borders[2]	12,826	13,719	16,987	18,698	22,868	21,637	15,629	14,209	14,216	13,360	13,462	15,460	17,516
Northern	1,285	1,433	1,742	1,657	1,572	1,766	1,724	1,727	1,775	1,253	1,375	1,436	1,514
Strathclyde	48,202	47,524	57,310	64,991	64,134	67,466	61,506	57,051	58,106	54,043	55,559	59,331	67,131
Tayside	3,954	4,066	5,505	5,325	5,427	6,311	6,184	7,328	6,977	6,761	7,333	7,192	8,402
Scotland	76,635	78,446	95,681	106,271	108,520	112,104	100,698	96,905	98,635	91,411	93,727	101,721	116,130

[1] Includes cases of attempted housebreaking and housebreaking with intent to steal.
[2] Figures for 1983 and 1984 were partly inflated following the introduction of computerisation. In the period August 1984—September 1988 a change in classification slightly reduced the number of housebreakings recorded: in cases where garden sheds, greenhouses, lock up garages (not attached to a dwelling house), non residential caravans and portacabins used for storage were broken into such offences were classified as theft by opening lockfast places rather than housebreaking.

Community Councils

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the role and responsibilities of community councils in his consideration of the future structure of local government; what measures he has in place to encourage representations on this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Our consultation paper on the future structure of local government in Scotland invites views on whether community councils should be given the statutory right to comment on planning applications affecting their area; on whether this right should be extended to matters other than planning and, if so, what these matters should be; and on other ways in which community councils might support the work of local authorities. Many community councils are taking a keen interest in the reform proposals. Their comments will be studied with interest.

ENVIRONMENT

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount made available to disabled people through the disabled facilities grant; and how much was paid out through grants for the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: The total amount of final payments of disabled facilities grants in England from their inception in July 1990 up to September 1992 is £76·8 million of mandatory and discretionary grants. The total amount during the 12 months from October 1991 to September 1992 is £56·3 million.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what items of equipment are provided through a disabled facilities grant.

Mr. Baldry: Disabled facilities grants under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are awarded

by local housing authorities. Such grants are usually confined to larger items, such as stair lifts and through floor lifts, requiring structural modifications to a dwelling. Smaller items are normally provided by welfare authorities under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the applications by region, for the last 12-month period for which figures are available, for disabled facilities grants; and how many of these applications were *(a)* given formal approval and *(b)* eligible for 100 per cent. grant aid.

Mr. Baldry: The Department collects information from local authorities about the number of approvals of disabled facilities grants but not on the numbers of applications. The table shows figures of approval over the 12 months to September 1992 by standard statistical region in England.

Disabled Facilities Grants: Approvals: October 1991 to September 1992

(numbers of grants)

Standard statistical region	*Mandatory grants*	*Discretionary grants*
North	866	3
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,251	14
East Midlands	2,130	15
East Anglia	795	9
Greater London	1,188	56
Rest of South East	3,406	96
South West	1,777	38
West Midlands	1,784	58
North West	2,731	13
England	18,928	302

The Department collects information about payments of grant that cover the full cost of relevant works—that is, those eligible for 100 per cent. grant aid—but not for approvals. The most recent information relates to final payments during the financial year 1991-92, as shown in the following table.

Disabled Facilities Grants: Final Payments: Mandatory and Discretionary grants: April 1991 to March 1992

(numbers of grants)

Standard statistical region	*Total*	*Covering full cost of relevant works*	*Column 2 as a percentage of column 1*
North	743	561	76
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,233	2,710	84
East Midlands	1,385	916	66
East Anglia	582	456	78
Greater London	714	438	61
Rest of South East	2,382	1,802	76
South West	1,511	1,211	80
West Midlands	1,402	954	68
North West	1,808	1,454	80
England	13,760	10,502	76

Urban Expenditure

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his Department's urban expenditure is per capita in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government support urban regeneration in England through a wide range of programmes. My Department's urban group of programmes is spending over £1 billion in 1992-93, of which some £960 million is targeted on the 57 urban priority areas. Dividing that figure by the 15 million estimated population of those areas gives a per capita figure of £64; dividing by the 48·1 million estimated total population of England would give a per capita figure of £20.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the black and Asian communities on the future of the urban programme; and what further consultations he plans to have.

Mr. Robin Squire: Decisions on the new urban programme arrangements were taken having regard to all the relevant factors, including their effect on the black and Asian communities. Taking city challenge together with the urban programme, resources will rise from £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in 1993-94. This will mean significant additional benefits for inner city residents, including ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to conduct a full review of urban policy.

Mr. Robin Squire: Urban policy will continue to be kept under review in the light of information derived from the 1991 census and other sources.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which categories of projects that were eligible to bid for urban programme funds are not eligible for urban partnership funds.

Mr. Robin Squire: All categories of urban programme capital projects and revenue projects directly linked to these are eligible to bid for urban programme funds; but in assessing bids we shall give preference to the factors listed under the assessment criteria set out in the operational guidance for the urban partnership fund.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit an urban programme scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Department of the Environment Ministers will continue to visit the urban priority areas on a regular basis and see a range of schemes supported by urban programme and other inner cities initiatives.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations and bodies in Lambeth that will eventually cease to be funded under the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Organisations now funded under the urban programme will continue to receive support for up to four years for projects which have already been approved. They may also be eligible to receive support under city challenge or the urban partnership fund.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have outturn figures on

the numbers of *(a)* projects supported, *(b)* jobs created or preserved and *(c)* training places supported, through the urban programme in 1991-92.

Mr. Robin Squire: I expect to have this information available by the end of May 1993.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the Woolwich industrial estate and applications for city challenge, city grant and urban programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Woolwich industrial estate featured in the London borough of Greenwich's round 2 city challenge bid last April as an area where Government grant might assist the retention and expansion of firms. Against strong competition from other boroughs this bid was unsuccessful. Only one preliminary city grant application has been received from a company on the estate, but after discussions between the Department's appraiser and the developer's agent it was concluded that a full application was unlikely to succeed. The urban programme has assisted six firms on the estate with grants totalling £260,000 for improvements to their premises over the past four years and existing commitments continue to be funded. An application has now been made by the London borough of Greenwich under the new urban partnership fund, which supersedes the urban programme for new schemes in 1993-94, for grant towards environmental and security improvements to communal parts of the estate. The application is being considered and a decision is expected to be announced shortly.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *656-57*, if he will publish a breakdown by each urban programme authority of *(a)* the 9,855 projects supported, *(b)* the 29,660 jobs created or preserved and *(c)* the 86,528 training places supported, through the urban programme in 1990-91;

(2) pursuant to his answers of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *14*, and 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *656-57*, if he will publish a breakdown by each urban programme authority of the local authorities' forecasts of outputs in 1991-92 and 1992-93 of the urban programme in terms of *(a)* projects supported, *(b)* jobs created or preserved and *(c)* training places supported.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Urban Policy

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the research commissioned from Professor Bryan Robson into urban policy.

Mr. Robin Squire: The research on the impact of urban policy instruments commissioned from the Centre for Urban Policy Studies has not yet been completed. When it is we will decide how to disseminate the findings.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much each district council in Hampshire received in each year since 1987 under the *(a)* urban programme, *(b)* city grant, *(c)* derelict land grant, *(d)* urban aid, *(e)* enterprise zones, *(f)* estate action, *(g)* city action teams, *(h)* city challenge, *(i)* inner city task force and *(j)* national garden festivals; and what was the average expenditure per local authority in England in each of those years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Most of the programmes specified fall within my Department's urban group of programmes which are targeted mainly on the 57 urban priority areas. These do not include Hampshire local authorities. However, Hampshire local authorities did receive the following:

Derelict land grant

	District council	*£ million*
1987-88	Portsmouth	0·249
1988-89	Portsmouth	0·190
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	—	—
1991-92	Portsmouth	0·003
	Test Valley	0·004
1992-93	Portsmouth	0·009

Estate action

	District council	*£ million*
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	Eastleigh	0·105
	Southampton	0·105
1990-91	Southampton	0·209
1991-92	Southampton	0·184
	Portsmouth	0·250
1992-93	Portsmouth	1·184

The 1992-93 figures are projected outturn.

Expenditure under my Department's urban group of programmes is expected to exceed £1 billion in 1992-93. Details of my Department's programmes are in the relevant public expenditure White Papers and the Department's annual reports; the 1993 annual report will be published shortly.

Caravan Sites Act

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making for his Department's consultation paper about reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to be made available for public inspection.

Mr. Baldry: The consultation paper "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968" was issued on 18 August 1992. I am today placing in the Library of the House lists of the responses received to this paper. Copies of the responses themselves have been placed in my Department's library.

Air Quality

105. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking in the light of the report of the quality of urban air review group to integrate local authority monitoring efforts with the national air quality monitoring network; and what additional funds he will make available to assist local authorities in undertaking quality assured monitoring.

Mr. Maclean: The report has only been published very recently, and we are studying its recommendations. We

had however already concluded that better integration between the national and local monitoring networks was needed. In the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year Report", we announced our intention of issuing a discussion paper on the subject this year. Meanwhile, the quality assurance and quality control procedures for urban air quality monitoring which are being developed under my Department's research programme will be a significant contribution in kind to local authorities' monitoring work.

Household Waste Disposal Centres

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of household waste disposal centres maintained by each local authority.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held centrally.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for which aspects of the Property Services Agency in Northern Ireland responsibility *(a)* has been or *(b)* is about to be transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Redwood: I have today written to the hon. Member about this matter.

Water Courses (Minewater Pumping)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the effect on surface water courses, pollution of water courses and water supplies and the raising of the water table consequent on the cessation of minewater pumping; and if he will ensure that no pumping will cease until the results of such studies are known.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* None. It is for British Coal and the National Rivers Authority, in the first place, to assess the environmental effects of stopping minewater pumping and what steps may need to be taken to minimise any adverse impact. I understand that arrangements have been made between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority for effective liaison over any proposed closures.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 February 1993

TRANSPORT

Buses Project

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local authority and bus company have been selected for the low floor demonstration project outside London.

Mr. Freeman: We have selected a route in North Shields and Whitley Bay run by Go Ahead Northern Coastline. I am delighted that we have been able to find the resources to enable Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive to fund this project. The route carries a significant number of elderly and disabled people who will particularly benefit from the introduction of new low floor buses. But such vehicles will also benefit other passengers who find the entrance steps and narrow gangways of conventional buses difficult to negotiate. We will monitor the scheme and make the results available to other bus operators and local authorities.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 29 October 1992, *Official Report*, column 760; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Norris: Details of public appointments made by my right hon. Friend since 20 October 1992 are set out in the table. It is not considered practicable or appropriate to list the many and varied qualifications of the individual appointees, but my right hon. Friend will have satisfied himself as to their relevance before making the appointments. The Department usually does not know, and certainly would not specifically record, the political affiliation of appointees. Remuneration of port authority appointees is a matter for the authorities themselves.

Name of appointee	*Body to which appointed and remuneration*	*Period of the appointment*
Mr. D. E. Rayner[1]	British Railways Board £69,550 pa	1 November 1992 to 31 October 1995
Mr. M. W. Betts	Traffic Commissioner, Scottish Traffic Area £42,724 pa	9 November 1992 to 3 March 2003
Captain M. Willett	Civil Aviation Authority £69,300 pa	14 November 1992 to 13 November 1996
Mr. R. B. Horton	British Railways Board £120,000 pa	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Miss K. Kantor[1]	British Railways Board £7,160 pa	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. A. J. Norman	British Railways Board £7,160 pa	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Miss J. A. Page	British Railways Board £7,160 pa	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. D. B. Pearl[1]	Medway Ports Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Sir Brian Shaw	Port of London Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1994
Mr. I. F. Halliday[1]	Port of London Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Ms. P. Hawkes	Shoreham Port Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. J. M. Buttmer[1]	Shoreham Port Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. G. R. Green[1]	Shoreham Port Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. J. E. White[1]	Shoreham Port Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995
Mr. B. J. Wilson[1]	Shoreham Port Authority	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1995

Name of appointee	Body to which appointed and remuneration	Period of the appointment
Mr. J. V. S. Evans	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Mrs. E. J. Garland	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Mrs. V. R. Wakefield	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Professor Margaret A. MacKeith	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Ms. W. M. Lutley	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Professor Mary Benwell	Landscape Advisory Committee Unpaid	1 January 1993 to 31 December 1997
Mr. T. O. Lewis[1]	Milford Haven Port Authority	1 February 1993 to 31 January 1996
Mr. W. A. J. Reardon-Smith[1]	Milford Haven Port Authority	1 February 1993 to 31 January 1996
Mr. R. E. Birdseye	Civil Aviation Authority £43,020 pa	1 February 1993 to 31 January 1996

[1] Reappointments.

Seat Belts

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budget has been set for the forthcoming campaign on seat belt wearing; and if he will give a breakdown of the estimated costs of advertising.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* A budget of £1·2 million has been set for the campaign on seat belt wearing which was launched on Tuesday 2 February. The bulk of this budget, £1·15 million, has been allocated to the production and airing of a television commercial over the period 2 to 16 February. The remainder of the budget, £50,000, has been allocated to the production of leaflets explaining seat belt law and posters and research.

ENVIRONMENT

Biodiversity Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to develop a United Kingdom-wide biodiversity plan.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 24 June 1992 that the United Kingdom would prepare a national biodiversity action plan to promote the convention on biological diversity agreed earlier that month. The target date for the publication of the plan is the end of 1993.

Aggregates

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide in tabular form the numerical data used in preparation of the pie charts in figures A2.2 to A11.3 inclusive in annex A of his Department's draft consultation document "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales-Revision of MPG6", showing in each case the tonnages assumed for each source of aggregates supply.

Mr. Baldry: This information has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Noise Review

142. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been taken by his Department following the report of the noise review working party in 1990.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on Tuesday 19 January, at column 163.

Marine Impact Assessment

143. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of how adequately his Department's marine impact assessment procedures meet the terms of EC directives.

Mr. Maclean: The requirements of directive 85/337 on environmental impact assessment have been fully incorporated into existing regulatory systems for controlling marine developments. EIA procedures are being considered as part of the Government's review of the effectiveness of regulations below the low water mark, which I announced on 8 July last year in response to a question from the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), at column 252.

Local Authorities (Devolution)

144. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to devolve power to local authorities;

(2) if he will make a statement on progress in the devolution of power to local authorities.

Mr. Squire: The split of responsibilities between central and local government is a matter for Parliament to determine. There has always been an ebb and flow of responsibilities between the two and this will continue.

Urban Priority Areas

145. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had and plans to have with the voluntary sector on the review of urban priority areas.

Mr. Squire: We will write shortly to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Services to invite comments on the methodology recommended by external researchers for use in analysing data on urban conditions drawn from the 1991 census.

Empty Office Buildings (Residential Consent)

146. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gives to local authorities concerning the granting of temporary residential consent for empty office buildings.

Mr. Baldry: Last October we published a draft Planning Policy Guidance Note 6, Town Centres and Retail Development, which at paragraph 14 states:

"In those town centres that contain vacant office and retail premises that seem unlikely to be reused for that purpose, local planning authorities should encourage conversion to other service, retail or residential uses. Such buildings, especially older office buildings originally converted from houses, may be particularly suitable for conversion to flats, for example for students and householders without cars."

We will finalise the draft note within the next few months.

Some developers might believe that such a conversion will mean for ever abandoning the prospect of attracting a commercial tenant. We see no such difficulty. Owners may seek temporary residential permissions—for, say, 10 years—with the certainty of being able to switch back to commercial use at a later date.

Empty Departmental Houses

156. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the task force on Government Department's empty houses.

Mr. Baldry: The task force on Government Departments' empty houses has met once since it was established on 8 December 1992. It has made a positive start on the work necessary to deliver its remit of helping to bring empty Government residential properties into use for people in housing need. The next meeting of the task force is on 10 February.

Air Quality

157. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with the European Commission on the draft air quality framework directive; and what assessment he has made of the consequences for the United Kingdom national air quality monitoring network and for local authority air quality monitoring activities.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has had three meetings with the Commission to discuss its emerging proposals for a draft air quality standards framework directive. The proposals are still at an early stage of development and it is too soon to say what implications the eventual directive might have for the United Kingdom monitoring network and local authority monitoring activities. Meanwhile, my Department is already expanding its urban air quality monitoring network and preparing proposals for better integration of central and local monitoring effort.

Local Authority Recycling Plans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons the Coopers and Lybrand report on local authority recycling plans will not assess the quality and realism of the plans; what steps he took to ensure that the tender specification for the report was widely distributed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The review of local authority recycling plans is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the information they contain; a qualitative assessment of the plans is beyond the scope of the exercise. We made clear our intention to commission a detailed study of the plans to extract useful information from them. Those organisations which expressed an interest in this project were invited to tender for the work.

Hedgerows

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's Government first committed themselves to bring forward new legislation to protect hedgerows; on how many occasions and in which documents that commitment has been repeated subsequently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Proposals to give local authorities powers to protect hedgerows were first announced in the Government White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" in September 1990. Revised proposals were announced in July 1991 and restated in the first year report of the White Paper (September 1991) and our policy document "Action for the Countryside" (February 1992). Due to pressure on the parliamentary programme, we were unable to introduce appropriate legislation this Session, but we continue to support the Hedgerows Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth).

Local Government Commission

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for the Local Government Commission's reviews of areas in the second tranche of its work programme.

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased to announce, following consultation with the Local Government Commission, the timetable for the second tranche of the review of areas.

We intend the commission begins its review of Leicestershire on 10 May. The review of Nottinghamshire will begin a few weeks later.

The commission's review of the other second tranche areas of Cumbria and Lancashire, Hampshire, Staffordshire, Devon, and Cambridgeshire will begin soon after the other reviews of areas in the first tranche have been completed.

We anticipate that the commission will require less time to formulate draft and final proposals for the second

tranche review areas than it needed for some of the more complex first tranche reviews. However, we are still adamant that local people should have ample opportunity to express their views to the commission and have plenty of time to respond to draft recommendations and the period allowed at the consultation stages remain as set out in the original procedure guidance to the commission.

In drawing up the timetable, we have allowed for local government elections and the need for extra consultation time over the summer holiday period.

The announcement of the detailed timetable will now enable all authorities in the second tranche to plan ahead in order to ensure that the Commission's review of their area will be executed as smoothly as possible.

I have placed a copy of the second tranche timetable in the Library.

Development Plans

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a local authority development plan is an interest of acknowledged importance in terms of the guidance provided in paragraph five of planning policy guidance note 1.

Mr. Baldry: Planning policy guidance note 1 (March 1992) provides advice on the determination of planning applications in accordance with sections 70(2) and 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In the process of deciding a planning application, which entails having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, all interests of acknowledged importance should be identified and any harm that would be caused, were permission to be granted, taken into account.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 30 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns 859-62; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Howard: The following new appointments have been made since October 1992 to the boards of non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department. Information on political affiliation is not held centrally.

Department of the Environment
New appointments made from 31 October 1992

Name of body and postholder	*Appointment end*
BRITISH WATERWAYS BOARD	
Member	
Viscountess Cobham	31 January 1996
COMMONS COMMISSIONERS	
Commissioner	
M. J. Roth	11 May 1994
G. Langdon-Davies	31 December 1993
ENGLISH NATURE	
Member	
Professor R. C. L. Wilson	31 March 1995
HOUSING ACTION TRUST—LIVERPOOL	
Member	
Miss D. Todd	12 November 1995
Mrs. M. F. Gallimore	12 November 1995
HOUSING ACTION TRUST—TOWER HAMLETS	
Chairman	
Dr. M. A. Barraclough	17 December 1995
Deputy Chairman	
J. Ludlow (Councillor)	17 December 1995
INLAND WATERWAYS AMENITY ADVISORY COUNCIL	
Chairman	
G. H. Baker	31 December 1993
URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION—SHEFFIELD	
Member	
F. Eul	30 November 1994
M. Bower (Councillor)	30 November 1994
Ms. J. Bacon	30 November 1994

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the relative performance of each local authority in Merseyside for the purposes of determining the housing investment programme allocations for 1993 to 1994; and if he will publish the figures.

Mr. Baldry: Figures for local authority housing investment programme allocations for 1993-94 were announced on 17 December by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, at column 507; details are in the Libraries of the House. The primary criterion which underlay the discretionary element of these allocations was the efficiency and effectiveness of authorities in the use of resources to meet housing need. In reaching an assessment for these purposes of the authorities in Merseyside, we took into account all available information which was relevant, including authorities' housing strategies and HIP bids, and discussions in the course of the annual round of HIP meetings between authorities and officials in the Department's Merseyside task force.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals there are to change the 1992-93 cash limit and running cost limit for Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Howard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary spring supplementary estimate for Ordnance Survey, class VIII, vote II, the cash limit for Ordnance Survey, class VIII, vote II will be increased by £2,866,000 from £19,049,000 to £21,915,000. The increase will be a charge on the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The net running cost limit will be increased by £3,076,000 from £18,998,000 to £22,074,000.

The increase in the cash limit is required to reflect a shortfall in the receipts for the sales of maps, copyright and public sector repayments due to a reduction in the demand for OS products, partially offset by savings from running costs, capital and superannuation expenditure. Supplementary provision is also required to reduce the imbalance between input and output VAT resulting from cutbacks in capital and running cost expenditure.

The increase to the net running cost limit is required to reflect a shortfall in the receipts for sales of maps, copyright and public sector repayments due to a reduction in demand. This is partially offset by savings from running cost expenditure.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to his Department's cash limits and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:—

The DOE/UA non-voted cash limit will be increased by £1,020,000 from £1,017,449,000 to £1,018,469,000. The increase is a net effect of savings and increases within the cash limit. Increases include £6,000,000 for local authority sector derelict land grant to account for increases in the forecast level of spend and £1,750,000 for the urban programme. A further £3,020,000 will be required for various projects for urban development corporations, to fund a number of schemes for the Cleveland city action team and to increase the provision for urban development grant. There is a technical increase of £3,000,000 which will be offset by a decrease in the Department of Transport national roads England cash limit. Savings include £10,205,000 on the city grant programme, £1,000,000 for the non local authority sector derelict land grant programme and a technical saving of £1,545,000 which will be offset by an increase in the Housing Corporation cash limit. The effect on voted expenditure will be a net increase of £3,000,000.

The cash limit for class VIII, vote 5 (Central environmental services etc.) will be increased by £5,861,000 from £317,127,000 to £322,988,000. The increase provides for an additional £7,900,000 in grant in aid to the Rural Development Commission, required because of a shortfall in the commission's receipts from property sales. This will be partially offset by a saving of £1,439,000 on the energy efficiency programme, £200,000 on the environmental technology innovation scheme and £400,000 on grants to water companies. The cash limit increase will be funded in part by forecast savings of £1,500,000 in European regional development fund payments to water undertakers and £161,000 of previously unallocated public expenditure provision.

The running cost limit for Property Holdings and Central Support Services will be reduced by £668,000 from £48,201,000 to £47,533,000. This reduction reflects pay savings. The net running cost control limit for the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre will be reduced by £48,000 from £1,136,000 to £1,088,000. Some receipts which would have been paid into the Consolidated Fund will be reclassified as appropriations in aid. This reclassification will fund a freehold acquisitions programme, cover a shortfall of property disposal receipts and offset an increase in vacant accommodation costs.

The Department of the Environment's running costs limit has been reduced by £5,556,000 from £201,899,000 to £196,343,000. This change mainly results from a reallocation of existing estimate provision between running costs and non-running costs, in line with estimated outturn, on class VIII, vote 8 (Department of the Environment: administration), partly offset by a transfer of £34,000 running costs cover to class VIII, vote 2 (Miscellaneous housing administration and grants).

The cash limit for class VIII, vote 9 (Revenue support grant, payment of non-domestic rates, valuation office rating services, etc, England) will be decreased by £176,000 from £29,523,296,000 to £29,523,120,000. This is due to lower than expected computer costs for valuation tribunals and a transfer of provision to the Ministry of Defence (class I, vote 1) compensating local authorities for community charge income foregone from servicemen as a result of the Gulf crisis. £71,000 of the savings offset an equivalent increase on class VIII, vote 13, for the new grant to compensate local authorities for additional costs arising from the influx of people displaced from former Yugoslavia.

The DOE/HC non-voted cash limit will be increased by £598,545,000 from £1,707,200,000 to £2,305,745,000. This increase reflects the addition of £597,000,000 mainly for housing associations to purchase empty dwellings as part of the housing recovery package announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement, and a transfer from the city challenge programme of £1,545,000 to increase housing association funding in city challenge areas.

The DOE/LACAP non-voted cash limit will be increased by £28,259,000 from £2,914,829,000 to £2,943,088,000. This increase reflects the addition of £30,000,000 for local authority cash incentive schemes as part of the housing recovery package announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement. This is partly offset by savings of £1,741,000 in other grants within the cash limit.

All the increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take in the implementation of the new EC habitats and species directive to safeguard key coastal and inshore waters from oil pollution.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The Government are considering what measures are necessary to implement the EC directive on the conservation of habitats and of wild flora and fauna. Proposals will be issued for consultation in the coming month. The inquiry under Lord Donaldson announced on 11 January by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will consider whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the United Kingdom coast from pollution from merchant shipping giving due consideration to the international and economic implications of any new measures.

Local Authorities (Debt)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which are currently debt free.

Mr. Squire *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1993, c. 116-17]:* I regret that the list of authorities which became debt free as a result of the commutation of grants

for debt charges which took place on 1 October 1992 contained an error. I now understand that Mid Bedfordshire district council is not in fact debt free.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Gill: To ask the Attorney-General what changes he proposes to the Crown prosecution service's cash limit for 1992-93.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The cash limit for class X, vote 5 will be reduced by £1,500,000 from £199,846,000 to £198,346,000. This is to offset, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, increased net expenditure on class X, vote 6, Crown prosecutions and legal services. This extra provision is needed to meet additional costs arising from implementation of the Road Traffic Act 1991 and a shortfall in appropriations-in-aid.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Printers

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he proposes to introduce the defence of innocent dissemination for printers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has already announced the Government's intention to make provision for the proposed defence of innocent dissemination by printers. This will require primary legislation which will be introduced when there is a suitable opportunity.

Land Registry

Mr. Butler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes he proposes to the Land Registry's cash and running costs for 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class X, vote 11 will be increased by £10,999,000 from a token £1,000 to £11,000,000. In addition, the net running costs limit for the Land Registry will be increased by £11,000,000 from zero to £11,000,000.

The Land Registry is a demand-led executive agency which relies on fees paid by its customers to cover its administrative costs which it has successfully achieved since 1976. The continuing low level of activity in the property market in England and Wales has resulted in the agency's workload (in units) being some 30 per cent. lower than originally anticipated. In order to keep its costs within the reducing income, the agency has restricted expenditure to 16 per cent. below the main estimate provision, but it is now clear that the total fee income for the year will fall short of forecast spending by the amount sought through the supplementary estimate. The agency's cashflow position has been made worse by the fact that some larger liabilities relating to its legal liability to indemnify for losses resulting from register and search errors have required payment. These increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Public Record Office

Mr. Peter Butler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes are planned to class X, vote 12 of the Public Record Office's vote for 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cash limit for class X, vote 12 has been reduced by £3,393,000 from £33,739,000 to £30,346,000 as a result of slippage on a major capital project. In addition, and subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary token supplementary estimate, the running cost limit for class X, vote 12 will be increased by £369,000 from £22,352,000 to £22,721,000 to cover certain payments to Property Holdings. This increase is financed by a transfer of provision from Property Holdings and an increase in receipts.

Northern Ireland Court Service

Mr. Butler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what changes have been made to the class X, vote 3 cash limit and running costs limit for the Northern Ireland court service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class X, vote 3 has been increased by £1,226,000 from £19,086,000 to £20,312,000 and the running costs limit by £73,000 from £14,685,000 to £14,758,000. The increases arise because of additional costs incurred in respect of bomb damage to the number of court buildings, bomb damage to the Legal Aid Department's accommodation and the transferral from the Northern Ireland block of project costs for the child support legislation and the fixed penalty/points scheme.

The increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total public expenditure.

House Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many repossessions have been carried out in county courts since September 1992 by lenders who are not members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cash Limits

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

(i) The cash limit for class XII, vote 1 (museums, galleries and the heritage) will be increased by £1,606,000 to £222,289,000. The increase is the net result of additional provision for payments to Inland Revenue in respect of important heritage offers in lieu of tax (£4,325,000) partly offset from savings (£2,719,000) in the contributions made in lieu of rates by certain national museums and galleries. As announced in the *Official Report*, at columns 891-92, on 12 November 1992, part of the

achieved savings has also been used to meet the balance of Government support for the European arts festival in 1992 (£458,000) (class XII, vote 2) and administration costs associated with the creation of the Department of National Heritage (£1,218,000) (class XII, vote 4). The balance of the additional provision now required (some £3,300,000) will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

(ii) The departmental running costs limit will be reduced by £83,000, from £18,731,000 to £18,648,000, as a result of an adjustment to the provision transferred from the Department for Education, to reflect lower costs attributable to the Department of National Heritage for certain central support services.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Brooke: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Television

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage under what authority the Independent Television Commission is making representations to the Monopolies Commission about the commercial arrangements made between production companies and broadcasters.

Mr. Brooke: Section 39 of the Broadcasting Act 1990 establishes the Independent Television Commission's role in the provision of networking arrangements for Channel 3.

National Lottery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to locate in Cardiff the *(a)* national headquarters and *(b)* regional sub-office for the south of the United Kingdom of the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The location of the operator of the national lottery will be a matter for the appointed licensee. Those companies tendering for the licence will be aware of the advantages of locating in an area receiving Government incentives.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to award the contract for the operation of the national lottery; when he expects the national lottery to be in operation; and in what year he expects the national heritage memorial fund to commence the distribution of moneys received from the national lottery distribution fund.

Mr. Key: The contract or licence for the operation of the national lottery will be awarded as soon as practicable after the National Lottery etc. Bill receives Royal Assent. It is hoped that the lottery will be operational towards the end of 1994. The National Heritage Memorial Fund should be in a position to distribute funds during 1995.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all the names of those he has appointed to public bodies, giving the period for which the appointment was made and the remuneration each currently receives; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage is still in the process of setting up a central database of public appointees and therefore the information to answer this question is not yet available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Office of Public Service and Science

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to change the 1992-93 cash limit or running costs limit for the Office of Public Service and Science.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for the Office of Public Service and Science (class XIX, vote 1) will be increased by a token £1,000 from £41,752,000 to £41,753,000. The Department's gross running costs limit will be decreased by £17,000 from £64,144,000 to £64,127,000. The principal changes being due to reductions in running cost cover for the Office of Science and Technology and for Chessington computer centre; and an increase in running cost cover for the CCTA.

The running costs change also reflects the transfer of running costs from H.M. Treasury (class XVIII, vote 1) in respect of Chessington computer centre. The running cost limit for the Civil Service college has been decreased by £163,000 from £1,800,000 to £1,637,000 reflecting greater than anticipated receipts from the provision of training courses. The changes will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Science Vote

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes he proposes to the estimates class XI, vote 5 (Science) for 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XI, vote 5 (Science) will be increased by £1,551,000 from £1,050,181,000 to £1,051,732,000.

Of the increase £480,000 is to enable the Royal Society to increase its programme of support for scientists in the former Soviet Union as part of the programme announced by the Prime Minister on 20 May 1992, at column 137. Of this £230,000 is offset by reductions in cash limits of £100,000 for class I, vote 1 (Ministry of Defence: personnel costs, support and other services), £50,000 for class IV, vote 2 (Department of Trade and Industry: support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration), £50,000 for class 3, vote 4 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: Agricultural, Food and Fishing Services) and £30,000 for class XIX, vote 1 (Cabinet Office).

The remaining £1,071,000 is to enable the Natural Environment Research Council to meet the cost of the

conversion of the RRS Discovery falling in 1992-93. The grant paid to the NERC in 1991-92 was reduced by this amount to take account of delay in the completion of this work.

£230,000 of the increase will be offset and the remainder charged to the reserve, and so there will be no increase in the planned total of public expenditure as a result of these changes.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, column 668; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My right hon. Friend has made the following appointments since 28 October 1992:

Civil Service appeal board

Appointee	*Period of appointment*
Mrs. J. Collingridge[1]	2 November 1992—28 February 1993
Mrs. C. Coltman	1 February 1993—31 January 1995
Miss B. Findlay	1 February 1993—31 January 1995
Mr. J. Renton	1 February 1993—31 January 1995
Mrs. M. B. Sloman[1]	2 November 1992—31 May 1995

[1] Re-appointed.

Economic and Social Research Council

Appointee	*Period of appointment*
Professor M. Anderson,[1 2] BA, MA, PHd, FRSA	1 August 1993—31 July 1994

[1] Re-appointed.
[2] Professor Anderson receives an honorarium of £4,420, the same amount as the other members.

Information is not held on the political affiliation of appointees other than where an hon. Member is appointed to a research council. No such appointments have been made by my right hon. Friend.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Press Gallery

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many offices and desks are currently allocated to the Press Gallery.

Mr. Ray Powell: Twenty-two offices and 95 desks are currently allocated for use by the Press Gallery.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many telephones are currently allocated to the Press Gallery.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Press Gallery currently has 129 telephone lines allocated to it from the Palace of Westminster exchange. Of that number six are for administrative use by staff of the House.

Car Parking (Journalists)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many car spaces in the underground car park are allocated to lobby journalists; what is the estimated annual value of this facility; and whether any charge is made.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Eighteen members of the Press Gallery have been issued with a permit which allows them to park on the fourth floor of the underground car park on a first-come-first-served basis. It is not possible without disproportionate cost, separately to identify the annual value of this facility. No revenue is received for its provision.

Veal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee how many times veal has been served in the canteens in the Palace of Westminster and Parliament street over the last year; and what was its country of origin on each occasion that it was served.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: This is a matter for the Director of Catering Services, but I understand that, at the request of our predecessor Committee, all veal purchased by the Refreshment Department continues to be of British origin.

Security Costs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what is the cost of the policing of the Palace of Westminster; and what is the cost of the non-police security guards employed in the Palace.

Mr. Beith: Based on the latest available figures, the House of Commons' share of the annual cost (excluding VAT) of policing the parliamentary precincts (the Palace of Westminster and the parliamentary outbuildings) is estimated at £8 million, of which approximately £4·3 million is the cost of civilian staff including security officers, firemen and administrative staff.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Wing

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he proposes to make in his Department's diplomatic wing cash limits and running cost limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Goodlad: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates the cash limit for class II, vote 1 (overseas representation) will be increased by £16,668,000 from £721,101,000 to £737,769,000 and the gross running costs limit on the vote will be increased by £4,311,000 from £519,529,000 to £523,840,000. For class II, vote 2 (other external relations) the cash limit will be increased by £241,337,000 from £178,791,000 to £420,128,000; for class II, vote 3 (external broadcasting and monitoring) by £3,142,000 from £162,711,000 to £165,853,000 and for class II, vote 4 (the British Council) by £2,994,000 from £88,669,000 to £91,663,000.

For vote 1 the cash limit increase of £16,668,000 is made up as follows: adverse overseas price movements

(£15,436,000), take up of capital end year flexibility (£829,000) as announced to the House by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992 *(Official Report)* columns 698-702), and transfers from other Government Departments (403,000) of which £173,000 is from Property Holding and £230,000 from the DTI.

The increase in the gross running costs limit of £4,311,000 reflects adverse overseas price movements (£6,638,000), transfers from other Government Departments (£403,000) and a payment from the private sector for the Taejon exhibition (£70,000), offset by a transfer of £2,800,000 out of running costs into Vote 2.

For vote 2 the cash limit increase of £241,337,000 is made up as follows: Programme increase (£204,312,000), adverse overseas price movements (£20,200,000), transfers from other Government Departments, (£525,000) of which £440,000 is from ODA and £85,000 from Department for Education, a transfer of provision from class II, vote 1 (£5,000,000), and an increase in VAT refunds (£11,300,000).

For vote 3 the cash limit increase of £3,142,000 reflects take up of capital end year flexibility as announced to the House by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992 *(Official Report* columns 698-702).

For vote 4 the cash limit increase of £2,994,000 is for adverse overseas price movements.

All the increases will either be offset by underspends elsewhere or charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Cambodia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards, and what representations he is making to other countries in respect of, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Mr. Goodlad: We deplore the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to fulfil its obligations fully under the Paris agreements and to co-operate with the United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia. We shall continue to work with the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and other countries closely involved in the Cambodian peace process to ensure that the Paris agreements are implemented as successfully as possible.

Sudan

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the present problems in the Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are deeply concerned at the Sudanese Government's poor record on human rights, the lack of progress towards more accountable government acceptable to all parts of the country, continuing difficulties in the provision of humanitarian aid, and the Government's apparent equivocation towards international terrorism. The concern is widely shared, as witness the United Nations General Assembly's adoption by a huge majority of a resolution condemning Sudan's human rights record. We are with our European partners exploring means of maximising international pressure to induce the Sudanese Government to mend their ways.

Jaffna

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when an official of the British High Commission in Colombo last visited Jaffna.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A member of the staff of the High Commission visited Jaffna in May 1990. Since the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam renewed fighting against the Sri Lankan Government in June 1990, visits have not been possible.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh; what plans there are to install NATO or United Nations observers in the region once a ceasefire has been arranged; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh continues, although fighting has slackened because of the harsh winter conditions there. Thousands have died as a result of this dispute and hundreds of thousands have been displaced, and impoverished by economic blockades associated with it. At the British initiative the CSCE started a year ago to mediate between the parties to this dispute. We welcome recent statements by the United Nations Secretary General and the Security Council Chairman that the CSCE should remain the focus for such talks, the latest round of which is due to be convened later this month. The CSCE has undertaken to deploy monitors to Nagorno-Karabakh, subject to a full and effective ceasfire. The details of this deployment are being worked out. NATO has promised support for this.

United Nations Security Council

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions he has had with United Nations members, and permanent and non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council with regard to the continuing necessity of *(a)* the veto and *(b)* permanent members in the light of post-cold war development;

(2) what discussions he has had with the other members of the United Nations Security Council on extending *(a)* permanent and *(b)* non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received on extending *(a)* permanent and *(b)* non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reform and revitalisation of United Nations institutions and the United Nations secretariat is a current subject of discussions in New York and in various bilateral and other meetings. The United Nations Special Committee on the charter regularly discusses Security Council reform at its meetings. Cuba and Libya have been active in recent years in pressing the case for abolition of the veto. The wish of Japan, currently a Security Council member, to become a permanent member is well known. At Maastricht, we agreed that Britain and France, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, will in the execution of their

functions ensure the defence of the positions and the interests of the union without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations charter.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on reform of the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on extending *(a)* permanent and *(b)* non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any reform of the current structure of the Security Council including expansion of permanent and non-permanent members would require an amendment to the United Nations charter, and negotiations on this would be long and complex. In the meantime we would wish to ensure that the Security Council continues to operate effectively.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 29 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *790;* and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Goodlad: The updated information is as follows:

Public appointments

Public body and name	*Appointment expires*	*Remuneration*
Anglo-Irish Encounter		
Sir David Goodall	Indefinite	Nil
Commonwealth Foundation		
Dr. J. B. Wood	1996	Nil
Commonwealth Institute		
Mr. Stephen Cox	1996	£45,000 pa
Mr. R. A. Fyjis-Walker	1993	£15,000 pa
Sir Mark Russell	1994	Nil
Mr. D. A. Thompson	1994	Nil
Mr. Stuart Maclure	1994	Nil
Mr. Cy Grant	1994	Nil
Mr. G. Oakes	1995	Nil
Mr. C. Shepherd	1994	Nil
Dr. Ann Robinson	1995	Nil
Miss Diane Warwick	1993	Nil
Sir Victor Garland	1993	Nil
Hon. David Douglas-Home	1993	Nil
Lady Reid	1993	Nil
Baroness Flather	1996	Nil
Diplomatic Service Appeal Boards		
Sir Derek Day	1993	per diem expenses
Mr. Frank Trew	1995	per diem expenses
Sir David Culcutt, QC	1993	per diem expenses
Sir Mark Russell	1995	per diem expenses
Mrs. Jacqueline Dyson	1995	per diem expenses
Mrs. Juliet Campbell	1995	per diem expenses
Diplomatic Service Appeal Boards		
Mr. Rodney Bedford	1993	per diem expenses
Miss Sally Bull	1995	per diem expenses
Government Hospitality Fund Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine		
Sir Ewen Fergusson	1998	Nil
Major John Surtees	1995	Nil
Mr. David Cossart	1993	Nil
Mr. Anthony Hanson	1994	Nil
Mr. Mark Savage	1995	Nil
Imperial War Museum		
Sir E. Jackson	1993	Nil
Mr. I. Smart	1994	Nil
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission		
Sir Donald Tebbit	Indefinite	Nil
Miss Sheila Browne	1993	Nil
Prof. Sir James Ball	1993	Nil
Prof. H. T. Dickinson	1994	Nil
Sir Roger Banninster	1994	Nil
Ms. Sue MacGregor	1995	Nil
Sir Arthur Bryan	1994	Nil
Dr. K. J. R. Edwards	1993	Nil
Prof. Christine Bolt	1995	Nil
Prof. Lord Desai	1995	Nil
London University School of Oriental and African Studies		
Lord Wilson of Tillycorn	1997	Nil
Westminster Foundation for Democracy		
Sir James Spicer	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. George Robertson, MP	1995	per diem expenses
Sir Russell Johnston, MP	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Tony Clarke	1995	per diem expenses
Mrs. Margaret Ewing, MP	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. Peter Frank	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Timothy Garton-Ash	1995	per diem expenses
Lady Howe, JP	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Gavin Laird	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Ralph Land	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Patrick Nicholls, MP	1995	per diem expenses
Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky	1995	per diem expenses
Mr. Ian Taylor, MP	1995	per diem expenses
Ms. Carol Tongue, MEP	1995	per diem expenses
Wilton Park Academic Council		
Mr. Michael Kaser	1995	Nil
Mr. John Drew	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. John Scates	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. Connie Martin	Ex-officio	Nil
Prof. Jack Spence	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. John Hanson	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. Janet Morgan	1995	Nil
Mr. Bruce George, MP	1995	Nil
Mr. John Lyons	1995	Nil
Mrs. Liliana Archibald	1995	Nil
Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, MP	1993	Nil
Sir Julian Bullard	1993	Nil
Ms. Brenda Dean	1994	Nil
Wilton Park Departmental Board		
Miss Valerie Le Moignan	1995	Nil
Miss Ruth Watts Davies	1995	Nil
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission		
Sir Michael Caine	1993	Nil
Dr. A. Sloman	1993	Nil
Prof. R. A. Howie	1994	Nil
Prof. B. Clayton	1993	Nil
Prof. J. G. G. Ledingham	1995	Nil
Mrs. D. L. Wedderburn	1994	Nil
Prof. S. Marks	1995	Nil
Prof. Gillian Beer	1993	Nil
Dr. C. Booth	1995	Nil
Dr. R. O. Iredale	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. P. Parsloe	1995	Nil
Prof. A. Little	1993	Nil
Prof. D. Jennings	1993	Nil
Mr. R. Francis	Ex-officio	Nil
Prof. A. Diplock	1994	Nil
Overseas Service Pension Scheme		
J. V. Kerby	Ex-officio	Nil
D. S. Fish	Ex-officio	Nil

Public body and name	Appointment expires	Remuneration
C. D. Stenton	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Miss D. R. Phillips	Unspecified	per diem expenses
D. H. Loades	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Indian Family Pension Scheme		
Mr. D. S. Fish	Ex-officio	Nil
Maj. Gen. D. L. T. Horsford	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Major R. J. Henderson	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Lt. Col. P. Kemmis-Betty	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Major R. Mottram	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Mr. R. V. Fenton	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Mr. J. M. Phelps	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Mr. J. P. C. Coventry	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Mrs. P. Lamarque	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Mrs. M. Ramsay-Brown	Unspecified	per diem expenses
Commonwealth Development Corporation		
Sir Peter E. Leslie	1995	£12,000
Sir Michael Caine	1994	£5,001 – £10,000 band
Mrs. A. E. Wright, JP	1994	£1 – £5,000 band
Prof. M. L. O. Faber	1994	
Mr. M. McWilliam	1995	
Mr. E. B. Waide	1995	
Prof. I. D. Carruthers	1995	
Mr. J. B. Zochonis	1995	
Crown Agents[1]		
Mr. D. H. Probert	1993	£30,000
Dr. A. I. Lenton	1993	£5,001 – £10,000 band
Mr. P. F. Berry	1994	£65,100[2]
Mrs. D. Miller, MBE, JP	1993	£5,000 – £10,000 band
Miss K. Mortimer	1993	
Mr. A. K. Stewart-Roberts	1993	
Mr. F. Cassell	1994	
Mr. J. D. Andrews	1995	
Mr. F. I. Sumner	1995	
ODA Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas		
Mr. J. B. Wilmshurst	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. R. Allen	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. S. Conlin	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. R. Thomas	Ex-officio	Nil
Ms. C. Coppard	Ex-officio	Nil
Miss R. Philipson	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. P. J. Ackroyd	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. C. O. N. Moser	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. A. W. Rew	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. J. F. J. Toye	1995	per diem expenses
Dr. H. Afshar	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. P. Blaikie	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. K. Davey	1995	per diem expenses
Ms. D. Elson	1995	per diem expenses
Dr. J. Heyer	1995	per diem expenses
Prof. N. Stern	1995	per diem expenses

[1] When members are appointed to this board they are also appointed to the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board.
[2] Excluding pension contributions.

Note: For Crown Agents and Commonwealth Development Corporation, figures are taken from 1991 published accounts.

Information on the exact period for which each appointment was made and the relevant qualifications of the appointees is not held centrally.

There are eight appointments vacant across four committees.

The Irish Pensions Appeals Tribunal has been wound up.

Information on the political affiliation of appointees is not held centrally. Appointees who are Members of Parliament or Members of the European Parliament are so designated in the list.

Council of Europe

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received concerning plans for Azerbaijan and Armenia to seek membership of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have applied for special guest status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, though not to join the Council itself. This is a matter for the Parliamentary Assembly itself, but I understand that both applications are going through the usual channels. The Council secretariat has discussed with Armenia and Azerbaijan areas for future co-operation.

Azerbaijan

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy regarding the current political, economic and civil circumstances of the Armenian community resident in Azerbaijan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most of the Armenian community in Azerbaijan live in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Their economic conditions are dire as the result of an armed dispute over the region's future since 1988. We have given £250,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for relief work in Nagorno-Karabakh. We fully support talks under the auspices of the CSCE to settle this dispute and believe that the only solution likely to be stable should involve autonomy for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijani sovereignty. Elsewhere in Azerbaijan around 20,000 Armenians remain. Most of these are in mixed marriages with Azeris. Over 200,000 Armenians have fled Azerbaijan. We have provided £200,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for relief work amongst Armenian refugees.

Peru

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Peru.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom and Peru have traditionally enjoyed good relations. Following recent steps towards the restoration of democracy, including elections to the constituent congress, we and our EC partners continue to review the measures, including the suspension of most aid, adopted after President Fujimori suspended constitutional government in April 1992.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Peru on human rights issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We take every opportunity, both bilaterally and with our EC partners, to emphasise to the Peruvian authorities the level of concern felt here about human rights violations, most recently, I raised the matter with President Fujimori when I visited Peru from 7-9 January 1993.

EC-Israel Co-operation Council

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the EC-Israel Co-operation Council on 1 February.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The EC-Israel Co-operation Council on 1 February reviewed co-operation under the 1975 agreement, and agreed that the Commission should continue its exploratory discussions on updating this agreement. EC Foreign Ministers subsequently reiterated their support for the peace process and repeated their condemnation of the Israeli deportation of over 400 Palestinians which risked endangering the peace process and preventing the updating of the agreement.

Palestinian Deportees

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States of America on the appropriate steps that they will take to ensure Israel complies with UN Security Council resolution No. 799 regarding the Palestinian deportees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has discussed the question of the Palestinian deportees with the new US Secretary of State. They have agreed to work closely together to ensure the earliest possible resolution of the problem.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the imposition of sanctions against Israel with regard to the Palestinian deportees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received some letters on the subject of the Palestinian deportees, some of which call for sanctions to be imposed on Israel. We do not believe that the adoption of sanctions against Israel would be helpful to the prospects for the peace process, which remains the best hope for all the parties to resolve their differences.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the annual figures on plutonium for 1991-92 will be published.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is being published today and copies of the press release placed in the Library of the House.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his most recent estimate of the contribution made by the United Kingdom tobacco industry towards the United Kingdom balance of payments.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom had a crude trade surplus[1] in manufactured tobacco products[2] worth £614·9 million in 1991 and £727·4 million in January to November 1992.

1. Crude trade surplus = exports (fob) less imports (cif).
2. Manufactured tobacco products are defined as heading 122 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the average length of service of miners who have subsequently been affected by pneumoconiosis;

(2) what sums have been paid in compensation to former miners suffering from pneumoconiosis in each of the last 10 years, together with the average figure paid to individuals for each of those years.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Fuel Report

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will commission Caminus Energy Consultants to prepare a report investigating the comparative cost advantages of gas, nuclear power and coal; and if he will ensure that their report is made available to the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Eggar: The relative costs of electricity generated from different sources are being considered as part of the coal review. As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 14 December, at column 25, Ernst and Young has been appointed to assist in the examination of the avoidable costs of nuclear generation and related issues. There are no plans to commission further work in this area.

KS Construction Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report from the liquidators of KS Construction Ltd. on the conduct of its directors in the two years prior to its liquidation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A return under rule 4, the Insolvent Companies (Reports on Conduct of Directors) No. 2 Rules 1986, was submitted by the liquidator of KS Construction Ltd on 21 October 1989.

Liquidation (Directors' Conduct)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average time between a company entering into liquidation and his Department receiving a report on the conduct of the directors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The statistics requested are not kept by my Department.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the caseload of the insolvency service in each year since 1989 and the average processing time per case each year since 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The following number of compulsory insolvencies fell to be dealt with by official receivers.

	1989	1990	1991	[1]1992
Bankruptcies	8,138	12,058	22,632	32,106
Compulsory liquidations	4,020	5,977	8,368	9,732
TOTAL	12,158	18,035	31,000	41,838

[1] Provisional.

In addition, the service's disqualification unit dealt with the following number of reports/returns by insolvency practitioners under the provisions of the Company Directors Disqualifications Act 1986:

	Numbers
1989	6,537
1990	12,463
1991	18,509
1992	20,468

Information on the average processing time per case is not maintained and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations

Mr. Garrett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to issue the Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have decided not to proceed with making the Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations, which would have implemented directive 80/836/Euratom, as amended, following a recommendation from the European Commission not to proceed with such legislation in view of the Commission's intention to make proposals for revising this directive.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to amend the payment of nuclear levey money towards the construction cost of Sizewell B; and what consultations he has had with the Office of Electricity Regulation and with Nucler Electric on such amendments.

Mr. Eggar: The coal review currently being undertaken by my Department is considering the implications of the non fossil fuel obligation and the operation of the fossil fuel levy.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions exist on the purposes on which Nuclear Electric may spend payments received from the nuclear levey; what amounts and proportion of such funds have been spent on *(a)* decommissioning costs and *(b)* other costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric receives income from two main sources: premimum payments on a given proportion of its output, which is financed by the levy; and revenue from electricity sales into the pool. From this total income —the management of which is the responsibility of Nuclear Electric's board—the company must finance its current operations and make provisions in respect of longer term liabilities. Income from the levy is not hypothecated to any one activity. Nuclear Electric's payments against provisions are clearly set out in the company's report and accounts, a copy of which rests in the Library of the House of Commons.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the United Kingdom currently contributes towards funding the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will list figures for the last 10 years.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 26 October 1992 at column 515.

Cash Limits

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes are being made to his Department's cash limits and nationalised industries' external financing limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates the cash limit for class IV, vote 2 (support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration) will be increased by £4,094,000 from £804,231,000 to £808,325,000 and the cash limit on class V, vote 2 (research and development and industrial support) will be increased by £11,450,000 from £340,375,000 to £351,825,000. The cash limit for class V, vote 3 (administration) will be reduced by £500,000 from £19,506,000 to £19,006,000. The increases will be met by offsets or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The increase on class IV, vote 2 comprises £2,145,000 in respect of the administration costs of companies' late filing penalties and £6,000,000 (£1,000,000 of which comes from reductions to existing programmes) in respect of English Industrial Estates Corporation to offset reduced receipts as a result of the downturn in the property market. An increase of £500,000 is made in running costs in respect of transferred provision from class V, vote 3 and a decrease in capital spending results in a transfer of £3,200,000 to class V, vote 2. Extra receipts amounting to £351,000 are declared in respect of payments by the Department of Health to the Radiocommunications Agency.

The increase on class V, vote 2 for £11,450,000 is made up of a transfer of £3,200,000 from class IV, vote 2 to cover consultancy costs of the coal review and compensation costs arising from litigation relating to leukaemia cases. A further increase of £8,250,000 provides for a contribution to finance improvements in nuclear safety in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. An offsetting reduction of £8,250,000 is made in the

external financing limit of Nuclear Electric from £278,000,000 to £286,250,000. The external financing limit of the British Coal Corporation changes to £795,000,000 resulting from increased costs including expenditure in respect of current year voluntary redundancies, increased working capital requirements and environmental restoration at former mining sites.

Office of Fair Trading

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he proposes to the cash or running costs limits for the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit of the Office of Fair Trading will be reduced by £57,000 from £18,246,000 to £18,189,000. The reduction represents a sum to be surrendered to the consolidated fund in respect of the office's contribution to the transfer value of Sir Bryan Carsberg's pension following his appointment as director general.

Office of Telecommunications

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he plans to announce to the cash or running costs limits for the Office of Telecommunications.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit is being reduced by £182,000 from £7,939,000 to £7,757,000 and the running costs limit will be reduced by £110,000 from £7,069,000 to £6,959,000. The reduction represents a sum to be surrendered to the Consolidation Fund in respect of Sir Bryan Carsberg's accrued superannuation contributions.

RECHAR

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the RECHAR grants *(a)* applied for, *(b)* awarded and *(c)* outstanding in Nottinghamshire since the start of the RECHAR programme.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

In the East Midlands RECHAR programme, 146 applications have been submitted by Nottinghamshire sponsors, seeking ERDF grant to the value of £9·86 million. Of these, 20 applications with a value of £3·16 million in ERDF grant have been approved so far. The remaining applications are being evaluated.

DEFENCE

AWE, Aldermaston

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the name of the contractor company who will operate the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The tender evaluation process for the competition to appoint a contractor to operate all the sites of the atomic weapons establishment has now been completed and Hunting-BRAE Ltd. has been declared the winner. Vesting day for full contractor operation of the atomic weapons establishment remains set for 1 April 1993.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he plans to announce to the class I cash limits and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the spring Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made:

Class I cash limits

Vote	*Current Cash limit £'000s*	*Change £'000s*	*Revised Cash limit £'000s*
1	10,666,157	+156,323	10,822,480
2	9,390,603	−222,000	9,168,603
3	1,898,876	+ 74,078	1,972,954
4	1,728,873	−212,505	1,516,368
5	555,005	− 55,000	500,005

These changes decrease the block defence cash limit by £259,104,000 from £24,239,514,000 to £23,980,410,000. They allow for increased expenditure on class I, votes 1 and 3 which will be offset by lower expenditure on class I, votes 2, 4 and 5. The changes additionally take account of decreases of £209,665,000 to compensate for an overspend on class I, votes 2, 4 and 5 in the financial year 1991-92 and of £50,000,000 to reflect a forecast underspend against certain elements of provision which are subject to specific limits. Also reflected is the net effect of transfers between the Ministry of Defence and other Government departments.

The running costs limit will be increased by £163,145,000 from £5,318,374,000 to £5,481,519,000. £162,589,000 of this increase results from the continued rationalisation of activities to meet the new force structure. This involves the transfer of certain administrative tasks into the running costs total and does not add to the overall level of Defence expenditure. The increase also reflects an interdepartmental transfer of £556,000 from Property Holdings.

RAF Police

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the provisions governing legal powers of members of the RAF police with regard to traffic control while on duty escorting military vehicles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the circumstances described the main task of the RAF police is to control the military vehicles being escorted. The powers of RAF policemen in relation to the control of service traffic are derived from the Air Force Act 1955. They have no powers with regard to civilian traffic control.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the pool of WE177 nuclear weapons was allocated to the Royal Navy prior to the decision to eliminate the Royal Navy's tactical nuclear capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to divulge information about our nuclear weapon holdings.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement about the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital in Woolwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I hope to be able to make an announcement about future service hospital requirements soon.

Civilian Staff (Woolwich)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian full-time equivalents are employed in each of the military establishments in Woolwich; and how many are likely to be *(a)* redeployed and *(b)* made redundant as a result of proposed changes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 1,806 civilian full time equivalents employed in Woolwich units. The breakdown is as follows:

Unit	*Civilian staff*
Families Housing and Welfare Service, Royal Artillery Barracks	13
Area Accommodation Stores, Repository Road	24
Director General Fighting Vehicles Equipment, Royal Arsenal (West)	1
Headquarters Director Royal Artillery, Royal Artillery Barracks	16
Headquarters Woolwich Garrison, Government House, New Road	23
Regimental Headquarters Royal Artillery, Government House	17
Royal Artillery Institute, Royal Military Academy	19
Army Security Vetting Unit, Royal Military Academy	139
Headquarters Director Educational and Training Service, Royal Military Academy	16
Defence Medical Equipment Adviser	1
Area Civilian Staff Management, London District East/Central, Royal Artillery Barracks	11
17 Training Regiment, Royal Artillery Barracks	88
Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital, Stadium Road	181
Vehicles and Weapons Branch, Ha Ha Road	27
56 Squadron Royal Corps of Transport, Repository Road	23
Engineering Management Support (Ordnance), Building 22, Royal Arsenal (West)	66
Land Systems Technical Publications Authority, Ha Ha Road	132
Army Scaling and Cataloguing Authority, Ha Ha Road	164
Common Services (Publications and Stationery) 3, Building 25A, Royal Arsenal (West)	52
London Movements Unit (RAF), Building 53, Royal Arsenal (West)	17
31 Army Education Centre, Royal Artillery Barracks	2
Army Dental Centre, Royal Artillery Barracks	1
Central Volunteers Headquarters, Royal Artillery Barracks	3
Woolwich Garrison Officers Mess, Royal Military Academy	3
Head of Administration Royal Arsenal Woolwich	767
Total	1,806

It is not yet possible to say what numbers may be redeployed or made redundant.

Greenwich Health Authority

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when officers from his Department last communicated with representatives of the Greenwich health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The most recent substantive contact between my Department and the Greenwich health authority took place in December last year.

Travel Warrants

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 35, what percentage discount was applied to the rail travel fares covered by travel warrants issued by the armed forces in 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is commercially confidential and cannot be released.

Bombing (Korea)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the bombing of the 1 Battalion of the Argylls in Korea on 23 September 1950 by the USAF; what response he has made; whether he will make the relevant files available to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cash Limits

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he plans to his Department's cash limits for 1993-93.

Mr. Gummer: The cash limit for class III, vote 2 (Intervention Board—Executive Agency's administration) will be reduced by £3,000,000 from £47,774,000 to £44,774,000, reflecting reduced expenditure in the payments for agents' services. It will be offset by an increase of £3,000,000 to the cash limit on class III vote 5 to reflect lower receipts by the Ministry and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The vote 5 cash limit will be increased from £263,095,000 to £266,095,000 subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate.

At the same time the cash limit for class III vote 4 (agricultural, food and fishing services) will be reduced by £3,637,000 from £350,056,000 to £346,419,000. Expenditure will be reduced by £493,000 on agricultural grant schemes; £1,600,000 on coast protection and by

£1,544,000 on sea fishery support. These reductions reflect a predicted decrease in demand and delay in implementation in further areas of these schemes.

HLCAs

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances in Northumberland; and how many of those are located in severely disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Gummer: Under the 1991 (the latest year for which complete figures are available) hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme a total of 1,046 applications were submitted in respect of holdings in Northumberland of which 652 related wholly to severely disadvantaged land.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the net farm income for sheep and sheep and cattle farms in severely disadvantaged areas, in both nominal and real terms, for each year since 1978.

Mr. Gummer: Estimates of net farm income, based on results of sample surveys are provided in the following table. Year to year comparison can best be made by reference to the indices shown in the table, which are based on results from constant samples of farms.

Average net farm income on livestock farms wholly or partly in the Severely Disadvantaged Area in England

Year[1]	Mainly sheep farms				Cattle and sheep farms			
	£'000 per farm		Indices[2]		£'000 per farm		Indices[2]	
	Current prices	1991-92 prices[4]	Current prices	Real terms[4]	Current prices	1991-92 prices[4]	Current prices	Real terms[4]
1978-79[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8·8	23·3	121	298
1979-80[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·2	9·7	55	118
1980-81[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6·1	12·0	77	141
1981-82[3]	11·1	19·6	100	167	9·4	16·6	141	232
1982-83[3]	8·1	13·3	84	130	9·2	15·1	127	195
1983-84	10·8	16·9	87	129	7·8	12·2	107	157
1984-85	9·4	14·0	79	111	9·6	14·3	121	169
1985-86	11·9	16·8	101	135	10·1	14·2	122	161
1986-87	9·1	12·4	89	114	8·0	10·9	97	123
1987-88	9·9	13·0	102	126	11·8	15·5	131	160
1988-89	12·7	15·8	135	159	15·6	19·4	163	190
1989-90	7·5	8·6	92	100	10·6	12·2	112	121
1990-91	7·7	8·1	78	78	7·2	7·6	73	72
1991-92[5]	11·0	11·0	130	123	12·0	12·0	115	107
1992-93[5]	14·2	13·7	167	152	12·5	12·1	119	108

Notes:

[1] Accounting years ending on average in February.

[2] 1989-90—1991-92 = 100.

[3] The estimates for these years are not strictly comparable with those for later years.

[4] This information has been derived by deflating the current price estimates by the Retail Price Index.

[5] Estimates and forecasts at the time of the 1992 autumn review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

Potato Regime

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what European Commission proposals for a potato regime are currently before the European Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: The proposals for a very lightweight régime are set out in COM(92)185 final which was published in the Official Journal No. C333 on 17 December 1992. The December Agriculture Council asked for further work to be done by the special committee for agriculture to progress the Commission's proposals including the addition of provision for marketing standards and for it to be referred back to the Council for decision as soon as the European Parliament has given its opinion.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Export Licences

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will combine in one Department the granting of export licences and the enforcement of the law relating to export matters.

The Prime Minister: Issues such as this need to await Lord Justice Scott's report on exports of defence equipment and dual use goods to Iraq.

Turkey

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he has held with the Prime Minister of Turkey concerning the current circumstances surrounding the relationship between Turkey and Armenia; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not discussed this subject with the Turkish Prime Minister.

However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs discussed the situation with our Community partners. As a result of these discussions, the EC made a démarche to Turkey on 29 January asking it to allow the transit of humanitarian aid through its territory. We have not been assured by the Turkish authorities that they will permit such transit subject to monitoring under standard CSCE procedures.

Azerbaijan

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the current state of the embargo on the supply of weapons to Azerbaijan and surrounding communities issued by the conference on security and co-operation in Europe on 28 February 1992.

The Prime Minister: The CSCE's embargo on the supply of arms to the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute still applies. The Government adhere to this fully and have not approved licences for the export of any military equipment to Azerbaijan or Armenia. Nor will we do so. Indeed, during the CSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm in December we called for an extension of this embargo to cover military assistance to the region generally.

Woolwich Arsenal Site

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will undertake a comparative study of the employment effects of any tax or consumer subsidy for deep coal mining with the projected cost of new jobs at the Greenwich city challenge proposal on the Woolwich Arsenal site.

The Prime Minister: The most suitable comparison for any city challenge bid is with other city challenge bids, and the Greenwich proposal has already been compared in this way.

EDUCATION

Departmental Building

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost of the new building for his Department in Great Smith street.

Mr. Forth: The Government rent Sanctuary Buildings from Land Securities who met the full construction costs. The final costs of fitting out the building, which is the responsibility of the Department, have not yet been settled. It is estimated that these costs, including fees and VAT, will amount to just over £11 million.

Schools (Repairs and Maintenance)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was spent in the last year for which figures are available on repairs and maintenance in state schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure on repairs and maintenance in state nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in England came to £560·3 million in the financial year 1990-91 (the latest year available). This figure excludes salary costs for maintenance staff.

Expenditure data for Wales are collected separately and are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *673-5*; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Boswell: The details requested are given in the table. Information on the political affiliation of appointees is not kept centrally, but we are satisfied that appointments to this Department's public bodies are made solely on the basis of aptitude, merit and suitability.

Names of appointments to public bodies	*Period of appointment*	*Remuneration*
Business and Technology Education Council		
Mr. P. Rogers CBE (Chairman)	1 year	£16,450 pa
Mrs. G. Armitage	1 year	—
Mr. B. Barker MBE	1 year	—
Mr. D. Betts	1 year	—
Dr. J. Capey	1 year	—
Mr. R. Davies	1 year	—
Mrs. P. Haikin	1 year	—
Mr. G. Hawkes	1 year	—
Dr. P. Hunter	1 year	—
Mr. M. Lickiss	1 year	—
Mr. M. Neal CBE	1 year	—
Mr. K. Ratcliffe	1 year	—
Mr. J. Spence	1 year	—
The Members named above have all been re-appointed to the Council.		
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education		
Prof. R. Alexander	2 years	—
Mr. J. Burn	2 years	—
Dr. M. Frazer CBE	2 years	—
Prof. A. O'Hear	2 years	—
The Members named above have all been re-appointed to the Council.		
Higher Education Funding Council (E)		
Mr. M. Fallon	2.5 years	£4,000 pa*

* Members of the Higher Education Funding Council (England) receive an honorarium of £4,000 per annum.

English

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from individuals and groups in the London borough of Greenwich regarding the English SAT; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Members for Withington (Mr. Bradley) and for Cambridge (Ms. Anne Campbell) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) on 2 February, *Official Report*, column 123. My right hon. Friend has had representations from various individuals and groups, including some from the London borough of Greenwich.

Primary Schools

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will visit Thamesmead to meet teachers and parents to discuss primary school provision in the area.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average size of primary school, including both infant and junior, and how many one-form entry primary schools exist, by education authority and nationally.

Mr. Forth: The average size of maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England in January 1992 is given in the table. Information on the number of maintained primary schools which operate a one-form entry system is not collected centrally.

Average Size of Maintained Primary Schools in each LEA in England
January 1992

LEA	*Average size (Number of pupils)*
City	221
Camden	256
Greenwich	269
Hackney	233
Hammersmith	227
Islington	255
Kensington and Chelsea	229
Lambeth	240
Lewisham	271
Southwark	265
Tower Hamlets	272
Wandsworth	242
Westminster	215
Barking	285
Barnet	263
Bexley	270
Brent	335
Bromley	254
Croydon	256
Ealing	299
Enfield	327
Haringey	242
Harrow	357
Havering	261
Hillingdon	269
Hounslow	305
Kingston upon Thames	286
Merton	302
Newham	359
Redbridge	327
Richmond upon Thames	259
Sutton	301
Waltham Forest	315
Birmingham	318
Coventry	267
Dudley	332
Sandwell	281
Solihull	272
Walsall	262
Wolverhampton	234
Knowsley	287
Liverpool	271
St. Helens	240
Sefton	286
Wirral	292
Bolton	251
Bury	229
Manchester	265
Oldham	239
Rochdale	276
Salford	255
Stockport	223
Tameside	270
Trafford	252
Wigan	239
Barnsley	217
Doncaster	231
Rotherham	210
Sheffield	253
Bradford	240
Calderdale	205
Kirklees	221
Leeds	250
Wakefield	219
Gateshead	213
Newcastle upon Tyne	262
North Tyneside	261
South Tyneside	253
Sunderland	279
Isles of Scilly	43
Avon	211
Bedfordshire	188
Berkshire	218
Buckinghamshire	212
Cambridgeshire	219
Cheshire	191
Cleveland	320
Cornwall	157
Cumbria	136
Derbyshire	184
Devon	174
Dorset	221
Durham	187
East Sussex	225
Essex	208
Gloucestershire	159
Hampshire	219
Herefordshire and Worcester	165
Hertfordshire	185
Humberside	233
Isle of Wight	154
Kent	215
Lancashire	210
Leicestershire	238
Lincolnshire	164
Norfolk	154
North Yorkshire	144
Northamtonshire	183
Northumberland	147
Nottinghamshire	212
Oxfordshire	164
Shropshire	160
Somerset	149
Staffordshire	221
Suffolk	167
Surrey	201
Warwickshire	185
West Sussex	208
Wiltshire	152
England	216

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average size of primary school and the number of primary schools with one year entry in the private sector.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992 there were on average 153 pupils in each independent school in England attended mainly by pupils of primary school age. Information on the numbers of such schools which operate a one-form entry system is not collected centrally.

Discretionary Awards

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many discretionary awards, for each category of course of study, were given by each local education authority in each year since 1985;

(2) how many discretionary awards were given by each local education authority in each year since 1985 to students following vocational training courses in dance.

Mr. Boswell: Data on discretionary awards, distinguishing course of study, are not held centrally.

Cash Limits

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he plans to announce to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1992-93.

Mr. Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limits for class XI, vote 2, Higher and further education, vote 4, Administration, and vote 7, Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, will be increased, and the cash limit for vote 1, Schools, research and miscellaneous services, will be reduced. The cash limit changes are as follows:

Class and Vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
XI.1	768,366,000	−22,471,000	745,895,000
XI.2	3,036,990,000	+ 2,550,000	3,039,540,000
XI.4	109,993,000	+ 1,000	110,994,000
XI.7	1,000	+ 1,000	2,000

The reduction to the cash limit on class XI, vote 1, includes a reduction of £15,000,000 as a contribution towards offsetting the increase of £195,000,000 sought via a Supplementary Estimate for class XI, vote 3, Student Awards, which is not cash limited. It also includes a reduction of £2,280,000 million to offset part of the increase to the cash limit on class XI, vote 2; a transfer of £85,000 to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, class II, vote 2, in respect of the funding of students coming to the United Kingdom under the European Community TEMPUS programme; and a transfer of £5,106,000 to supplementary credit approvals to local education authorities for school building works which is non-voted expenditure.

The increase on class XI, vote 2 includes an increase of £1,460,000 in capital grant to the Royal College of Art for final settlement of costs from the major project to rationalise the college's accommodation; an increase of £720,000 in recurrent grant-in-aid to the Universities Funding Council in respect of the extra costs for universities arising from the implementation for clinical academic staff of the 1992 pay award recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body; and an increase of £100,000 in provisions for bursaries for the training of teachers in shortage subjects. These increases are wholly offset within the reduction to the cash limit on class XI, vote 1. In addition there is a further increase of £140,000 in recurrent grant-in-aid to the Universities Funding Council in respect of additional places sponsored by the Home Office on social work training courses at universities, wholly offset by a transfer of funds from the Home Office; and an addition of £130,000 in provision of recurrent grant-in-aid to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to reflect the transfer of responsibility to polytechnics and colleges for funding extended and upgraded training courses in social work wholly offset by a transfer of funding from the Department of Health.

The token increases on class XI, votes 4 and 7 enable an adjustment to be made in the transfer of funds between the Department for Education's administration vote and the vote for the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector for schools in England which I announced on 12 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *893-94*. Within the vote totals, the Department's running costs limit has been reduced by £5,000 from £95,598,000 to £95,593,000 as a result of this adjustment. OHMCI's running costs limit has been increased by £69,000 from £7,818,000 to £7,887,000.

The increases are either offset elsewhere or are charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total for public expenditure.

Staffordshire (Musical Performances)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what response he is making to the invitation he has received to attend the performance of the Staffordshire youth wind orchestra and the Staffordshire youth big band and massed music centre choirs on 14 March.

Mr. Boswell: No such invitation has been received as yet.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Cash Limits

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes are being made in the 1992-93 cash limit and running costs limits for expenditure by Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on the external assistance vote (class II, vote 5) will be reduced by £439,000 from £1,797,199,000 to £1,796,760,000. The reduction is necessary to allow for a transfer of £440,000 to the Diplimatic Wing's programme for assistance to eastern Europe (class II, vote 2). The gross running costs limit for the ODA has been reduced by £300,000 from £47,354,000 to £47,054,000. This allows for a transfer of resources to enable the net running cost control limit of the Natural Resources Institute to be increased by £200,000 from £1,100,000 to £1,300,000 for relocation costs. It also allows for a £100,000 increase in the capital expenditure subhead of the administration section to meet the cost of office works. The decrease in the cash limit on this vote will be offset by an increase of £440,000 on class II, vote 2.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Geriatric Medicine, Banbridge

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of admissions and the number of discharges and deaths in geriatric medicine in each hospital in the southern area other than Banbridge

hospital of persons resident in Banbridge district in each month since August 1991 to the present, showing the number in such care at the end of each month.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information for residents of Banbridge district council is as follows:

Hospital	*Quarter ending*	*Admissions*	*Deaths and discharges*	*Number in care at end of quarter*
Lurgan	September 1991	35	30	17
	December 1991	34	37	11
Craigavon	September 1991	0	0	0
	December 1991	0	1	0
Mullinure	September 1991	0	0	0
	December 1991	2	0	2
Daisy Hill	September 1991	0	0	1
	December 1991	0	1	0

[1] This data is taken from the hospital in-patient system. The information is provisional. Data for 1992 is not yet available.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of admissions and the number of discharges and deaths in geriatric medicine in Banbridge hospital in each month since August 1991 to the present, showing the number in such care at the end of each month.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information is as follows:

Quarter Ending	*Admissions*[1]	*Deaths and Discharges*[2]	*Number in care at end of quarter*[2]
September 1991	13	18	26
December 1991	8	10	24
March 1992	N/A	8	22
June 1992	N/A	4	21
September 1992	N/A	5	21

[1] This data is taken from the hospital in-patient System. The 1991 information is provisional and the 1992 information is not yet available.
[2] This data, which is only available on a quarterly basis, was obtained from the Korner Aggregate Returns which do not record place of residence.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of live births in each hospital in Northern Ireland in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of live births in each hospital in Northern Ireland for the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92:

Hospital	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Ards	987	950	936	959
Belfast City	2912	2,871	2,913	2,853
Downe	671	705	734	709
Lagan Valley	1,232	1,341	1,319	1,306
Mater	860	895	926	1,090
Royal Maternity	2,634	3,159	3,309	3,304
Ulster	2,059	1,905	1,988	2,035
Ballymena Cottage	106	80	57	34
Carrickfergus[1]	61	—	—	—
Dalriada[1]	17	—	—	—
Mid Ulster	954	900	891	851
Moyle	606	596	599	587
Robinson Memorial	224	310	274	168
Route	1,025	990	1,093	1,022
Waveney	1,532	1,544	1,465	1,524
Banbridge[1]	96	—	—	—
Craigavon Area	2,282	2,313	2,286	2,287
Daisy Hill	1,802	1,754	1,776	1,668
South Tyrone	908	959	934	895
Tower Hill Maternity[1]	50	—	—	—
Altnagelvin	3,064	2,924	2,885	2,846
Erne	926	870	815	732
Tyrone County	1,014	1,007	981	970
Northern Ireland	26,022	26,073	26,181	25,840

[1] Maternity services were no longer provided at these hospitals after 1988-89 financial year.

Companies (Relocation)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of companies which have relocated from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland in the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware of two companies which relocated from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland in this period.

Polling Stations

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps the chief electoral officer intends to take to consult political parties in Northern Ireland on the new polling station scheme.

Mr. Hanley: The chief electoral officer will publish a new draft polling station scheme and invite comments on it shortly after the electoral register is published on 15 February. Any elector or group of electors may make objections to or proposals about the scheme within 14 days of publication. I understand that the CEO wrote to the political parties in Northern Ireland in November 1992 to inform them of the impending review and of the scheduled publication of a new draft scheme.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 2 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *44-48*; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Mates: The following are details of public appointments made by my right hon. and learned Friend during the period 1 November 1992 to 31 January 1993.

In making public appointments, the prime consideration is the appointee's ability or potential to contribute to the work of the particular body to which he or she is appointed. In Northern Ireland other major factors taken into account are community background and gender.

Appointments and re-appointments to public bodies from 1 November 1992 to 31 January 1993

Name	*Public body name*	*Category*	*Position*	*Date of appointment*	*Date of expiry*
Mr. P. H. McWilliams	Industrial Development Board	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Sir K. P. Bloomfield	NI Higher Education Council	A	Chairman	1 January 1993	Indeterminate
Dr. M. N. Hayes	Community Relations Council NI	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. P. A. Duffy	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. J. E. Craig	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. J. L. McCrum	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. P. Kenny	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. W. McCarter	International Fund for Ireland	A	Chairman	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. G. Barr	Community Relations Council NI	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. D. McFerran	Community Relations Council NI	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. B. A. Slowey	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Ms. C. Murphy	International Fund for Ireland	A	Member	1 January 1993	31 December 1995
Mr. N. W. Shaw	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman	23 November 1992	22 November 1996
Mrs. B. M. McLaughlin	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman designate	23 November 1992	31 August 1993
Mr. G. Burnison	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman designate	23 November 1992	31 August 1993
Sir D. Faulkner	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman	23 November 1992	22 November 1996
Mr. I. Oswald	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman	23 November 1992	22 November 1996
Mr. J. Shields	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman designate	23 November 1992	31 August 1993
Mrs. G. A. Shaw	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman designate	23 November 1992	31 August 1993
Mr. G. H. Moore	Health and Social Services Trusts—appointment of lay helpers and chairmen	A	Chairman	23 November 1992	22 November 1996
Mrs. G. M. Loughran	Eastern Health and Social Services Board	A	Member (non-executive)	21 December 1992	31 March 1995
Mrs. J. I. Ferguson	Eastern Health and Social Seevices Board	A	Member (non-executive)	21 December 1992	31 March 1995
Mrs. P. Farren	NI Transport Holding Company	A	Member	1 November 1992	31 October 1995
Mr. I. Doherty	NI Transport Holding Company	A	Member	1 November 1992	31 October 1995
Mr. S. McDowell	NI Housing Executive	A	Member	5 November 1992	4 November 1995
Mrs. E. Waterson	NI Housing Executive	A	Member	5 November 1992	4 November 1995
Mrs. M. A. F. Cook	NI Housing Executive	A	Member	5 November 1992	4 November 1995
Mr. J. Hood	NI Housing Executive	A	Member	5 November 1992	4 November 1995
Mr. R. S. McCulloch	NI Transport Holding Company	A	Member	10 November 1992	30 June 1993

Name	Public body name	Category	Position	Date of appointment	Date of expiry
Miss G. M. M. Keegan	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	7 December 1992	6 December 1994
Mr. D. Hewitt	Independent Assessor of Military Complaints Procedures	A	Independent Assessor	15 December 1992	14 December 1995

Departmental Costs

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cash and running cost limits for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departmental service 1992-93.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, it is proposed that the cash limit for class XVII, vote 1 (the Northern Ireland Office) will be increased by £45,832,000 from £844,423,000 to £890,255,000. This is principally to meet additional expenditure on compensation and police costs. The additional provision sought will be mainly met from a transfer within the Northern Ireland block and the balance charged to the reserve. It will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for most Northern Ireland departmental services will be increased by £20,621,000 from £3,393,100,000 to £3,413,721,000. This increase reflects the take-up of entitlement to end-year flexibility on capital and departmental running costs and the housing package announced by the Chancellor on 12 November 1992. It will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The combined running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments will be increased by £4,165,000 from £712,316,000 to £716,481,000. This reflects the take up of £2,471,000 of the end year flexibility entitlement announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, at columns 697-702, a net transfer of £1,684,000 from the Department of Social Security, mainly in respect of child support costs, and a transfer of £10,000 from the Property Services Agency relating to maintenance work. Of the revised running cost provision £171,362,000 is for the Northern Ireland Office and £545,119,000 for Northern Ireland Departments.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the evidence of trends in the level of drug abuse in Northern Ireland during the past five years; and if he will give details of *(a)* drugs, by type, seized and their street value and *(b)* the number of convictions by category.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The quantities and types of drugs seized during the period specified are set out in table 1 which also indicates the trends in drug abuse during the period. Table 2 lists the related convictions over the same time scale.

It is not possible accurately to assess the street value of the drugs seized as the value varies according to availability, quality and demand.

Table 1
Drug Seizures 1988-92

Year	Cannabis	Cocaine	Heroin	LSD	Amphetamines
1988	12·75 kilos	2·51 gms	3·65 gms	917 doses	466·26 gms
1989	21·71 kilos	52·4 gms	25·35 gms 1052 MST tablets	485 doses 17·80 gms	658·£65 gms
1990	37·6 kilos	—	2757 MST tablets	573 doses	95·2 gms
1991	37·5 kilos	88 gms	250 doses Dipipanone	½ kilo Psilocin	625 gms
	1·5 kilos herbal		1 gm Morphine	800 doses 2,711 MDMA 114 gms	25 tablets
1992	15·75 kilos	77 gms	9 gms 51 MST tablets	9,201 doses 4,408 MDMA	5,732 gms

MST = Morphine Sulphate
MDMA = Ecstasy

Table 2
Convictions for drug offences 1988-92

Offence	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Producing controlled drug	3	4	1	3	4
Importing controlled drug	1	1	—	—	1
Supplying controlled drug	12	14	5	3	10
Possessing controlled drug	97	105	98	140	242
Possessing controlled drug with intent to supply	10	6	6	6	14
Permitting premises to be used for use of drugs	4	2	1	1	2

Offence	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Obstructing powers of search for drugs	—	—	1	—	1
Attempting producing controlled drugs	—	—	1	—	—
Attempted possessing controlled drug	4	—	—	—	—
Conspiracy possessing controlled drug	1	—	—	—	—
Permitting possessing controlled drug	—	1	—	—	—
Totals	132	133	113	153	274

RUC

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many RUC officers, by rank, are operating, full-time, in *(a)* the anti-drugs unit, *(b)* the complaints and discipline branch and *(c)* the anti-racketeering unit.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The current number of RUC officers, by rank, in the drugs squad and the complaints and discipline branch is as follows:

	Number
Drugs squad	
Chief Inspector	1
Inspector	1
Sergeant	4
Constable	28
Complaints and discipline branch	
Assistant Chief Constable	1
Chief Superintendent	2
Superintendent	11
Chief Inspector	25
Inspector	11
Sergeant	10
Constable	10

Given the particular operational circumstances under which the anti-racketeering unit works, it is not in the public interest to disclose information as to its strength.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Safer Cities Programme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the evaluation of the safer cities programme by the Home Office research and statistics department, as it relates to crime rates and the fear of crime, to be completed and published.

Mr. Jack: Evaluation of the safer cities programme is being carried out in two stages: the first uses results from surveys and the second from recorded crime figures obtained from police forces. Surveys have taken the form of before and after studies and are being used to measure any change in levels of victimisation and fear of crime over the period 1990-92. This is intended to provide a snapshot picture of the impact of safer cities action in 11 cities, and is likely to be completed by the autumn of 1993. Police recorded crime figures will be used to look for changes in crime across time. Results from this second stage of the evaluation should be available a little later in the year, soon after which it is expected that publication of findings will begin.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many safer cities projects he plans to have operating in the financial year 1994-95; and what criteria he will use to select locations for new projects.

Mr. Jack: There are a number of considerations which will affect the pace at which phase 2 safer cities are set up and it is too early to predict the number which will be operating in the financial year 1994-95. We are considering the criteria for the selection of new locations, but among the factors likely to be taken into account will be local crime rates and the readiness of local agencies to work with the programme. I will be looking carefully at projects coming from current urban priority areas which have not yet benefited from safer cities.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason it was decided not to award Stoke on Trent safer city status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When the safer cities programme was launched in March 1988, the 20 project locations were selected from urban programme areas with high crime rates which were aggravated by other social problems, and where other Departments' inner cities programmes were targeted. As Stoke on Trent was not an urban programme area, it was not eligible for inclusion. Plans for the second phase of the safer cities programme are now being drawn up and I have previously undertaken to let the hon. Member have full details as soon as they are available. I made a statement on 7 January which set out the Government's policy on crime prevention, including the future of the safer cities programme. A copy of this statement has been placed in the library.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money each of the safer city projects in the east midlands will receive from his Department in the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. Jack: There are three safer cities projects in the east midlands, in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. The projects in Derby and Leicester were set up in the autumn of 1991 and it is intended to maintain their grant allocation at £250,000 in 1993-94 to enable them to support local crime prevention activities. The Nottingham project started in April 1989 and Home Office funding is due to end in March 1994; its grant allocation has been set at £100,000 in 1993-94. Nottingham and the other 15 projects where Home Office funding is due to finish next year will

also have access to additional grant money from a central pool of £500,000 to assist the development of continuing structures for multi-agency crime prevention work.

In addition to the sums stated, the Home Office also pays the salaries of the staff and the other running costs of each safer cities project.

The ending of Home Office funding in 16 of the longer established safer cities projects will enable work to be started on a new phase of safer cities in other locations.

HMP, Manchester

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the original and *(b)* the revised closing date for tenders in respect of the market testing exercise at Her Majesty's prison Manchester.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The original closing date was 18 January. No new date has yet been set.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional costs will be incurred in respect of the market testing exercise at Her Majesty's prison Manchester as a result of the effect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to identify separately any additional costs that might be caused by the application of the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the market testing of HMP Manchester.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional information has been sent to tenderers for Her Majesty's Prison Manchester since 1 January; and what effect it will have on the tendering process.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following information has been sent to all tenderers since 1 January:

On 4 January information about prisoner numbers received and discharged from Her Majesty's Prison Manchester over a three-month period;

On 6 January a note clarifying the supply of UHF and VHF equipment at the prison;

On 6 January a note advising that the deadline for the return of bids would be extended;

On 18 January information on the supply of X-ray machines, security portals and certain furnishings and fittings in the administration suite;

On 2 February a note on the current number of prisoners in police cells;

In addition, on 8 January, the Manchester bid team was sent a further copy of schedule 4, appendix 7, to the tender documents.

This information was provided to assist tenderers in the preparation of their bids and to inform them that the deadline for receiving bids would be extended.

Departmental Warehousing and Distributing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the contracting out of the warehousing and distributing function of the supply and transport branch of his Department;

(2) how many staff employed in the warehousing and distributing function of the supply and transport branch of his Department have been issued with redundancy notices; and if he plans to withdraw these notices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The prison service warehousing and distribution activities were market tested in 1991. Competitive bids were received from four private sector companies and there was an in-house bid. In July 1992 the contract was awarded to a private contractor subject to consultation with the trade unions and negotiation of a satisfactory contract.

All of the 141 staff employed in the warehousing and distribution function planned for contracting out were issued with redundancy notices in September 1992. There are currently no plans to withdraw these notices.

At the market testing stage it was not thought that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) had implications for this market testing exercise, but advice received subsequently is that the regulations would apply. The implications of this advice are now being considered.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received recently about the number of police officers in the Plumstead and Greenwich divisions of the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's 1993 corporate strategy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am placing copies of the Metropolitan Police Corporate Strategy, 1993-94 to 1997-98, which I fully endorse, in the Library of the House today. I am also sending copies to all right hon. and hon. Members whose consituencies fall wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district.

I am inviting London Members to discuss it with me.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the proposed policing levels for each of the Metropolitan police divisions for 1993; and what were the comparable figures for 1991 and 1992, indicating the percentage change.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available in the format requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Market Testing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of redundancy payments to persons employed in the prison department supply and transport branch as a result of the recent market testing exercise.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The cost of redundancy payments for all of the staff employed in the prison department warehousing and distribution function is estimated at £850,000.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the consultancy

study undertaken by Deloitte Haskins and Sells in 1989 into the warehousing and distribution service in his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The details of costs of individual contracts between Government and contractors are regarded as commercial-in-confidence.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the full cost to date of the market testing exercise in respect of supply and transport at his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Those involved in this market testing exercise have carried out the work required as part of their normal job functions. Detailed records of the amount of time spent by individuals on this particular aspect of their jobs have not been recorded and there would be a disproportionate cost involved in obtaining these details.

False Number Plates

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded offences involving the use of false number plates in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Cash Limits

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for changes to the 1992-93 cash limits within his responsibilities and to his Department's running costs limit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on class IX, vote 2, prisons, England and Wales, will be increased by £113,500,000 from £1,363,448,000 to £1,476,948,000.

The additional provision is necessary because of the need to pay for the cost of keeping prisoners in police cells. Extra provision is also necessary to meet the construction costs of new prisons due mainly to claims from contractors. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit on class IX, vote 3, Home Office administration, immigration and police support services, England and Wales, will be reduced by £12,000,000 from £1,242,192,000 to £1,230,192,000 to reflect a transfer of resources to class IX, vote 1 for the purpose of criminal injuries compensation payments and an increase in the amount of current grant payable for probation and bail hostels.

The Home Office running cost limit will be reduced by £2,132,000 from £1,449,076,000 to £1,446,944,000 to reflect lower than expected pay settlements in the prison service.

Prisoners (Razors)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which prisons male prisoners have to share razors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prisoners are not expected to share razors. The recommended scale allows for three razors per prisoner every two weeks. Where this is insufficient, supplies of additional razors can be obtained from a direct call-off contract available to prisons.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made in his Department to implement the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992 place duties on employers and self-employed persons who conduct an undertaking from which a radiation emergency is reasonably foreseeable, and on first-tier local authorities. They place no duties on the Home Office.

Crime (London)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the metropolitan police commissioner to discuss action against crime in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has already discussed with the new commissioner his approach to his responsibilities, including this one, and will meet him frequently on a range of issues over the coming months.

Elections (Mechanisation)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce electronic systems for counting ballot papers at election counts.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider the introduction of a mechanised voting system for public elections on a trial basis at specified locations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have set up a working group of local authority representatives and Home Office officials as part of our post-election review to look at the implications of introducing procedures for automated vote counting. We shall consider the working group's recommendations once it has reported its findings. We have no plans to introduce an automated voting system.

Relate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the funding in real terms for Relate in each year from 1987-88 to 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office grant-in-aid to Relate for each year from 1987-88 to 1993-94 is as follows in actual terms and real terms, using 1991-92 as the base year.

	Actual expenditure £	*Real terms expenditure* £
1987-88	912,870	1,204,902
1988-89	935,910	1,151,478
1989-90	958,890	1,106,408
1990-91	1,006,840	1,076,408
1991-92	1,107,500	1,107,500

	Actual expenditure £	Real terms expenditure £
1992-93	1,511,400	1,449,784
1993-94	1,530,500	1,428,811

In real terms, there has been an increase of 18·6 per cent. in the grant during the period in question; the actual increase is 67·7 per cent.

Car Crime

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to set up a national squad to combat the problem of car crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to create a national squad to deal with this particular type of crime.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers of 9 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *636-66*, if he will list in descending order for each police force in England and Wales the percentage changes in notifiable offences since 1979 together with the total resident population of each force area in 1981 and 1991, the number of police officers in 1981 and 1991 and the percentage clear-up rate in 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Jack: The available statistics are provided in the tables. Figures for percentage clear-up rate are not yet available for 1992. Population figures are a matter for the Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment.

Police force strength
England and Wales

Police force area	Police strength (Actual) 1981	1991
Avon and Somerset	3,014	3,072
Bedfordshire	983	1,090
Cambridgeshire	1,120	1,239
Cheshire	1,850	1,867
Cleveland	1,475	1,477
Cumbria	1,113	1,183
Derbyshire	1,779	1,706
Devon and Cornwall	2,694	2,876
Dorset	1,162	1,280
Durham	1,344	1,378
Essex	2,612	2,878
Gloucestershire	1,126	1,178
Greater Manchester	6,928	6,975
Hampshire	3,048	3,177
Hertfordshire	1,568	1,679
Humberside	1,955	2,016
Kent	2,868	3,039
Lancashire	3,153	3,205
Leicestershire	1,728	1,808
Lincolnshire	1,182	1,198
London, City of	863	809
Merseyside	4,647	4,605
Metropolitan Police District	25,075	28,126
Norfolk	1,263	1,419
Northamptonshire	1,003	1,156
Northumbria	3,331	3,460
North Yorkshire	1,353	1,382
Nottinghamshire	2,259	2,334
South Yorkshire	2,874	2,989
Staffordshire	2,095	2,185
Suffolk	1,114	1,203
Surrey	1,593	1,681
Sussex	2,824	2,969
Thames Valley	3,091	3,722
Warwickshire	925	1,005
West Mercia	1,933	2,028
West Midlands	6,689	6,893
West Yorkshire	5,147	5,143
Wiltshire	1,042	1,212
Dyfed-Powys	925	944
Gwent	963	995
North Wales	1,288	1,343
South Wales	3,082	3,142
Total	118,081	125,066

Percentage change in notifiable offences and percentage of offences cleared up
England and Wales

Police force area	Percentage change 1991 over 1979[1]	Percentage cleared up[1] 1979	1991
Gloucestershire	260	51	35
Avon and Somerset	212	43	24
Leicestershire	207	54	29
Warwickshire	205	46	24
Norfolk	200	47	37
Lincolnshire	169	60	46
Northamptonshire	168	48	31
Kent	163	50	23
Humberside	161	45	32
Devon and Cornwall	159	46	29
Thames Valley	158	45	22
North Yorkshire	146	51	36
Cambridgeshire	145	47	36
West Yorkshire	144	37	28
Durham	143	52	30
Sussex	141	53	23
South Wales	138	46	29
Cumbria	135	56	40
Staffordshire	136	51	37
Dyfed-Powys	132	62	50
Dorset	129	46	41
West Mercia	129	49	35
Cleveland	127	51	33
Hampshire	126	46	28
South Yorkshire	125	51	36
Northumbria	123	53	35
Greater Manchester	120	45	36
Cheshire	119	58	41
Bedfordshire	114	48	19
Nottinghamshire	109	51	27
Suffolk	108	57	37
Essex	108	42	32
Derbyshire	104	50	28
Lancashire	105	56	40
Wiltshire	103	42	40
West Midlands	100	37	31

Police force area	Percentage change 1991 over 1979[1]	Percentage cleared up[1] 1979	1991
Gwent	98	60	47
Surrey	94	47	23
North Wales	91	59	36
Metropolitan Police District	69	21	17
Hertfordshire	53	54	33
Merseyside	37	42	45
London, City of	13	21	20
Total	114	41	29

[1] Excluding offences of Criminal Damage value £20 and under.

Crime Clear-up Rates

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of offences cleared up and the percentage of the total clear-up rate in each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 in terms of *(a)* those charged and found guilty, *(b)* those charged and summoned, *(c)* those taken into consideration where the offence had previously been reported, *(d)* those taken into consideration where the crime had not previously been reported, *(e)* as a result of admissions to further offences from persons already in prison and *(f)* by no futher action.

Mr. Jack: The available information for 1991 is given in the table. Corresponding figures for 1981 are not available.

Notifiable offences[1] cleared up by the police by method of clear up
England and Wales 1991

Police force area	Charged or summonsed		Caution		Taken into consideration (previously recorded)		Taken into consideration (not previously recorded)		Interview of convicted prisoner		Other		Total cleared up	Clear up rate
	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number	Percentage of total cleared up	Number of notifiable offences	Percentage of total notifiable offences cleared up
Avon and Somerset	18,843	53	3,328	9	2,283	6	3,151	9	5,234	15	2,736	8	35,575	24
Bedfordshire	6,655	61	1,564	14	980	9	749	7	176	2	824	8	10,948	19
Cambridgeshire	7,386	36	2,611	13	2,806	14	2,989	15	2,477	12	2,319	11	20,588	36
Cheshire	13,699	54	2,710	11	2,643	10	1,084	4	4,230	17	806	3	25,172	41
Cleveland	8,654	35	3,488	14	7,597	31	567	2	4,139	17	372	1	24,817	33
Cumbria	7,767	45	2,771	16	1,492	9	1,646	10	2,335	14	1,184	7	17,195	40
Derbyshire	9,256	46	3,229	16	2,456	12	1,549	8	1,380	7	2,196	11	20,066	28
Devon and Cornwall	18,134	58	4,081	13	2,568	8	2,267	7	2,086	7	1,883	6	31,019	29
Dorset	9,586	45	1,626	8	2,532	12	433	2	5,977	28	939	4	21,091	41
Durham	11,896	65	1,121	6	946	5	1,268	7	1,937	11	1,160	6	18,328	30
Essex	13,526	40	3,992	12	6,075	18	5,373	16	1,929	6	2,623	8	33,518	32
Gloucestershire	6,345	32	2,322	12	1,461	7	2,021	10	6,330	32	1,096	6	19,575	35
Greater Manchester	40,699	32	10,867	9	25,262	20	7,460	6	40,629	32	1,547	1	126,464	36
Hampshire	19,565	49	7,194	18	4,805	12	2,244	6	4,044	10	1,889	5	39,741	28
Hertfordshire	9,121	50	2,304	13	2,932	16	2,035	11	527	3	1,320	7	18,239	33
Humberside	15,527	42	4,882	13	5,699	16	2,019	6	4,676	13	3,800	10	36,648	32
Kent	15,128	49	5,847	19	2,539	8	3,644	12	583	2	2,847	9	30,608	23
Lancashire	17,903	42	3,424	8	6,396	15	2,702	6	9,465	22	2,673	6	42,563	40
Leicestershire	9,576	37	4,442	17	4,572	18	2,581	10	2,889	11	1,514	6	25,574	29
Lincolnshire	8,786	44	2,624	13	3,180	16	1,142	6	2,385	12	2,035	10	20,152	46
London, City of	1,022	67	209	14	133	9	53	3	35	2	74	5	1,526	20
Merseyside	22,750	36	4,582	7	7,332	11	2,440	4	25,589	40	1,111	2	63,804	45
Metropolitan Police	92,669	62	14,035	9	10,388	7	0	0	1,679	1	30,245	20	149,016	17
Norfolk	10,974	47	2,045	9	2,626	11	2,476	11	4,612	20	548	2	23,281	37
Northamptonshire	7,212	41	1,694	10	2,589	15	543	3	3,458	19	2,286	13	17,782	31
Northumbria	21,318	29	6,870	9	11,988	16	2,851	4	18,790	25	11,979	16	73,796	35
North Yorkshire	8,298	46	2,007	11	1,745	10	2,779	15	1,972	11	1,214	7	18,015	36
Nottinghamshire	21,871	57	6,615	17	4,794	12	4,370	11	745	2	300	1	38,695	27
South Yorkshire	21,634	51	4,214	10	1,568	4	1,036	2	10,428	24	3,702	9	42,582	36
Staffordshire	14,259	45	3,669	12	3,612	11	1,385	4	7,242	23	1,367	4	31,534	37
Suffolk	10,377	71	2,753	19	89	1	43	0	188	1	1,176	8	14,626	37
Surrey	5,946	53	2,011	18	927	8	928	8	411	4	1,026	9	11,249	23
Sussex	13,861	55	3,377	13	1,735	7	3,672	15	268	1	2,164	9	25,077	23
Thames Valley	19,623	49	6,089	15	5,770	14	4,713	12	1,553	4	2,537	6	40,285	22
Warwickshire	4,791	50	1,206	13	1,173	12	866	9	1,230	13	375	4	9,641	24
West Mercia	11,776	47	3,555	14	2,684	11	717	3	4,419	18	2,081	8	25,232	35
West Midlands	37,113	41	9,433	10	12,056	13	2,591	3	23,037	25	6,114	7	90,344	31
West Yorkshire	35,269	44	8,864	11	11,461	14	3,131	4	15,280	19	5,658	7	79,663	28
Wiltshire	8,798	57	2,300	15	1,846	12	264	2	530	3	1,722	11	15,460	40
Dyfed-Powys	6,619	54	1,077	9	175	1	370	3	2,424	20	1,596	13	12,261	50
Gwent	12,843	73	1,379	8	555	3	1,166	7	1,412	8	132	1	17,487	47
North Wales	8,735	56	1,679	11	1,985	13	638	4	1,676	11	810	5	15,523	36
South Wales	24,772	55	2,760	6	1,474	3	285	1	15,148	34	292	1	44,731	29
England and Wales	690,627	47	166,848	11	177,929	12	84,261	6	245,554	17	114,272	8	1,479,491	29

[1] Excluding offences of Criminal Damage value £20 and under.

Police Statistics

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 *(a)* the number of arrests, *(b)* the number of people charged, *(c)* the number of people who appeared in court, *(d)* the number of people found guilty and *(e)* the figure for those found guilty as a percentage of *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*.

Mr. Jack: Information concerning arrests (for all offences), prosecutions and convictions (for indictable offences) 1981 and 1991 (which is provisional) is given in the table. Data on the number of people charged is not collected centrally.

Table A
Number of arrests, prosecutions at magistrates' courts and total found guilty at all courts by police force area
England and Wales 1981

Police force area	Arrests[1] Number	Prosecutions at magistrates' courts[2] Number	Total found guilty at courts[2] Number	Percentage found guilty to arrests Per cent.	Percentage found guilty to prosecutions Per cent.
Avon and Somerset	35,891	12,758	10,986	31	86
Bedfordshire	15,831	5,315	4,481	28	84
Cambridgeshire	17,757	6,032	5,428	31	90
Cheshire	18,511	8,816	8,065	44	91
Cleveland	24,565	8,267	7,715	31	93
Cumbria	12,434	4,526	4,095	33	90
Derbyshire	17,850	7,550	6,708	38	89
Devon and Cornwall	21,499	9,878	9,173	43	93
Dorset	13,068	5,320	4,719	36	89
Durham	16,616	6,206	5,710	34	92
Essex	31,138	9,935	8,931	29	90
Gloucestershire	11,758	4,039	3,829	33	95
Greater Manchester	102,118	37,274	33,966	33	91
Hampshire	42,551	14,643	13,078	31	89
Hertfordshire	19,092	6,783	6,150	32	91
Humberside	30,662	10,633	9,872	32	93
Kent	37,003	10,492	9,725	26	93
Lancashire	39,844	15,561	14,264	36	92
Leicestershire	21,202	7,753	7,100	33	92
Lincolnshire	13,203	4,443	4,031	31	91
London, City of	3,390	1,139	947	28	83
Merseyside	57,139	22,183	17,792	31	80
Metropolitan police district	340,809	97,898	85,262	25	87
Norfolk	10,155	5,135	4,764	47	93
Northamptonshire	15,151	5,501	4,821	32	88
Northumbria	62,121	16,598	14,659	24	88
North Yorkshire	11,829	5,384	4,645	39	86
Nottinghamshire	32,625	11,483	10,876	33	95
South Yorkshire	44,550	13,879	12,524	28	90
Staffordshire	31,833	9,453	8,168	26	86
Suffolk	12,452	4,587	3,735	30	81
Surrey	17,536	4,388	4,115	23	94
Sussex	35,294	10,194	9,615	27	94
Thames Valley	42,076	13,411	12,416	30	93
Warwickshire	7,050	3,146	2,784	39	88
West Mercia	22,692	7,742	7,268	32	94
West Midlands	87,376	30,777	26,820	31	87
West Yorkshire	56,702	26,570	23,177	41	87
Wiltshire	8,857	4,057	3,773	43	93
England	1,442,230	489,749	436,187	30	89
Dyfed-Powys	8,605	2,942	2,605	30	89
Gwent	15,955	5,912	5,223	33	88
North Wales	11,003	5,664	5,204	47	92
South Wales	35,795	16,910	14,162	40	84
Wales	71,358	31,428	27,194	38	87
England and Wales	1,513,588	521,177	463,381	31	89

[1] All offences.
[2] Indictable offences.

Table B Number of arrests, prosecutions at magistrates' courts and total found guilty at all courts by police force area
England and Wales 1991[1]
Number and percentage

Police force area	Arrests[2]	Prosecutions at magistrates' courts[3]	Total found guilty at all courts[3]	Percentage found guilty to arrests	Percentage found guilty to prosecutions
Avon and Somerset	39,216	11,955	7,526	19	63
Bedfordshire	17,543	4,467	2,716	15	61
Cambridgeshire	17,699	5,403	3,664	21	68
Cheshire	29,684	8,101	5,937	20	73
Cleveland	28,061	6,739	4,336	15	64
Cumbria	21,275	5,204	3,939	19	76
Derbyshire	23,708	7,828	5,275	22	67
Devon and Cornwall	34,024	10,032	7,332	22	73
Dorset	18,382	5,357	3,637	20	68
Durham	25,125	5,684	3,487	14	61
Essex	40,100	12,580	7,835	20	62

Police force area	Arrests[2]	Prosecutions at magistrates' courts[3]	Total found guilty at all courts[3]	Percentage found guilty to arrests	Percentage found guilty to prosecutions
Gloucestershire	17,020	4,446	2,990	18	67
Greater Manchester	116,916	29,320	22,832	20	78
Hampshire	62,330	13,788	9,544	15	69
Hertfordshire	23,191	6,288	4,039	17	64
Humberside	35,847	7,941	6,057	17	76
Kent	47,992	7,176	6,262	13	87
Lancashire	62,104	14,005	10,544	17	75
Leicestershire	26,417	7,442	5,041	19	68
Lincolnshire	22,680	5,044	3,466	15	69
London, City of	4,688	1,120	756	16	68
Merseyside	72,930	23,311	14,955	21	64
Metropolitan Police District[4]	113,570	69,148	50,684	45	73
Norfolk	20,898	5,579	4,577	22	82
Northamptonshire	19,353	5,425	3,488	18	64
Northumbria	68,847	15,787	10,266	15	65
North Yorkshire	20,936	6,276	4,324	21	69
Nottinghamshire	46,487	14,974	9,292	20	62
South Yorkshire	45,722	13,405	9,636	21	72
Staffordshire	39,142	10,386	6,794	17	65
Suffolk	15,796	4,994	3,627	23	73
Surrey	19,940	5,141	3,451	17	67
Sussex	39,247	12,261	8,559	22	70
Thames Valley	59,458	14,148	9,203	15	65
Warwickshire	14,138	2,859	2,218	16	78
West Mercia	32,048	8,186	6,080	19	74
West Midlands	131,062	33,082	21,624	16	65
West Yorkshire	85,867	22,946	15,987	19	70
Wiltshire	13,670	4,618	3,280	24	71
England	1,573,113	452,446	315,280	20	70
Dyfed-Powys	13,466	4,177	2,752	20	66
Gwent	17,796	5,146	3,372	19	66
North Wales	24,338	5,541	4,421	18	80
South Wales	57,143	18,931	12,510	22	66
Wales	112,743	33,795	23,055	20	68
England and Wales	1,685,856	486,241	338,335	20	70

[1] Provisional
[2] All offences
[3] Indictable offences
[4] Notifiable offences

Fire Brigade (Marine Units)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which fire brigades in England and Wales undergo regular training for emergencies at sea; and in which towns their specialist marine units are based.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 21 January 1993]*: In addition to the training all firefighters receive for fighting fires on ships, 22 brigades in England and Wales maintain regular specialist training. Eleven brigades have specialist marine units.

Area	Brigade maintaining training	Location of marine units
Northern England	Tyne & Wear	Newcastle and Sunderland
	Cleveland	Middlebrough
	Lancashire	—
	Cheshire	—
	Humberside	—
	Merseyside	—
Wales	Dyfed	Milford Haven
	South Glamorgan	—
	West Glamorgan	—
	Gwynedd	—
Eastern England	Lincolnshire	—
	Cambridgeshire	Wisbech
	Suffolk	Felixstowe, Ipswich
	Norfolk	Great Yarmouth
	Essex	South Woodham Ferrers
	London	London
South and South-West England	Kent	Strood, Whitstable, Sheppey
	East Sussex	—
	Dorset	—
	Devon	Plymouth
	Cornwall	—
	Gloucestershire	inshore inflatable at Gloucester

Bail Support Schemes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the location of all bail support schemes in operation in England and Wales; and if he will indicate for each *(a)* the magistrates court areas served, *(b)* the local authority, *(c)* police force area in which it falls and *(d)* the number of people dealt with in each of the last three years;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each bail support scheme currently in operation *(a)* the number of

people aged over 21 years, *(b)* the number of people aged 18 to 21 years and *(c)* the number of people aged under 18 years who were involved in each of the last three years;

(3) if he will publish a table showing for each bail support scheme currently in operation in England and Wales *(a)* the current total cost on a full year basis, *(b)* the total cost in each of the past three years and *(c)* the cost per head per week for each scheme in 1991 or for the latest available financial year.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* The Home Office probation supervision grant scheme, established in March 1992, makes available grants to voluntary organisations working in partnership with the probation service for a number of purposes, including bail support programmes for young adult defendants. Information about the scheme and how to apply for grants under it was sent in March 1992 to all probation services and the major voluntary organisations concerned with offenders. Bail support projects for juveniles are run by or in partnership with social service departments of local authorities. Such projects are also eligible for Home Office funding where there is a partnership with the probation service and the voluntary sector.

So far 16 applications under the supervision grant scheme have been made. Of these, five have been approved and the remainder are under urgent consideration. The available information about the two projects already in operation is set out in the table.

Bail support schemes in operation in England and Wales

Name and location of scheme	*(i) Magistrates court area served* *(ii) Local authority* *(iii) Police force area* *(iv) Number dealt with*[2]	*Number (per year)*[1] *involved by age* *(i) under 18* *(ii) 18-21* *(iii) over 21*	*Total cost on full year basis (£)*[1]
Bail Charter Scheme (North Wales)	(i) Wrexham, Mold, Hawarden, Flint (ii) Clwyd (iii) North Wales police	(i) 34 (ii) 18 (iii) 23	73,412
Surrey Youth Justice Team	(i) All Petty Sessional areas in Surrey (ii) Surrey county council (iii) Surrey constabulary	(i) 80 (ii) 0 (iii) 0	97,422

[1] Estimates as shown on application form for Homwe Office funding.
[2] Information not yet available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Cider Tax

12. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield from cider tax during the year 1992-93.

Sir John Cope: The yield from the excise duty on cider for the year ending 1992-93 is estimated at £80 million.

Economy (Demand)

13. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Lamont: Real domestic demand has been edging up since the second quarter of 1991. Both Treasury and the majority of outside forecasters expect it to pick up further in 1993.

Financial Services

14. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to make further changes in the system of regulation of financial services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has asked the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to review how SIB carries out its regulatory responsibilities.

Competitive Tendering

15. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will issue guidelines to Departments in respect of expenditure on the underwriting of compulsory competitive tendering contracts.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Consumption and GDP

16. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the percentage changes in consumption and gross domestic product between 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Nelson: GDP is estimated to have risen by 22¼ per cent. in real terms between 1979 and the first three quarters of 1992. Real consumers' expenditure is estimated to have risen by 37 per cent. over the same period.

Value Added Tax

17. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the operation of the new single market VAT procedures introduced at the beginning of the year.

Sir John Cope: Early indications are that the new single market VAT procedures have been introduced with minimum disruption to trade. This reflects credit on the preparations made by Customs and by British businesses, often against tight deadlines.

25. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the operation of the new single market VAT procedures introduced at the beginning of the year.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowland).

Company Cars

18. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost in the last financial year of tax relief on company cars; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Capital allowances for company cars are estimated to have reduced corporation tax receipts by about £900 million in 1991-92. The hon. Member would not expect me to make a statement on taxation matters at this time of year.

Retail Prices

19. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the annual increase in retail prices; and what was the equivalent figure two years ago.

Mr. Lamont: Latest figures show that the retail prices index rose 2·6 per cent. in the 12 months to December. The equivalent figure two years earlier was 9·3 per cent.

Tax Evasion

20. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of revenue lost through tax evasion in the cash economy.

Mr. Nelson: That part of the economy known as the "underground" or "hidden economy" is, by its very nature, unseen and thus unmeasurable. Reliable estimates of its size are therefore not available.

Business and Consumer Confidence

21. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the autumn statement on business and consumer confidence.

Mr. Portillo: The autumn statement was widely welcomed by business organisations. Recent survey evidence indicates that it has been followed by a marked improvement in both business and consumer confidence.

Car Tax

22. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the decision to abolish car tax.

Sir John Cope: The abolition of car tax has been warmly welcomed by both the motor trade and the vast majority of retail customers, and the motor industry has received a valuable stimulus.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of car tax on Exchequer revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: The abolition of car tax, announced in the 1992 autumn statement, has an estimated revenue cost of £100 million in 1992-93 and £750 million in 1993-94, including the loss of consequential VAT receipts. However, the Chancellor announced his intention at that time to recoup the cost of abolishing car tax in 1993-94 through other taxes on motoring. This information is set out in the 1992 autumn statement.

Tax System (Distortions)

23. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress in eradicating distortions in the tax system.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's main objective in reforming taxes is to improve the performance of the economy and to see that people's choices are distorted as little as is reasonably possible by the tax system.

Balance of Payments

24. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the balance of payments.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford).

Growth (EC)

26. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the prospects for growth in the economies of the European Community.

Sir John Cope: In the autumn statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast that average growth in the three main continental European economies in 1993 would be under 1 per cent. A more recent forecast by the European Commission points to growth in the Community as a whole of only 3/4 per cent.

Local Authority Capital Receipts

27. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his latest estimate is for local authority capital receipts.

Mr. Portillo: The latest estimate of capital receipts in Great Britain for the current financial year is published in table 5.10 of "Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement" which was published on 29 January.

Banking

28. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the banking sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the Governor from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Interest Rates

29. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the level of interest rates.

Mr. Nelson: I have received a number of such representations.

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *48*, whether he has completed his consideration of a leakage prevention programme.

Sir John Cope: As part of the HM Treasury domestic policy and strategy for environmental good housekeeping there is a commitment to cease to use wherever possible ozone-depleting substances. In addition to this, the Treasury is committed to a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned by the Department. Work has started on this operation which is due to be completed by 1 April 1993.

European Community

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet European Community Finance Ministers to discuss proposals for generating economic growth.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend next intends to discuss measures to promote economic recovery with his European Community colleagues at the meeting of the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 15 February.

Inflation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many months over the last year the United Kingdom inflation rate has been below the EC average.

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom inflation rate, as measured by the annual change in the retail prices index, was lower than the EC average inflation rate in all of the 12 months up to December 1992.

National Savings

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he is considering in the operation of National Savings Bank accounts.

Mr. Nelson: The terms and operation of National Savings Bank accounts are kept under review.

Custom House, Greenock

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of the renovation of the Custom House, Greenock, occupied by Customs and Excise staff; which department met the cost; and how long the construction programme took from start to finish.

Sir John Cope: The total cost of renovation of the Custom House, Greenock, was £2·9 million and was jointly funded by PSA and Customs and Excise. The construction programme took 24 months from start to finish.

European Investment Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he has had with the European investment bank concerning the European investment fund; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend has not had any such consultations.

VIP Tax Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to expand the workload of the VIP tax unit at Llanishen, Cardiff.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no current plans to expand the workload of this unit.

National Investment and Loans Office

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes to make to the running cost limit for the National Investment and Loans Office in 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the running cost limit for class XVIII, vote 12 will be reduced by £28,000 from £1,214,000 to £1,186,000. This reduction reflects lower than expected expenditure on pay and other expenses.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes to make to the Treasury's cash and running costs limits in 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 1 for 1992-93 will be increased by £800,000 from £93,691,000 to £94,491,000 to provide for redundancy and residual costs following the closure of the National Economic Development Office. Total winding-up costs are estimated at £2·5 million, part of which (£1·7 million) is being met from savings on the NEDO grant-in-aid and on Treasury gross running costs. The balance of £800,000 will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The gross running costs limit is being reduced by £1,532,000 from £80,891,000 to £79,359,000 following the transfer of CCTA and Chessington computer centre to the Cabinet Office: Office of Public Service and Science; and the transfer of savings to fund part of the NEDO residual costs and capital expenditure.

Registry of Friendly Societies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes to make to the cash and running costs limit of the Registry of Friendly Societies for 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 11 will be reduced by £2,124,000 from £5,685,000 to £3,561,000 and the Registry of Friendly Societies running costs limit will be reduced by £1,502,000 from £8,869,000 to £7,367,000.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *215-17*, regarding the refusal of community care grants and social fund loans if he will provide comparable information for each year from 1989.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the

Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 3 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund applications refused on grounds of insufficient priority.

Information for the year 1989-90 is not available by local office but you may wish to know that the number of loans and grants refused nationally on the grounds of insufficient priority in that year was 138,997 and 50,342 respectively.

Details of loans and grants refused on grounds of insufficient priority for the year 1990-91 by former Department of Social Security local office are at Annex A. Details for the year 1991-92 are given by Benefits Agency District and are at Annex B.

The figures should be viewed in the light of the increase in Social Fund applications; from 1989-90 to 1991-92 the number of applications to the discretionary part of the fund increased by 35%.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what extent the services of civil service medical officers were made use of in clearing the recent backlog of applications for disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement on the role of civil service medical officers in this regard.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hanson, dated 3 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. You asked to what extent the services of Civil Service Medical Officers were made use of in clearing the recent backlog of applications for Disability Living Allowance (DLA); and on the role of Civil Service Medical Officers in this regard.

When the backlog of DLA claims arose following the launch of the benefit a number of measures were taken which I described in my letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs. In addition, as a temporary measure, the opinions of Civil Service Medical Officers were sought to clarify some of the comments on individual cases to enable adjudication officers to quickly reach a decision. This action was taken on approximately 56,000 claims. However, I must emphasise that the decision on entitlement to benefit is always made by the adjudication officer and at no time has this been altered.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Pensions

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to enable couples, where the woman is of pensionable age and the man is not, to claim a married couple's pension.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to alter the basic structure of pension provision for married couples.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average number of years for which a woman currently works prior to reaching the state retirement age; and for how many years she would expect, on average, to receive that pension;

(2) what is the average number of years for which a man currently works prior to reaching the state retirement age; and for how many years he would expect, on average, to receive that pension.

Miss Widdecombe: The average life expectancy for a woman aged 60 is 21·69 years and for a man aged 65 is 14·06 according to the Government Actuary's Department's interim life tables. Information regarding the average length of time for which men and women work prior to state retirement age is not currently available.

Child Support Act

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations his Department has received concerning the need for research to monitor the effects of the Child Support Act 1991;

(2) what plans his Department has to carry out or commission research on the working of the Child Support Act 1991 and its impact on single parents caring for children and on non-custodial parents.

Mr. Burt: We have consistently stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effects of the Child Support Act 1991, as did several respondents to the consultation exercise. Such work will be built in to the Department's research programme. We envisage that this will involve both the careful analysis of management information on the activities of the Child Support Agency and the comissioning, if necessary, of research by external experts.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated first year costs inclusive of setting-up moneys of the newly-formed Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The current estimated first-year costs, inclusive of setting-up costs, are £262 million. These are broken down as follows:

	£ million
(a) Total costs of setting up the agency	146
(b) Total costs of running the agency in 1993-94	116

One-parent Families

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the latest estimate for the number of one-parent families in Great Britain.

Mr. Burt: The latest provisional estimate for 1991 of the number of one-parent families in Great Britain is 1·3 million. This is due to be published in March 1993 in "Population Trends No. 71."

Departmental Costs

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he proposes in the cash limit or running costs limit of his Department for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit for class XIV vote 4 will be increased by £21,426,000 from £2,271,998,000 to £2,293,424,000. The revision takes account of an increase in agency payments to the Department of Employment (class VI vote 2) £31,000,000), a transfer to the Department of Health (class XIII vote 3) of £696,000, of which £646,000 is running costs, a transfer to the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) (vote 3) of £227,000 (running costs) and a transfer from the Scottish Office (class XV vote 19) of £1,429,000 (running costs). The additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £10,080,000 and the balance of £20,920,000 will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running cost limit of the Department of Social Security will be reduced by £12,239,000 from £2,537,904,000 to £2,525,665,000. In addition to the running cost transfers included above there is also a net reduction of £12,795,000 to take account of a transfer from running costs to capital expenditure (£25,367,000) and a £12,572,000 shortfall on value added tax refunds.

Family Credit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will collect and publish data on family credit recipients in each of *(a)* the major industrial classifications and *(b)* by employer employing over 1,000 workers.

Mr. Burt: An analysis of family credit recipients, by the occupation of the main earner, is contained in table A1.05 of "Social Security Statistics 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. No analysis is kept of family credit recipients by employer and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Benefits Agency Staff

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for each of the past five years, what was the number of residential courses undertaken by departmental or Benefits Agency staff based in West Yorkshire, the cost of such courses and the reason why it has been necessary for such courses to be undertaken on a residential basis.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Residential training is not undertaken as a matter of routine, but it maximises the number of training hours in the working day and generally enhances the learning environment.

SCOTLAND

Cash Limits

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits for 1992-93 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates I intend to make changes to 10 voted cash limits and in addition the two non-voted cash blocks. These include increases in provision to reflect the increased resources for capital expenditure under the special measures announced as part of the autumn statement in November 1992.

1. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 2, Agricultural services, agricultural grants and fisheries, Scotland will be decreased by £4,000,000 from £126,684,000 to £122,684,000.
2. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 3: Training Programmes, Roads and Transport Services and Industrial Support, Scotland, will be increased by £17,522,000 from £713,689,000 to £731,211,000. An additional £8,500,000 is allocated to the Trunk Roads programme, £6,460,000 to Scottish Enterprise, £1,530,000 to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, £700,000 to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. and £332,000 to the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.
3. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 5: Housing and Environmental Services, Scotland, will be increased by £260,613,000 from £423,453,000 to £684,066,000. Of this £250,139,000 will be used to increase grant-in-aid provision to Scottish Homes to enable the premature repayment of National Loans Fund debt. There will be a transfer of £9,361,000 from SO/LA2 to enable Scottish Homes to continue to improve housing quality within Scotland and provide assistance to Housing Associations for the purpose of acquiring stock from local authorities and new towns. £1,109,000 of the cash limit increase will be allocated to Historic Scotland of which £1,009,000 relates to an increase in provision for Historic Building repair grants, £54,000 to reflect part take-up of entitlement to end-year flexibility for running costs as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report*, columns 698-702) and £55,000 to reflect a transfer of functions from Class XV, Vote 19. There is also a small increase of £4,000 to meet an unanticipated shortfall in Appropriations-in-Aid from repayments of loans and grants by first-time buyers.
4. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 12: Law, Order, Miscellaneous Health and Social Work Services, Scotland, wil be increased by £2,326,000 from £247,302,000 to £249,628,000. This includes an increased allocation to the Scottish Prison Service to bring forward a number of capital projects and take-up in full of £520,000 running costs and £803,000 End-Year Flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July (Official Report, Cols. 698-702).
5. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 13: Education, Arts and Libraries, Scotland, will be increased by £400,000 from £262,615,000 to £263,015,000. The additional resources will assist special schools and Jordanhill school with buildings expenditure.
6. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 16 Scottish Record Office will be increased by £258,000 from £3,871,000 to £4,129,000 for the take-up of end-year felxibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 (Official Report, Cols. 698-702) and a transfer of £27,000 from Property Holdings.
7. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 19, Scottish Office Administration will be decreased by £1,375,000 from £152,875,000 to £151,500,000.
8. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 17, The Registrar General for Scotland will be decreased by £560,000 from £7,912,000 to £7,352,000. This reduction takes into account the take-up of capital End-Year Flexibility entitlements amounting to £640,000 as announced by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992 (Official Report, Cols. 698-702).
9. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 20: Revenue and rate support grants, Scotland will be decreased by £431,000 from £3,506,200,000 to £3,505,769,000.
10. The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 25: Hospital, Community Health, Family Health (Part) and Other Health Services, Scotland will be increased by £12,033,000 from £2,601,445,000 to £2,613,478,000, for increased capital expenditure and also in respect of the part of an NHS Trust's charges that reflects the

Trust's liability to remunerate its capital debt to the Consolidated Fund. In addition there will be transfers from this Vote of £6,408,000 to class XV Vote 15 (to take account of changes in the requirements for GP practice fundholders and the external financing limit for NHS trusts) and of £42,000 to class XV Vote 12; and a transfer to this Vote of £47,000 from class XIII, Vote 3.

11. The non-voted cash limit SO/LA1, which covers non-housing capital expenditure by local authorities, is to be increased by £31,462,000 from £622,125,000 to £653,587,000. This increase reflects £20,850,000 of Special Measures (including Water, Transport, Education, Police and Social Work) and take-up in full of £10,612,000 capital End-Year Flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July (*Official Report*, Columns 698-702.
12. The non-voted cash limit SO/LA2, which covers housing capital expenditure by local authorities and capital expenditure by New Towns, is to be increased by £23,704,000 from £267,981,000 to £291,685,000. This increase reflects allocation of £20,000,000 additional provision in the measures announced in November and take-up of £13,065,000 End-Year Flexibility as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992. It also takes account of the transfer of £9,361,000 to Vote 5 (see 3. Above).

The change to the overall Scottish Office running costs limit will be a decrease of £774,000 from £287,346,000 to £286,572,000.

The increases represented by these changes will be charged to the Reserve or offset elsewhere and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those local authorities which operate a total disregard scheme in relation to housing benefit for *(a)* both war disablement and war widows' pensions *(b)* war disablement pensions only, *(c)* war widows' pensions only, and *(d)* those authorities which do not operate a total disregard scheme for either category; if he will publish a table showing the annual cost of running each scheme to the local authority expressed (i) in actual terms and (ii) as a per capita cost to the population in that area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

A £10 statutory disregard of war widows' and war disablement pensions applies across the income-related benefits. Local authorities also have a discretionary power to enhance this disregard at their own expense in calculating entitlement to housing benefit and community charge benefit. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

The data requested on these local schemes has been compiled from the latest information from local authorities for the financial year 1990-91, together with the latest population figures from the 1991 census, and is listed in the tables. It is not possible to break down the annual cost between war disablement and war widows' pensions.

Local authorities which operate a total disregard scheme in housing benefit for both war disablement and war widows' pensions

Local authority	*Cost of scheme* £	*Annual per capita cost* £
Aberconwy	14,032	0·26
Aberdeen	167,439	0·82
Amber Valley	34,464	0·31
Angus	37,555	0·40
Annandale	23,217	0·63
Arfon	2,050	0·04
Argyll-Bute	[1]—	—
Arun	1,726	0·01
Ashfield	31,472	0·29
Ashford	43,073	0·47
Badenoch	2,489	0·23
Banff and Buchan	39,915	0·47
Basingstoke	50,838	0·36
Bassetlaw	22,254	0·22
Bearsden and Milngavie	2,989	0·07
Berwickshire	10,022	0·52
Birmingham	58,184	0·06
Blackpool	13,811	0·10
Blaenau Gwent	2,646	0·04
Boston	24,805	0·47
Bracknell	31,060	0·33
Bradford	48,316	0·11
Braintree	86,454	0·75
Brent	23,596	0·10
Brentwood	[1]—	—
Brighton	37,864	0·28
Broxbourne	24,148	0·30
Broxtowe	34,290	0·33
Burnley	10,962	0·12
Caithness	[1]—	—
Calderdale	[1]—	—
Cannock Chase	4,820	0·06
Cardiff	[1]—	—
Carlisle	71,481	0·72
Carrick	9,409	0·11
Castle Point	27,578	0·33
Ceredigion	15,262	[2]—
Charnwood	4,055	0·03
Chelmsford	63,085	0·42
Cheltenham	7,081	0·08
Cherwell	33,739	0·29
Chesterfield	9,853	0·10
Chiltern	18,686	0·21
Christchurch	20,591	0·51
Clackmannan	23,540	0·49
Clydebank	73,548	1·61
Clydesdale	21,144	0·37
Colwyn	[1]—	—
Congleton	20,747	0·25
Copeland	37,560	0·53
Cotswold	38,886	0·53
Coventry	45,550	0·16
Craven	14,674	0·30
Crewe & Nantwich	22,495	0·22
Cumbernauld (DC)	[1]—	—
Cumbernauld (Kils)	8,404	0·13
Cumnock & Doon	13,939	0·33
Cunninghame	83,004	0·61
Dacorum	2,674	0·02
Dartford	34,045	0·43
Daventry	10,757	0·17
Delyn	4,152	0·06
Dumbarton	30,432	0·39
Dundee	117,578	0·71
Dunfermline	56,890	0·45
Dwyfor	2,764	0·10
Ealing	84,383	0·32
East Cambridgeshire	1,267	0·02
East Devon	24,602	0·21
East Dorset (Wimborne)	20,219	0·26
East Hertfordshire	25,295	0·22
East Kilbride	3,653	0·04
East Kilbride (DC)	32,748	[2]—
Eastleigh	35,494	0·34
East Lothian	50,649	0·60
Eastwood	7,383	0·12
East Yorkshire	38,066	0·45
Eden	1,509	0·03
Edinburgh	229,339	0·55

Local authority	Cost of scheme £	Annual per capita cost £
Ellesmere Port	24,157	0·31
Elmbridge	65,740	0·60
Epping Forest	3,013	0·03
Epsom and Ewell	16,555	0·25
Erewash	3,683	0·04
Etterick and Lauderdale	17,787	0·52
Falkirk	72,854	0·52
Forest Heath	21,871	0·38
Forest of Dean	5,285	0·07
Gedling	11,099	0·10
Gillingham	8,605	0·09
Glanford	[1]—	—
Glasgow	777,683	1·17
Glenrothes	31,516	[3]—
Gloucester	4,995	0·05
Glyndwr	1,246	0·03
Gordon	15,444	0·20
Gosport	54,349	0·75
Great Yarmouth	9,432	0·11
Guildford	9,672	0·08
Hackney	127,507	0·78
Halton	[1]—	—
Hamilton	405,806	3·86
Hammersmith	92,884	0·68
Harborough	5,950	0·09
Harlow	[1]—	—
Harrow	45,752	0·24
Hart	20,344	0·26
Hartlepool	25,916	0·29
Hereford	18,847	0·38
Hertsmere	27,998	0·33
High Peak	4,087	0·05
Hillingdon	78,211	0·35
Hinckley & Bosworth	16,744	0·18
Horsham	3,496	0·03
Hounslow	55,386	0·29
Hove	47,913	0·58
Huntingdon	6,043	0·04
Hyndburn	[1]—	—
Inverclyde	[1]—	—
Inverness	[1]—	—
Ipswich	51,152	0·44
Irvine (DC)	10,124	[3]—
Isles of Scilly	[1]—	—
Islington	17,349	0·11
Islwyn	16,482	0·25
Kennet	637	0·01
Kilmarnock	41,484	0·52
Kincardine and Deeside	17,853	0·33
Kingswood	4,748	0·05
Kirklees	210,785	0·57
Kyle and Carrick	5,552	0·05
Lambeth [1]—	—	
Lancaster	35,705	0·28
Langbaurgh	12,890	0·09
Leicester	[1]—	—
Lewes	15,030	0·18
Lewisham	138,665	0·64
Lichfield	[1]—	—
Liverpool	223,418	0·50
Livingston (DC)	26,245	[3]—
Llanelli	4,166	0·06
Lochaber	6,392	0·33
Luton	6,907	0·04
Macclesfield	50,084	0·34
Maidstone	59,698	0·45
Maldon	29,749	0·59
Mansfield	3,039	0·03
Medina	68,524	0·98
Melton	3,480	0·08
Mendip	41,437	0·43
Merton	144,047	0·89
Mid Bedfordshire	22,442	0·21
Midlothian	34,265	0·43
Mid Suffolk	15,096	0·20
Mid Sussex	17,225	0·15

Local authority	Cost of scheme £	Annual per capita cost £
Milton Keynes	7,584	0·04
Mole Valley	50,617	0·65
Monklands	[1]—	—
Montgomery	5,927	[2]—
Moray	29,847	0·36
Motherwell	76,749	0·54
Nairn	8,818	0·83
Neath	5,269	0·08
Newark	15,519	0·15
Newbury	32,362	0·24
Newcastle under Lyme	27,219	0·23
Newham	123,361	0·62
Nithsdale	25,720	0·45
Northampton	86,150	0·48
Northavon	17,234	0·13
North Bedfordshire	[1]—	—
North Cornwall	7,713	0·10
North East Derby	12,530	0·13
North East Fife	24,608	0·37
North Hertfordshire	45,744	0·42
North Kesteven	4,070	0·05
North Shropshire	11,875	0·23
North Tyneside	137,017	0·73
North Warwickshire	[1]—	—
North West Leicestershire	2,293	0·03
North Wiltshire	40,928	0·37
Nottingham	219,914	0·84
Nuneaton	32,948	0·29
Oadby and Wigston	13,400	0·26
Ogwr	47,574	0·36
Orkney	4,035	0·21
Perth and Kinross	48,030	0·39
Peterborough	14,424	0·10
Plymouth	43,840	0·18
Purbeck	5,511	0·13
Radnor	1,268	[2]—
Redbridge	61,067	0·28
Redditch	27,011	0·35
Reigate and Banstead	72,856	0·63
Renfrew	150,442	0·76
Rhuddlan	30,230	0·56
Richmondshire	3,035	0·07
Richmond upon Thames	41,868	0·27
Rochester on Medway	45,906	0·32
Rochford	12,278	0·17
Ross and Cromarty	24,776	0·50
Rossendale	35,112	0·55
Rother	14,491	0·18
Roxborough	21,136	0·60
Rugby	2,917	0·04
Runnymede	37,896	0·53
Rushcliffe	4,751	0·05
Rushmoor	22,402	0·28
Rutland	9,360	0·29
Ryedale	11,873	0·13
Salford	247,222	1·13
Sandwell	181,950	0·65
Scottish Homes	243,237	[3]—
Scunthorpe	[1]—	—
Sedgefield	2,778	0·03
Sefton	146,667	0·52
Selby	26,854	0·30
Sevenoaks	22,104	0·21
Shetland	6,272	0·28
Skye & Lochalsh	1,570	0·13
Slough	45,271	0·46
Solihull	69,864	0·36
South Bedfordshire	7,319	0·07
South Buckinghamshire	5,138	0·09
South Cambridgeshire	37,222	0·32
South Derbyshire	579	0·01
Southend on Sea	90,120	0·59
South Herefordshire	6,091	0·12
South Holland	26,422	0·40
South Lakeland	26,107	0·26
South Northamptonshire	12,582	0·18

Local authority	Cost of scheme £	Annual per capita cost £
South Oxfordshire	5,449	0·04
South Ribble	34,609	0·35
South Shropshire	4,686	0·12
South Staffordshire	21,041	0·20
South Tyneside	23,794	0·16
Southwark	14,858	0·08
South Wight	39,074	0·69
Spelthorne	53,744	0·62
Staffs Moorlands	15,164	0·16
St. Albans	24,326	0·20
Stewartry	9,888	0·42
St. Helens	124,627	0·71
Stirling	43,968	0·56
Stockport	[1]—	—
Stoke on Trent	9,638	0·04
Stratford on Avon	26,650	0·26
Strathkelvin	21,909	0·26
Stroud	26,411	0·24
Suffolk Coastal	1,366	0·01
Surrey Heath	28,227	0·36
Sutherland	4,065	0·31
Sutton	26,980	0·16
Swale	29,935	0·26
Tameside	151,136	0·71
Tamworth	49,129	0·71
Tandridge	22,896	0·31
Tendring	52,723	0·42
Test Valley	40,041	0·40
Tewkesbury	20,229	0·23
Thanet	[1]—	—
The Wrekin	[1]—	—
Three Rivers	30,366	0·41
Tower Hamlets	3,248	0·02
Trafford	42,529	0·21
Tweeddale	3,555	0·23
Vale of White Horse	21,579	0·20
Wakefield	7,297	0·02
Walsall	15,306	0·06
Waltham Forest	104,801	0·52
Wandsworth	40,348	0·17
Wansbeck	4,147	0·07
Wansdyke	[1]—	—
Watford	6,896	0·10
Waverley	[1]—	—
Welwyn Hatfield	32,306	0·35
Western Isles	26,518	0·90
West Lothian	36,140	0·25
Westminster	40,190	0·22
West Oxfordshire	10,629	0·12
West Wiltshire	50,309	0·48
Wigtown	[1]—	—
Winchester	27,308	0·29
Windsor and Maidenhead	[1]—	—
Wirral	157,414	0·49
Working	40,761	0·49
Workingham	5,237	0·04
Wolverhampton	124,899	0·52
Woodspring	4,213	0·02
Worthing	18,470	0·20
Wycombe	75,965	0·49

Local authorities which operate a total disregard scheme in housing benefit for war disablement pension only

Local Authorities	Cost of scheme £	Annual per capita cost £
Bath	14,968	0·19
Blaby	2,706	0·03
Blackburn	68,617	0·52
Bolton	60,587	0·24
Bromley	53,819	0·19
Bury	37,167	0·22
Cambridge	26,972	0·27
Corby	[1]—	—
Doncaster	39,852	0·14
Dudley	93,332	0·31
East Staffordshire	15,267	0·16
Exeter	22,599	0·22
Grimsby	253	0.00
Hambleton	10,470	0·13
Havering	5,588	0·02
Middlesbrough	13,641	0·10
Newport	25,354	0·20
Oldham	27,343	0·13
Ribble Valley	2,647	0·05
Southampton	8,017	0·04
South Somerset	54,011	0·39
Stevenage	19,761	0·27
Stockton on Tees	6,386	0·04
Torbay	31,912	0·26
Torfaen	16,341	0·19
Tunbridge Wells	[1]—	—
Vale Royal	31,663	0·29
York	1,429	0·01

Local authorities which operate a total disregard scheme in housing benefit for war widow's pension only

Local authority	Cost of scheme (£)	Annual per capita cost (£)
Castle Morpeth	[1]—	—
Chester	14,267	0·12
Kirkcaldy	108,432	1·62
Monmouth	20,455	0·27
Thurrock	[1]—	—

[1] Denotes details of cost of scheme not provided by local authority.
[2] Denotes per capita cost calculation not possible because Ceredigion, Radnor and Montgomery include some areas where housing benefit is administered by the Development Board for Rural Wales.
[3] Denotes per capita cost calculation not possible because 1991 census figures are not yet available.

Local authorities which do not operate a total disregard scheme in housing benefit for either war disablement or war widows' pensions

Adur
Allerdale
Alnwick
Alyn and Deeside
Aylesbury Vale
Babergh
Barking
Barnet
Barnsley
Barrow in Furness
Basildon
Basildon (DC)
Berwick upon Tweed
Beverley
Bexley
Blythe Valley
Bolsover
Boothferry
Bournemouth
Breckland
Brecknock
Bridgnorth
Bristol

Broadland
Bromsgrove
Camden
Canterbury
Caradon
Carmarthen
Chester le Street
Chichester
Chorley
City of London
Cleethorpes
Colchester
Corby New Town
Crawley
Croydon
Cynon Valley
Darlington
Derby
Derbyshire Dales
Derwentside
Dinefwr
Dover
Durham
Easington
Eastbourne
East Hampshire
East Lindsey
East Northampton
Enfield
Fareham
Fenland
Fylde
Gateshead
Gravesham
Greenwich
Haringey
Harrogate
Hastings
Havant
Holderness
Kensington and Chelsea
Kerrier
Kettering
Kingston upon Hull
Kingston upon Thames
Knowsley
Leeds
Leominster
Lincoln
Lliw Valley
Malvern Hills
Manchester
Meirionnydd
Merthyr Tydfil
Mid Devon
Newcastle upon Tyne
New Forest
North Devon
North Dorset
North Norfolk
Norwich
Oswestry
Oxford
Pendle
Penwith
Poole
Portsmouth
Port Talbot
Preseli
Preston
Reading
Restormel
Rhondda
Rhymney Valley
Rochdale
Rotherham
Rural Wales
Salisbury
Scarborough
Sedgemoor
Sheffield
Shepway
Shrewsbury and Atcham
South Hams
South Kesteven
South Norfolk
South Pembrokeshire
Stafford
St. Edmundsbury
Sunderland
Swansea
Taff-Ely
Taunton Deane
Teesdale
Teignbridge
Telford
Thamesdown
Tonbridge and Malling
Torridge
Tynedale
Uttlesford
Vale of Glamorgan
Warrington
Warrington DC
Warwick
Waveney
Wealden
Wear Valley
Wellingborough
West Devon
West Dorset
West Lancashire
West Lindsey
West Norfolk
West Somerset
Weymouth and Portland
Wigan
Worcester
Wrexham Maelor
Wychavon
Wyre
Wyre Forest
Ynys Môn

Sight Tests

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people had sight tests in all health board areas for which figures are available in *(a)* the last 12-month period for which figures are available and *(b)* in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 February, 1993]:* The information requested for each of the financial years from 1987-88 to 1991-92 is shown in the table. Information for the period October 1991 to September 1992, the last full 12-month period for which information is available, is shown separately in the table.

Numbers of NHS sight tests[1] in Scotland by Health Board area

Health Board	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90[2]*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992*
Argyll and Clyde	95,153	98,926	30,636	39,703	46,243	48,096
Ayrshire and Arran	80,202	85,746	34,754	34,606	38,236	39,902
Borders	16,123	17,981	7,176	5,240	6,316	7,163
Dumfries and Galloway	29,324	31,007	11,761	11,336	13,637	14,704
Fife	72,534	76,854	24,821	28,556	34,049	35,453
Forth Valley	54,525	58,847	26,276	18,426	21,637	22,354
Grampian	96,777	108,592	30,582	33,367	36,977	39,129
Greater Glasgow	237,924	252,843	131,605	110,697	122,878	128,436
Highland	36,185	36,599	15,841	13,091	15,476	16,073
Lanarkshire	119,371	119,307	47,680	47,983	56,269	58,527
Lothian	162,353	176,902	74,531	56,682	66,297	69,096
Orkney	2,674	2,972	862	873	1,034	1,156
Shetland	7,000	7,069	2,808	2,420	2,834	2,700
Tayside	83,680	90,498	28,103	28,132	32,642	34,802
Western Isles	4,320	4,467	2,043	1,773	2,073	2,035
Scotland Total	1,098,145	1,168,610	475,479	432,885	496,598	519,626

[1] One person may have more than one sight test in the period.
[2] Since 1 April 1989 free NHS sight tests have been available only to children, full-time students under 19, those in receipt of income support or family credit, the registered blind and partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate from the health benefits unit, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers, and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers. Information is not collected on private sight tests.

EMPLOYMENT

Maternity Leave

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will review the maternity leave provisions to take account of *(a)* very premature birth of a baby of low birth weight, *(b)* multiple birth and *(c)* combination of *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill gives all women, irrespective of length of service or hours of work, the right to 14 weeks' statutory maternity leave. Women with premature babies or multiple births will benefit from this right in the same way as other women.

Employment Training

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people resident in the area in which East Lancashire training and enterprise council operates are engaged on employment training and employment action; and what proportion they represent of the total number of eligible people.

Mr. McLoughlin: At December 1992, the latest date for which information is available, for the area covered by East Lancashire TEC (ELTEC) it is estimated that there are 1,200 people in training on employment training and 221 employment action participants. Information on the number of eligible people is not available.

Health and Safety Executive

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of persons, full-time equivalent, in each grade for each section of the Health and Safety Executive in the north-west for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Available information about staffing in HSE's Field Operations Division, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and North West areas is given in the table for 1 April 1991, 1 April 1992, and 1 January 1993. Figures for earlier years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Greater Manchester

Grade	*1 April 1991*	*1 April 1992*	*1 January 1993*
Senior executive officer	1	1	1
Higher executive officer	1	1	2
Executive officer	3	3	4
Administrative officer	14·5	16	14
Administrative assistant	8	9	11
Typing manager	1	1	—
Typist	11	9	9
Personal secretary	4	3·5	3
Support grade band 2	1	1	—
Superintending inspector factories	1	1	1
Deputy superintending inspector factories	2	2	2
Inspector class 1A	7	7	6
Inspector class 1B	13	10·5	12·5
Inspector class 2	9	8	8
Superintending specialist inspector C	1	1	1

Grade	1 April 1991	1 April 1992	1 January 1993
Principal specialist inspector	6	7	5
Specialist inspector	11	11	9
Senior scientific officer	1	1	1
Higher scientific officer	1	1	1
Scientific officer	—	1	2
Assistant scientific officer	2	1	—
Senior inspecting officer	1	1	1
Higher professional technological officer	2	1	1
Senior employment medical adviser	1	1	1
Employment medical adviser	1·5	1·5	2·5
Senior employment nursing adviser	1	1	—
Employment nursing adviser	1	2	2
Ward sister (SRN)	1	—	—
TOTAL	107	103·5	100

North West

Grade	1 April 1991	1 April 1992	1 January 1993
Higher executive officer	1	1	1
Executive officer	2	2	3
Administrative officer	9	9·5	10·5
Administrative assistant	8	6·5	7·5
Typing manager	1	1	1
Typist	6·5	6	5·5
Personal secretary	2	2	2
Support grade band 1	1	1	1
Support grade band 2	0·5	0·5	0·5
Superintending inspector factories	1	—	—
Deputy superintending inspector factories	1	1	1
Inspector class 1A	5	5	5
Inspector class 1B	7·5	8·5	11
Inspector class 2	9	12	10
Specialist inspector	2	—	1
Senior employment medical adviser	1	1	—
Employment medical adviser	1	1	1
Employment nursing adviser	1	1	2
Deputy chief inspector agriculture	—	1	1
Principal agricultural inspector	1	1	1
Agricultural inspector	5	7	7
Assistant agricultural inspector	2	2	3
Inspector of quarries	1	—	1
TOTAL	68·5	70	76

Merseyside

Grade	1 April 1991	1 April 1992	1 January 1993
Higher executive officer	1	1	1
Executive officer	3	2	4
Administrative officer	9	8	10
Administrative assistant	5	8·5	4·5
Typing manager	1	1	1
Typist	7	8	8
Personal secretary	2	2	2
Support grade band 2	—	1	1
Superintending inspector factories	1	—	1
Deputy superintending inspector factories	1	1	1
Inspector class 1A	6	6	6
Inspector class 1B	13	11·5	11·5
Inspector class 2	10	10	10
Specialist inspector	1	—	1
Senior employment medical adviser	1	1	1
Employment medical adviser	0·5	2	2
Employment nursing adviser	1	2	2
Ward sister (SRN)	1	—	—
Principal agricultural inspector	1	1	1
Agricultural inspector	3	2	2
Assistant agricultural inspector	2	3	1
TOTAL	69·5	71	71

Unemployment Benefit Disqualification

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Barnsley, Central.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Eric Illsley, dated 4 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Barnsley Central area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the official total of unemployed for December 1992 were self-employed immediately before registering as unemployed.

Mr. McLoughlin: No information is available in respect of the claimant count. Estimates from the summer (June to August) 1992 labour force survey indicate that there were 275,000 people in Great Britain unemployed on the international standard ILO definition (not seasonally adjusted) who reported their employment status in their last job as self-employed. This represents 9·8 per cent. of total unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many vacancies in the shipbuilding and manufacturing engineering sectors have been *(a)* notified to and *(b)* filled through the Newcastle area job centres in each year since 1987; and how many people were (i) employed and (ii) seeking employment in those sectors in the Newcastle area in each of those years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the total numbers of people seeking employment, regardless of their current employment status, is not available.

The information requested on vacancies can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Information on the numbers employed is available only for the years 1987, 1989 and 1991 and can also be obtained from the NOMIS database there.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in the Cheshire area in *(a)* September 1990, *(b)* September 1991 and *(c)* September 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: On the unadjusted basis, there were 23,518 unemployed claimants in the county of Cheshire in September 1990, 34,916 in September 1991 and 38,655 in September 1992.

Redundancies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contingency planning is undertaken by the Employment Service concerning large-scale redundancies.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Nicholas Brown, dated 4 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about what contingency planning is undertaken by the Employment Service concerning large-scale redundancies. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

My Jobcentre managers get advance warnings of major redundancies and will contact the employer and offer appropriate support.

We try to get involved as soon as possible in major redundancies and will normally approach the employer as soon as there is reason to believe our help is needed. We can offer a wide range of help and facilities to redundant workers, including a job placing service, special jobshops and benefit advice, depending on the actual requirements of the people and companies concerned.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Redundancies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the numbers of redundancies involved in each of the six largest cases of company closures in each of the last four years *(a)* in Newcastle and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Opportunity 2000

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what conclusions and evaluations of the Opportunity 2000 initiative have been made; and what plans she has to ask training and enterprise councils to report to her on their plans for increasing child care provision and training for 1993-94.

Mr. McLoughlin: Opportunity 2000 is not an Employment Department initiative and arrangements for its formal evaluation are those for Business in the Community to make. However, the lessons learnt so far have been that issues concerning people returning to the labour market, who are predominantly women, are being addressed in a positive and constructive way. An increasing number of employers are realising the important contribution that women make towards economic growth and stability.

TECs are required to support, where necessary, the child care costs of those in the youth training guarantee group and may make similar help available to those entering the new adult programme, Training for Work.

From 1 April 1993 TECs will also be able to apply for a new child care grant. The purpose of the grant is for TECs, working closely with other agencies, such as local authorities and schools, to promote, set up and run after-school childcare provision.

TECs will continue to be monitored by my Department, as they have been since their introduction.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of enterprise allowance claimants are still pursuing the business for which they received an allowance a year after the allowance was exhausted in *(a)* each region, *(b)* each TEC and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will update the information given in her answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns 718-19; and if she will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following list shows the appointments my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made since 28 October 1992. Information on the political affiliation of appointees is not kept on record.

Name of Body/Board: Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).
Type of Appointment: Chairman (full-time).
Period of Appointment: From 19 February 1993 to 31 January 1995.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
(i) Broad practical experience of industrial relations;
(ii) Should have a reputation for integrity and an ability to secure agreement on complex issues through negotiations.
Current Remuneration: £65,000 per annum.

Name of Body/Board: Certification officer for trade unions and employers' association.
Type of Appointments: Certification officer.
Period of Appointment: From 6 October 1992 to 5 October 1995.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications: None specified, but experience in industrial relations is the main criterion.
Current Remuneration: £29,820-60 (part-time).

Name of Body/Board: Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.
Type of Appointment: Commissioner.
Period of Appointment: From 26 November 1992 to 25 November 1995.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications: Qualified barrister, has served as a Magistrate, and was a part-time chairman of industrial tribunals for ten years.
Current Remuneration: £239 per day.

Name of Body/Board: Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities (CEPDs).
Type of Appointment:
(i) Chairmen[1].
(ii) Members ([1]see note below).
Period of Appointment:
7 May 1992 to 31 March 1994.
25 June 1992 to 31 March 1994.
3 July 1992 to 31 March 1994.
19 October 1992 to 31 March 1994.
18 January 1993 to 31 March 1994.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
Chairmen should have good personal skills in influencing people in order to make a major contribution to the employment of people with disabilities; should be locally known with good contacts and links with people with disabilities and employers.
Current Remuneration: Nil.
[1] Information on CEPDs members' appointments is not held centrally and is not readily available. The following details may be of use:
The Employment Service Regional Directors and Directors for Scotland and Wales appoint members of the 60 CEPDs throughout the country, on behalf of the Secretary of State. Each committee can have up to 14 members. The majority of appointments for Chairmen and members were made at the reconstitution of committees for the period from July 1991 to 31 March 1994.

Name of Body/Board: Equal Opportunities Commission.
Type of Appointment: Commissioner (part-time).
Period of Appointment: From 1 January 1993 to 31 July 1993.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
Equal Opportunities Director. Appointees are selected on the basis of their qualifications and experience. They do not represent any particular organisation.
Current Remuneration: £96 per day.

Name of Body/Board: Industrial tribunals (England and Wales) and the Industrial tribunals (Scotland)
Type of Appointment: Lay member.
Period of Appointment:
Members are normally appointed for 3 years and may be eligible for reappointment up to the age of 69. In 1992, 1,457 members were reappointed from 25 October. At the same time an additional 699 new members took up their appointments.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
Practical experience of employee relations in the workplace.
Current Remuneration: £110 per day.

Name of Body/Board: National council for vocational qualifications
Type of Appointment:
Members (8)
Periods of Appointment:
From 9 November 1992 to 30 September 1995 (6)
From 1 December 1992 to 30 September 1995 (1)
From 11 January 1993 to 30 September 1995 (1)
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
The representation of interests on the complete Council is three members for education, eight for employers, one for profession and one for trade unions, plus the chairperson. Appointees are chosen for their knowledge and expertise in the area of representation.
Current Remuneration: Nil.

Name of Body/Board: Wages Council: Perambulator and Invalid Carriage.
Type of Appointment: Deputy Chairman.
Period of Appointment: From 18 January 1993 to 31 December 1995.
Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:
Appointee is Deputy Chairman of the General Waste Materials Wages Council and Third member on both the Retail Trades (Non-food) and the Perambulator and Invalid Carriage Councils.
Current Remuneration: £88 per day.

Name of Body/Board: Women's National Commission (WNC)
The WNC became the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Employment after the General Election of 1992.
Type of Appointment:
(i) Government Co-Chair (1)
(ii) Elected Co-Chair (1)
(iii) Executive Members (10 Elected by members)

(iv) Members (50 Representatives of member organisations)

Period of Appointment:

(i) Two years
(ii) Two years
(iii) One year
(iv) Five years

Appointee's Relevant Qualifications:

The Commission is headed by two co-chairs, one elected by members, one nominated by the Prime Minister. Baroness Denton is currently the Government Co-Chair. While member organisations are approved by Government individual members of the Commission are nominated by those organisations, not personally appointed by Ministers. Of the member organisations three have definite political affiliations. These are:

Labour Party Women's Organisation
Conservative Women's National Committee
Women's Liberal Democrat Party

Current Remuneration: Nil.

Appointments since October 1992

Five new members have been appointed since October 1992 to replace members who have retired from the Commission.

Cash Limits

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes she plans to her Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1992-93.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class VI, vote 1—programmes and central services—will be reduced by £27,510,000 from £2,481,255,000 to £2,453,745,000. This reduction is mainly the net effect of lower than expected levels of expenditure on employment training and employment action programmes partly offset by increases in expenditure elsewhere on the vote, predominantly business and enterprise, training and education support and running costs (mainly for increased costs associated with the internal reorganisation of the Department and increased costs relating to higher volumes of redundancy payments). There is also an increase in expenditure on projects assisted by the European social fund offset by receipts from the European Communities, and transfers between votes.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 2—Employment Service—will be increased by a token £1,000 from £522,682,000 to £522,683,000. This is mainly the result of an increase in running costs which is chiefly in connection with the increased costs of administration of unemployment benefit payments offset by increased receipts from the Department of Social Security and, therefore, the increase will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running cost limit for the Department of Employment, votes 1 and 2, will be increased by £38,484,000 from £1,205,045,000 to £1,243,529,000 for the reasons outlined above.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 3—Health and Safety Commission and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service—will be decreased by £2,071,000 from £196,936,000 to £194,865,000. This is the result of a reduction in running costs provision to help cover increases on vote 1, partly offset by an increase of £150,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry to provide assistance and advice to the Bulgarian Nuclear Safety Authority.

The running costs limit for the Health and Safety Commission will be decreased by £2,056,000 from £151,774,000 to £149,718,000 and the running costs limit for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service will be decreased by £165,000 from £21,467,000 to £21,302,000.

Food Service Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to remedy unfair trade practices in the food service industry, especially in regard to young people or students; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* If the hon. Member has in mind terms and conditions of employment, these are for employers and employees to negotiate and agree subject to any statutory requirements.

HEALTH

HIV

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the most recent findings of the unlinked anonymous monitoring of HIV prevalence in England and Wales; what levels of HIV were found in patients of district general hospitals aged between 16 to 49 years; what projections had been made for this age group; what plans she has to extend anonymous HIV testing among district general hospital patients or to increase prevention activities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The most recent findings from the unlinked anonymised HIV surveys in England and Wales were published in the Public Health Laboratory Services (PHLS) communicable disease report of 1 January 1993, copies are available in the Library.

The results included initial findings from a pilot survey conducted in two London district general hospitals. HIV prevalence in patients aged 16 to 49 attending specialities thought unlikely to be associated with HIV related illnesses was one in 170 for men and one in 600 for women. The great majority of AIDS cases and HIV infection diagnosed in England and Wales has been within this age group.

The results of the surveys indicate that HIV remains a cause for concern and that public education work should continue to draw attention to the risks of HIV infection and how these risks can be reduced. The findings from all elements of the anonymised HIV survey programme will be taken into account in the further development of the HIV prevention strategies.

The Day report published by the PHLS in 1990 included a projection of the incidence of AIDS to the end of 1993, but not HIV infections.

The Medical Research Council is considering proposals from the PHLS to expand the general hospital study.

Mrs. Tracey Evans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, what assessment she has made of the impartiality and thoroughness of the inquiry of the area child protection committee and as to why Mr. Evans was not invited to give evidence or be interviewed.

Mr. Yeo: Government guidance in 'Working Together under the Children Act 1989' explains that the area child

protection committee review is a composite review of the reports of individual agencies, completed following reviews by those agencies to establish:

whether the agency child protection procedures have been followed;

whether the case suggests that there is an urgent need to review those procedures and

whether any other action is needed within agencies.

The area child protection committee does not carry out a direct inquiry and it is not normal practice for it to seek evidence from individuals for this purpose.

Community Care

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library her Department's guidance to local authorities to ensure the provision of human aids to communication during community care assessment procedures for deaf or hard of hearing people.

Mr. Yeo: We fully recognise the importance of communication for people with a hearing impairment. The Department's social services inspectorate and the social work services group of the Scottish Office issued practice guidance on care management and assessment in 1991: "Care Management and Assessment: Practitioners Guide". This document advises local authorities that users and carers should receive every help to speak and act for themselves in the assessment process, including ready access to interpreting services where necessary. Copies are available in the Library. The Department will also be supporting a conference in June for managers in health and social services aimed at improving awareness of the communication needs of people with a hearing impairment.

Head Injury Deaths

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died from head injuries in England and Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of deaths from head injuries (ICD 800-804 and 850-854) in England and Wales, 1980 to 1991

Year	Persons
1980	4,385
1981	3,910
1982	4,064
1983	4,129
1984	4,172
1985	4,065
1986	4,022
1987	4,091
1988	3,856
1989	3,994
1990	4,156
1991	3,754

Condoms

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the Bolton project for the distribution of free condoms, to the rest of England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: There are about 30 similar projects, evaluating the provision of sexual health counselling and free condoms by general practitioners, currently being conducted around England and Wales. In the 1992 "Allocation for HIV and AIDS work" letter (EL(92)18), the Department suggested that health authorities consider using HIV prevention money for such schemes. The Department is keeping in close touch with many of the pilot projects and awaiting further results with interest.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made in the project to distribute free condoms via general practitioners in Bolton.

Mr. Yeo: This project is currently the subject of local consultation. It is hoped to begin a pilot scheme on 1 April 1993. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of Bolton family health services authority, Mr. A. J. Pettengell, for details.

Hospital Patients

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in directly managed units and trusts *(a)* from NHS purchasers and *(b)* from non-NHS purchasers in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate costs.

Hospices

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total government funding to voluntary hospices in the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The Government greatly appreciate the contribution which the voluntary hospice movement makes to the provision of specialised care and support for the terminally ill and their families. Our commitment to the movement has been shown by the allocation of funds to regional health authorities to enable them to increase their support.

In 1988-89, and 1989-90, there were one-off payments to voluntary hospices. Funds were allocated to the hospice movement, through the charity 'Help the Hospices' as a one-off award to help hospices facing financial dificulties. In 1988-89, payments were made to help with the costs of nurses' pay awards. Since 1990-91, the Government have allocated funds annually to regional health authorities specifically to enable them to increase the support they give to voluntary hospices. Since 1991-92, funds have also been provided to ensure the supply of drugs to hospices without charge.

Funding since 1988 is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	1·4
1989-90	0·4
1990-91	8·0
1991-92	20·2
1992-93	38·2
1993-94	42·9

Dentists (North Devon)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many adult and child patients have been de-registered by their dentists for national health service treatment in north Devon to date;

(2) how many dentists in North Devon have become private practitioners since the alteration to their contracts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about numbers of patients de-registered by dentists has been collected only since 3 July 1992. By 22 January 1993, 11,491 adults and 272 children were reported by Devon FHSA as de-registered by their dentist. On 1 July 1992 there were 514,766 adults and 156,443 children registered by Devon FHSA. By 30 November, the latest date available, these totals were 511,987 and 167,228 respectively.

Information on the number of dentists who have become private practitioners since the alteration to their contracts is not held centrally.

Monkton Nursery, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column 723, what representations she has received about Monkton nursery, Liverpool; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have received 13 letters from the hon. Member on behalf of his constituents. The Department's social services inspectorate is making inquiries about the matter.

Sight Tests (Sandwell)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people had sight tests in Sandwell in each financial year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of National Health Service sight tests paid for in each financial year by the Sandwell family health services authority are shown in the table.

Year	*Number of sight tests*
1987-88	90,020
1988-89	92,230
[1]1989-90	44,830
1990-91	34,860
1991-92	40,570

Note: The Department does not collect information on the number of private sight tests carried out.

[1]From April 1989, NHS sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population. The sight tests paid for in 1989-90 include some conducted prior to 1 April 1989, when sight tests were universally available. The remainder paid for in 1989-90 do not represent a full year under the new system, because of the delay in payments. The figure for 1989-90 is not, therefore, directly comparable with that for 1990-91.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were on waiting lists for under one year, one to two years, and two years or more in March and September of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table. This shows that at September 1992 the number of patients waiting over a year was 60 per cent. lower than in March 1988. In 1991-92 alone, the number of over-one-year waiters fell by almost 90,000. Today, regions no longer have any patients waiting two years or more for any in-patient or day case treatment.

Number of people on waiting lists in the last five years

England In-patients and day cases	*Waiting 0 to 1 year*	*Waiting one to two years*	*Waiting two years or more*
1988			
March	668,300	120,100	87,900
September	680,100	128,100	91,900
1989			
March	699,400	131,100	92,200
September	710,900	130,000	88,100
1990			
March	751,100	127,000	80,900
September	754,800	131,600	71,100
1991			
March	778,500	118,700	51,100
September	789,300	115,000	43,500
1992			
March	837,100	78,900	1,700
September[1]	859,156	80,039	651

[1] Provisional figures from Regional Health Authorities.

Private Beds

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of private beds available in each regional health authority in the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The requested information, which is the latest available, is given in the table.

Number of authorised pay beds in NHS hospitals

Regions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	56	56	78	103	103	105	95	101	96	99	97	97
Yorkshire	140	140	154	182	199	199	193	193	187	192	188	188
Trent	130	130	150	143	143	143	138	136	128	136	136	136
East Anglian	90	90	94	106	106	108	108	108	96	108	108	108
North West Thames	339	339	352	292	292	292	287	285	271	285	283	283
North East Thames	278	278	286	398	404	410	413	411	347	393	411	411
South East Thames	263	263	302	332	337	337	339	341	322	333	333	333
South West Thames	156	156	168	180	182	194	182	180	141	180	180	180
Wessex	99	99	106	117	120	120	116	116	105	115	116	116
Oxford	164	164	180	180	180	180	183	193	188	193	194	194
South Western	78	78	82	102	104	104	104	102	96	100	100	100
West Midlands	181	181	217	258	267	276	273	270	209	281	276	276
Mersey	67	67	92	112	123	123	123	129	123	129	129	129
North Western	170	170	214	231	244	245	243	237	207	233	233	227

Regions	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Special Health Authorities and Boards of Governors	194	194	202	183	183	183	178	178	177	160	178	178
England	2,405	2,405	2,677	2,919	2,987	3,019	2,975	2,980	2,693	2,937	2,962	2,956

Dentistry

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women were eligible for free dental service during pregnancy and one year after the birth of the child, for each of the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

General dental services
Number of expectant or nursing mothers eligible for exemption from NHS dental charges in England

Year	Monthly average number eligible
1981	960,000
1982	940,000
1983	940,000
1984	950,000
1985	980,000
1986	990,000
1987	1,020,000
1988	1,040,000
1989	1,030,000
1990	1,050,000

Note: The numbers of women eligible for free NHS dental treatment during pregnancy and one year after giving birth have been estimated from the monthly number of live and still births in England in the years shown.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnant women/nursing mothers have been exempted from NHS dental charges in each of the last 10 years; what has been the cost of their exemption in each year; and what estimate she has made of the saving to the Exchequer of removing this exemption.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested.

Information on the number and cost of courses of treatment given to expectant and nursing mothers is given in the table.

General Dental Services—England
Number and cost of courses of treatment to expectant and nursing mothers

Year	Number of courses	Cost of courses (£)
1982	885,410	23,590,780
1983	893,290	24,783,350
1984	897,630	27,109,140
1985	910,650	28,889,630
1986-87	976,420	34,162,740
1987-88	986,030	35,021,050
1988-89	1,022,800	39,076,930
1989-90	1,052,010	40,799,800
1990-91[1]	n/a	n/a
1991-92	1,120,283	45,998,319

[1] Data for 1990-91 are not available.

It is not possible to estimate the cost of the exemptions over this period both because the charging regimes have changed many times over the period and because some women will have been able to claim exemption or remission on one or more grounds. This factor affects the interpretation of the table.

No precise estimate has been made of any saving to the Exchequer of removing this exemption.

District Nursing Service, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of the district nursing service in Liverpool.

Mr. Sackville: The management of nursing services in Liverpool is the responsibility of Liverpool health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the authority chairman, Mr. D. H. Tod, for details.

OPCS

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are planned to the cash limits and running costs limits for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 6 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) will be increased by £889,000 from £37,057,000 to £37,946,000 and the running costs limit for OPCS will be increased by £1,568,000 from £46,002,000 to £47,570,000. This reflects the take-up of £504,000 under the end year flexibility arrangements for running costs as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, at columns *697-702;* an increase in running costs provision of £207,000 in respect of a transfer of funds from Property Holdings; and increased running costs provision of £300,000 for work on problems connected with census outputs and increased staff costs which will be partly offset by a decrease in capital provision of £122,000. The increases not offset will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The following increases will also affect the running costs limit; £232,000 in the National Health Central Register area for work on the Department of Health's National Health Service number programme and additional research work; £325,000 for the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission. There will also be increases in capital provision of £25,000 for the National Health Central Register and £66,000 for the Parliamentary Boundary Commission. These increases will be offset by an increase in appropriations in aid on the OPCS vote and met from within the existing resources of the Department of Health (class XIII, vote 3) and the Home Office (class IX, vote 3) and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Cash Limits

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made to the cash limits and the running costs of her Department in 1992-93.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 1 (Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England) will be increased by £28,278,000, from £18,509,508,000 to £18,537,786,000. This increase covers additions of £42,116,000 for entitlements to carry over underspends under the end year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, at columns *697-702*. The increase also covers transfers from class XIII, vote 3 (Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) of £8,302,000 (£4,316,000 for work of the valuation office; £1,750,000 in respect of an adjustment in HIV funding; £871,000 for day and domiciliary care; £613,000 for the British National Formulary and Drugs and Therapeutic Bulletin; £390,000 in respect of the National Health Service Estates and Health Building Agency; £307,000 for the National Health Service Supplies Authority and £55,000 for the Association of Community Health Councils) and £351,000 for class IV, vote 2 (Department of Trade and Industry: support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration) for licence fees for use of the radio spectrum. These increases are partly offset by transfers of £22,308,000 to class XIII, vote 4, (Family health services (part) national health service trusts external financing, etc., England) for an increase in the national health service trusts' aggregate external financing limit; of £146,000 to class XIII, vote 3 (£110,000 for oral polio vaccines and £36,000 for the Special Hospital Service Authority) and £37,000 to class XVI, vote 5 (Tourism, roads and transport, other environmental services (including civil defence), education, arts and libraries and health and personal social services, Wales) for career registrars.

The cash limit class XIII, vote 3 (Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be reduced by £3,277,000 (from £821,523,000 to £818,246,000). This reduction allows for transfers £8,302,000 to class XIII, vote 1; £130,000 to class XI, vote 2 (Department for Education higher and further education) for the conversion of social work training courses; £47,000 to class XV, vote 25 (Hospital and community health services, family health (part) and other health services, Scotland), £23,000 to class XVI, vote 8 (Hospital and community health, family health services (part) and related services, Wales); £13,000 to the Department of Social Services, Northern Ireland in respect of the NHS Estates Management and Health Building Agency and £62,000 to class XIV, vote 4 (Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services) in respect of Departmental administration. The overall reduction is partly offset by £3,929,000 for the take-up of entitlements to carry over underspends under the end year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, at columns *697-702* (capital £2,655,000 and departmental running cost of £1,264,000); the transfer of increased provision of £422,000 from class VIII, vote 7 (Department of the Environment Property Holdings and central support services); civil accommodation and administration, etc) in respect of club subscription charges; transfer of £146,000 from class XIII, vote 1; transfer of £45,000 from class VI, vote 1 (Department of Employment: programmes and central services) for advice on alcohol in the workplace and £758,000 transferred from class XIV, vote 4 (Department of Social Security: administration and miscellaneous services) mainly for printing costs, departmental administration, computer systems and for costs in respect of Age Concern.

The Department's gross running cost limit will be reduced by £2,627,000 from £269,236,000 to £266,609,000. This reflects the take-up of £1,264,000 end year flexibility on running costs, offset by the net effect of transfers mentioned above.

All increases will either be offset by savings or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Children Act 1989

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress made in implementing the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Yeo: I am pleased to be able to announce that my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have today submitted our first joint report to Parliament on the Children Act in operation in England and Wales. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The report, which contains a full description of the operation and achievements of the Act, highlights a number of striking and encouraging features. Overall, local authorities are to be commended for their generally positive response to their new duties under the Act and in particular for the way in which their child care interventions have become more sharply focused, with more children remaining at home with their own families.

In line with the intentions of the Act, I can report that:

(i) almost 3,000 or approximately 50 per cent. fewer emergency orders were made in the first year giving authority for the removal of a child at home;

(ii) there has been a substantial fall in the number of children entering compulsory care. Some 1,600 were subject to a compulsory care order under the Children Act in the first year compared with nearly four times as many under similar orders previously;

(iii) some 5,000 or 10 per cent. fewer children were being looked after by local authorities at the end of March compared with a year before.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the names and addresses of limited companies set up by general practitioner fund holders in the last three years;

(2) how much has been paid from public funds, in real terms to limited companies set up by general practitioner fund holders *(a)* individually and *(b)* in total in the years 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(3) if she will list the names of general practitioner fund holders who have been invited to return money from the limited companies to the national health service or risk losing their fund-holding status; which of them have been asked to return sums *(a)* between £50,000 and £100,000 and *(b)* over £100,000; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department to regional health authorities about speculative investment in the property market.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are not allowed to invest speculatively in the property market. In certain circumstances, they may acquire land by agreement and manage and deal with land in order to make more income available to the health service. Departmental guidance is given in "Property Transactions in the NHS" which specifically prohibits investment in property and land dealing markets.

Surgery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what independent evaluation she has made, and proposes to make, of the costs and benefits of reduction and elimination of long wait elective surgery cases; and if she will publish such a study at appropriate intervals.

Mr. Sackville: None. Waiting times have improved dramatically under this Government and we are determined to build on this success. Since 1987 we have provided a waiting time fund totalling nearly £200 million which has enabled additional long-wait patients to be treated from waiting lists. The introduction of the waiting time guarantee under the patients charter means that for the first time patients do not have to face an interminable wait for treatment.

Social Work Training

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the development and implementation of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work post-qualifying framework for social work training; what has been spent so far; how many post-qualifying awards have been made to date; and how many it is expected will be made within the next 12 months.

Mr. Yeo: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) is in the process of developing a framework for post-qualifying education and training social work, with funding provided by the Government. A five-year implementation plan commenced in 1991-92 as part of the overall Government training strategy.

The framework will be implemented by 30 regionally-based consortia composed of educational institutions and employing agencies in the statutory and independent sectors. Fifteen of these have been established and the others are in the process of being established. It is anticipated that United Kingdom-wide coverage will be completed by mid-1993 and that they will have completed their development work by mid-1995.

Expenditure by CCETSW on the development and implementation of the new arrangements in England, Wales and Northern Ireland between 1989-90 and 1992-93 amounts to £1·2 million.

CCETSW anticipates that 40 awards will be made in 1993-94 and that thereafter numbers will increase considerably.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement setting out the cost, the date, address and reasons for the decision of the Mersey regional health authority recently to purchase a flat in Liverpool; and if she will indicate the number of occasions upon which that property has been used so far, by whom, upon what dates, and for what purposes.

Mr. Sackville: I understand the Mersey regional health authority recently purchased a flat from its endowment funds. It is used to accommodate visitors for whom the region would otherwise have to meet hotel costs. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Professor Breckenridge, chairman of Mersey RHA, for further details.

Retinopathy of Prematurity

86. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *481*, when she expects to complete her discussions with those professional bodies concerned with conducting research studies into retinopathy of prematurity;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *481*, if she will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the College of Ophthalmologists on the care of retinopathy of prematurity;

(3) pursuant to her answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *481*, if she will estimate her Department's total expenditure since 1980, at constant prices, on research into the cause and treatment of retinopathy of prematurity.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* I have today placed in the Library copies of the guidelines on the care of retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) drawn up by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and College of Ophthalmologists.

Discussions between departmental officials, professional bodies and researchers about research studies into ROP, referred to in my earlier reply of 22 January at column *481*, will be completed shortly. Funding has currently been earmarked for a suitable research proposal. The Department has not hitherto commissioned any research into ROP over the period in question.

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many former miners have been affected by pneumoconiosis in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.
This is a matter for British Coal.

DHA Mergers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authority amalgamations are already taking place; and if she will list them.

Mr. Sackville: Ministers have approved the following nine district health authority mergers to come into effect from 1 April 1993:

West and East Suffolk District Health Authorities;
Lewisham and North Southwark, Camberwell and West Lambeth District Health Authorities;
Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings District Health Authorities;
Kingston and Esher and Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton Health Authorities;
Aylesbury, Wycombe and Milton Keynes District Health Authorities;
Hull and East Yorkshire District Health Authorities;
Grimsby and Scunthorpe District Health Authorities;
Calderdale, Dewsbury and Huddersfield Health Authorities;
Pontefract and Wakefield District Health Authorities.

WALES

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what benefits will accrue to Wales from the proposals to establish an environmental protection agency jointly covering the Principality and England.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The proposed new Environment Agency will report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on its activities in the Principality and will unify the key regulatory pollution control functions affecting air, land and water; provide a strong independent voice influencing the adoption of better environmental standards and practices; and help industry by reducing the number of regulators and ending overlaps between them. There will be an appropriate presence by the agency in Wales, for it to be accessible to the public and to those it will regulate in the Principality.

Special Needs Pupils

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children with special educational needs have entered segregated special schools at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary level in every local education authority area of Wales in each of the last five years; and how many pupils at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school level in each area have attended special schools during the same period.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of children with special educational needs entering special schools each year is not collected centrally.

Information on the number of full-time pupils who attend special schools is provided in the series of publications entitled 'Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools', Section 1, table 1.10, for previous years up to and including 1990-91. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Youth and Community Work

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from the Welsh Association of Full-time Youth and Community Workers over the level of provision for their work on education and development.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Environmental Managers Network Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress made in his Department's scheme to establish in Wales an environmental managers network programme in conjunction with the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the launch in July 1992, 87 companies have joined the Welsh environmental managers network, and membership has increased at a steady pace. Of these, 21 are from north Wales, 7 are from south-west Wales, 40 from south-east Wales and 19 from mid Wales.

A mini-launch of the network in conjunction with the Development Board for Rural Wales took place on 20 January 1993, in Newtown, Powys. Since that date membership in the mid Wales region has increased from two to 19. All inquiries for membership in mid Wales will be routed through the Development Board for Rural Wales. A list of members is displayed in the Library of the House, and brought up to date at three-monthly intervals.

A470

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the improvements to the A470 between Betws-y-Coed and Blaenau Ffestiniog are to be commenced; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: These improvements are planned for the medium and long term and thus not expected to start before April 1995.

Health Service Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that the numbers of administrative and managerial grade staff employed in the national hospital service does not exceed the numbers of medical consultants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. The required employees for any grade in the national health service must be as is appropriate for the provision of the best health care for patients.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the latest conclusions of the sub-group on internal management submitted to the Welsh consultative council on local government reform.

Mr. David Hunt: I expect shortly to receive a report from the sub-group. This will be considered by the Consultative Council on Local Government at its next meeting. A copy of the final report will be placed in the Library of the House.

"Environmental Digest for Wales"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the next edition of his Department's environmental digest for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The seventh edition of the 'Environmental Digest for Wales' is due to be published on 31 March 1993.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 30 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns 866-908; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. David Hunt: Information is not collected about the political affiliations, if any, of appointees. Although these are public and well known in some cases, in other cases they are either not known at all or are known only on a private basis.

As the updated information requested is some 50 pages in length, I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Certificate of Education

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from educational organisations and schools regarding the future of the certificate of education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Representations have, so far, been received from the Welsh joint education committee and four secondary schools. I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 2 February 1993.

Youth and Community Services

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount spent as a percentage of their budget by each local authority in Wales on youth and community services for young people and adults in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the table.

Expenditure on youth and community services as a percentage of all revenue expenditure[1]

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Clwyd	0·61	0·66	0·62	0·60	0·61	0·61	0·56	0·55	0·55	0·57	0·57	0·55
Dyfed	1·14	1·06	1·02	1·11	1·12	1·06	1·01	0·99	0·95	0·78	0·79	0·89
Gwent	1·24	1·21	1·27	1·37	1·43	0·67	0·66	0·68	0·72	0·77	0·67	0·75
Gwynedd	0·47	0·49	0·54	0·59	0·64	0·78	0·94	0·95	0·86	0·87	0·58	0·81
Mid Glamorgan	1·18	1·14	1·08	1·15	1·13	1·22	1·61	1·60	1·38	0·84	0·90	1·14
Powys	0·82	0·84	1·21	1·51	1·54	1·38	1·34	1·31	1·38	1·67	3·87	2·67
South Glamorgan	1·55	1·30	1·14	1·24	1·28	1·30	1·19	1·14	1·11	1·37	1·25	1·78
West Glamorgan	0·99	0·92	0·89	0·93	0·90	0·85	0·86	0·79	0·77	0·74	0·77	0·78

[1] Calculated using outturn information reported by local authorities for gross revenue expenditure on employees, running expenses, debt charges and revenue contributions to capital. Definitions changed in 1990-91; hence figures for this year are not strictly comparable with those for earlier years.

HLCA (Gwynedd)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances in Gwynedd; and how many of those are located in severely disadvantaged areas.

Mr. David Hunt: Some 2,900 claimants in Gwynedd currently receive hill livestock compensatory allowance. Of these, some 1,900 have land located in the severely disadvantaged areas.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the net farm income for sheep and sheep and cattle farms in severely disadvantaged areas, in both nominal and real terms since 1978.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of net farm income based on the results of the farm business survey are provided in the table. Year-on-year comparison can best be made by reference to the indices shown in the table which are based on the results from a constant sample of farms.

Net Farm Income in Welsh SDAs

	Hill and upland cattle and sheep				*Hill and upland sheep*			
Year	*Nominal price* £	*Real price* £	*Nominal Index*	*Real Index*	*Nominal price* £	*Real price* £	*Nominal Index*	*Real Index*
1978-79	7,358	19,363	84	181	6,867	18,071	104	189
1979-80	4,082	9,493	47	89	2,871	6,676	43	69
1980-81	6,222	12,200	67	107	5,877	11,523	92	124
1981-82	7,770	13,632	119	171	8,808	15,453	130	157
1982-83	6,746	11,059	100	134	6,242	10,233	100	113
1983-84	6,649	10,389	93	119	8,598	13,434	132	142
1984-85	7,658	11,430	96	117	9,740	14,537	201	206
1985-86	8,353	11,765	112	129	7,943	11,188	138	133
1986-87	9,348	12,805	113	127	9,792	13,414	153	144
1987-88	12,491	16,435	138	149	9,380	12,342	144	130
1988-89	8,489	10,611	178	181	8,328	10,410	204	175
1989-90	10,881	12,507	109	102	9,468	10,883	135	107
1990-91	8,680	9,137	83	71	10,804	11,373	122	88
1991-92	13,457	13,457	155	126	16,540	16,540	153	105

Note: Real prices and real indices are based on 1989-1992 = 100.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what independent studies and evaluation exercises he has undertaken of the deprivation factor in the calculation of the health spending formula in the different health authorities in Wales;

(2) what consultations he has had with the Welsh health authorities on the variation of the capitation formula for procurement and primary health care to correspond to variations in deprivation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A review of the relationship between morbidity, social deprivation and health care needs was carried out for the Welsh Office by Dr. Roy Carr Hill of the University of York Centre for Health Economics in 1990. Dr. Carr Hill's report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, helped to inform my right hon. Friend's decision, following consultation with health authorities, on the structure of the weighted capitation formula for health authority revenue allocations in Wales. The House was informed of this on 21 March 1991, at columns 178-80.

Copies of the relevant consultation paper, "Implementing the White Paper: Options for a Weighted Capitation Revenue Resource Allocation Formula", are in the Library of the House. The treatment of social deprivation is amongst the issues examined in the paper.

My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he is willing to review the formula used in Wales if agreed methods can be devised to distinguish the effects of higher levels of sickness and social deprivation on the relative resource needs of health authorities in Wales.

The Welsh Office will be examining the 1991 census data now becoming available to see how this impacts upon the formula shares of health authorities in Wales. It has also invited Mid Glamorgan health authority to submit a research proposal to examine further how the effects of social deprivation might be reflected specially in the formula and how this might be weighted compared to the overall "sickness factor" currently used. Subject to the research proposal satisfying other authorities and academic referees, central funding towards such research will be considered.

General Practices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current estimate of the number of general practices in Wales with *(a)* no female general practitioner in the practice, *(b)* a part-time only female general practitioner, *(c)* a full-time female general practitioner but not in partnership and *(d)* other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information relates to partnerships and single-handed practitioners. Of the 550 in Wales as at 1 April 1992 there were:

(a) 281 which had no female practitioner;

(b) 42 which had one female part-time practitioner;

(c) 11 female practitioners who practised as single-handed doctors;

(d) 216 partnerships which had at least one full-time female practitioner.

The information provided relates to principals, unrestricted and restricted, in general practice. Information relating to the number of female trainees and assistants in general practice has not been included, as the data required at individual partnership level is not readily available.

Waste Incinerator (South Glamorgan)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the emissions from the waste incinerator stack.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the prime regulatory responsibility for incinerators such as that operated by South Glamorgan health authority at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff rests with the local district council. I understand that Cardiff city council is in close contact with the health authority about the cause of the recent emission problems and how these may be remedied.

Welsh Development Agency (Chairman)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column 887, what activities he undertook prior to the placing of the advertisement for the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to secure a suitable field of candidates; and what recruitment consultants he has hired to assist in the process.

Mr. David Hunt: Quite a lot; none.

Hospital Doctors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current estimate of the number of full-time equivalent *(a)* consultants, *(b)* senior registrars, *(c)* registrars and *(d)* junior hospital doctors employed in the national health service in Wales; and what were the equivalent figures for the years 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information for 1990 and 1991 is given in the table. No estimate of the position in 1992 can yet be made. This can be compared with the figures for 1979.

	Medical staff in post as at[1]		
	30 September 1979	*30 September 1990*	[2]*30 September 1991*
Consultants	614·1	826·5	839·7
Senior registrars	112·8	138·7	143·8
Registrars	321·6	357·1	352·4
Junior hospital doctors[3]	669·6	898·2	866·2

[1] Whole-time equivalents excluding locum staff and hospital dental staff.
[2] Provisional.
[3] House officers and senior house officers.

School Governors (Ring-binder Contracts)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 51, if he will give the cost of each of the two ring-binder contracts for school governors under local management of schools.

Mr. David Hunt: Twenty-two thousand five hundred and seventy-two pounds, and £13,925.

Valleys Initiative (Leaflet Contract)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of the valleys initiative leaflet contract.

Mr. David Hunt: The values of the six contracts for the production of leaflets on the programme for the valleys were: £22,028·25; £10,360·00; £4,639·67; £3,279·00; £3,050·00 and £1,513·40.

County Councils (Expenditure)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount he proposes to transfer to each of the Welsh county councils equivalent to the present expenditure on the independent living fund.

Mr. David Hunt: Successor arrangements to the independent living fund announced on 24 November by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will involve local authorities working in partnership with the new fund to help people of working age with the most severe disabilities to live independently in the community. The sums within local authorities' standard spending assessments for 1993-94 attributable to their enhanced responsibilities under these arrangements are as follows:

	£ thousands
Clwyd	230
Dyfed	192
Gwent	253
Gwynedd	130
Mid Glamorgan	308
Powys	65
South Glamorgan	231
West Glamorgan	205
Total	1,614

Revenue Support Grant (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his assumptions in relation to capital receipts in his revenue support grant announcement for local authorities for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I have, as in previous years, made certain assumptions in relation to capital receipts in the revenue support grant calculations, including those set out in the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 (HC 412) in note 1(d)(v) to table 1.2 on page 13 and in note (f)(vi) to table 1.5 on page 19. All assumptions have been agreed with the local authority associations.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average weekly earnings of *(a)* women and *(b)* men in Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is available from the new earnings survey (part A or E), an annual publication produced by the Employment Department. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was personal income per head in Wales in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest available information is for 1990 when the average personal income per head of population in Wales was £7,236.

Melrose Centre, Shotton

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Clwyd county council social services division, Melrose centre, Shotton to meet the user groups.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend has plans to do so at present.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5th February 1993

EDUCATION

Primary Schools

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines the Government issue on the optimum size of primary schools.

Mr. Forth: The Government have issued no guidelines on the optimum size of primary schools.

Universities, Wales

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what formula will be used in determining the proportion granted to the Wales higher education funding council of the Department for Education budget for universities.

Mr. Boswell: The expenditure programmes of the Department and the Welsh Office were adjusted at the time of the 1992 autumn statement to take account of the changed responsibilities for the funding of universities. Adjustments of this kind are only one component of the public expenditure survey process leading to a decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales about the funds available for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Schools Inspectors

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools is making towards maintaining a register of those competent to lead inspection teams.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for Ofsted; I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to my hon. Friend.

Key Stage 1

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children aged seven years in each local education authority area are allowed to proceed beyond key stage 1, level 3.

Mr. Forth: Every child at the end of key stage 1 who has demonstrated through the statutory assessments that he or she has reached the targets for level 3 should be taken on by his or her teachers to the targets appropriate for the next level. The following table indicates by LEA the percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 1 in 1992 who reached level 4.

Key stage 1: Testing 7 year olds in 1992 — *England*

Percentages of pupils who have reached level 4

	English Level 4 Per cent.	*Mathematics Level 4 Per cent.*	*Science Level 4 Per cent.*	*Technology Level 4 Per cent.*
Camden	0·7	0·1	0·1	0·0
Greenwich	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
Hackney	0·8	0·0	0·1	0·0
Hammersmith	0·6	0·2	0·0	0·0
Islington	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·1
Kensington and Chelsea	0·4	0·1	0·0	0·0
Lambeth	1·1	0·1	0·3	0·4
Lewisham	0·5	0·0	0·0	0·0
Southwark	0·6	0·0	0·2	0·0
Tower Hamlets	0·7	0·0	0·1	0·5
Wandsworth	0·1	0·0	0·3	0·0
Westminster	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Barking	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Barnet	0·6	0·1	0·1	0·0
Bexley	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Brent	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Bromley	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Croydon	0·5	0·0	0·1	0·0
Ealing	1·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Enfield	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Haringey	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
Harrow	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Havering	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Hillingdon	0·3	0·0	0·2	0·0
Hounslow	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Kingston upon Thames	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
Merton	1·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
Newham	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Redbridge	0·3	0·0	0·1	0·1
Richmond upon Thames	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sutton	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Waltham Forest	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Birmingham	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·0
Coventry	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Dudley	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sandwell	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·1
Solihull	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

	English Level 4 Per cent.	Mathematics Level 4 Per cent.	Science Level 4 Per cent.	Technology Level 4 Per cent.
Walsall	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0
Wolverhampton	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Knowsley	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Liverpool	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
St. Helens	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sefton	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·0
Wirral	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Bolton	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Bury	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Manchester	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Oldham	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Rochdale	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Salford	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0
Stockport	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Tameside	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Trafford	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Wigan	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Barnsley	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Doncaster	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Rotherham	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sheffield	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Bradford	0·5	0·1	0·1	0·0
Calderdale	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Kirklees	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1
Leeds	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
Wakefield	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Gateshead	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Newcastle Upon Tyne	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
North Tyneside	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0
South Tyneside	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sunderland	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0
Avon	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Bedfordshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Berkshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Buckinghamshire	0·4	0·1	0·1	0·0
Cambridgeshire	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·0
Cheshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Cleveland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Cornwall and Isles Scilly	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Cumbria	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Derbyshire	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Devon	0·5	0·0	0·0	0·0
Dorset	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Durham	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
East Sussex	0·5	0·0	0·0	0·0
Essex	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Gloucestershire	0·2	0·1	0·0	0·0
Hampshire	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Hereford and Worcester	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Hertfordshire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Humberside	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Isle of Wight	0·5	0·3	0·5	2·5
Kent	0·3	0·0	0·1	0·0
Lancashire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Leicestershire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Lincolnshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Norfolk	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
North Yorkshire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Northamptonshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Northumberland	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0
Nottinghamshire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Oxfordshire	0·4	0·1	0·0	0·0
Shropshire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Somerset	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
Staffordshire	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Suffolk	0·3	0·0	0·2	0·0
Surrey	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
Warwickshire	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
West Sussex	0·5	0·0	0·1	0·0
Wiltshire	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·2

Special Educational Needs

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring in legislation to give parents of children with special needs the right to state a preference for their child's school from amongst local education authority special or ordinary schools, grant-maintained schools and schools run by a recognised charity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill, currently before Parliament, significantly extends the rights of parents of children with special educational needs over the school their child should attend. It enables parents of children with special educational needs to express a preference for the maintained school which should be named in a statement or to make representations in favour of a non-maintained or independent school. In all cases, if the local education authority does not comply with the parents' wishes, parents may appeal to the special educational needs tribunal, whose rulings will be binding.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish for each local education authority the number of appeals made against statements of special educational need; and what is the estimated cost of running the appeals system in each local education authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide information on the staffing and other costs which go to making up his estimate of setting up the tribunal system for hearing appeals about statements of special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: We shall be consulting on the details of the tribunal's establishment and procedures. Initial estimates are based on the Department's own experience of staffing and administrative costs in handling appeals and reflect consultation with other Departments which sponsor tribunals.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Smoking

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if consideration will be given to reviewing the policy on smoking within the Palace of Westminster, following the recent case involving Stockport council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 1 February at column *64*.

Abbreviated Automatic Dialling

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee on what date abbreviated automatic dialling to the European Commission ceased; and when it will be restored.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The only disruption of the abbreviated dialling system for the European Commission occurred recently when its telephone number was changed without notice. The new number was encoded as soon as it was known. Extra numbers have now been added; and a revised list of European institution exchanges accessible by abbreviated dialling will be circulated as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken in his Department to implement the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1993.

Mr. Atkins: None. The enactment cited is not extant in Northern Ireland.

Population

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures expressed in numbers and as a percentage of relevant population.

Mr. Hanley: The information is set out in the tables. It is the same as that which I provided to the hon. Gentleman in my letter of 18 November 1992, a copy of which was placed in the Library. Electoral registration figures for 1993-94 will not be available until the new register is published on 15 February. Mid-year population estimates for 1992 will not be available until the summer.

Table A: Parliamentary Constituences

Constituency	*Column 1: estimated population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991)*	*Column 2: registered electors (1992-93 Register, qualifying date 15 September 1991)*	*Column 2 as a percentage of Column 1*
Belfast East	54,655	53,375	97·7
Belfast North	54,931	55,587	101·2
Belfast South	55,368	52,556	94·9
Belfast West	54,960	55,280	100·6
East Antrim	64,621	63,739	98·6
East Londonderry	78,930	76,912	97·4
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	70,489	71,472	101·4
Foyle	77,264	75,970	98·8
Lagan Valley	76,053	73,688	96·9

Constituency	Column 1: estimated population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991)	Column 2: registered electors (1992-93 Register, qualifying date 15 September 1991)	Column 2 as a percentage of Column 1
Mid Ulster	71,186	70,410	98·9
Newry and Armagh	68,837	68,716	99·8
North Antrim	71,096	70,217	98·8
North Down	70,201	69,604	99·1
Strangford	71,468	69,855	97·7
South Antrim	71,334	68,292	95·7
South Down	78,592	77,371	98·4
Upper Bann	68,675	68,422	99·6
Total	1,158,660	1,141,466	98·5

Table B: District Council Areas

District Council	Column 1: estimated population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991)	Column 2: registered electors (1992-93 Register, qualifying date 15 September 1991)	Column 2 as a percentage of Column 1
Antrim	32,678	30,227	92·5
Ards	49,086	49,089	100·0
Armagh	37,019	36,222	97·8
Ballymena	42,671	42,091	98·6
Ballymoney	17,725	17,610	99·4
Banbridge	24,704	24,891	100·8
Belfast	212,332	209,126	98·5
Carrickfergus	24,683	24,527	99·4
Castlereagh	48,405	47,505	98·1
Coleraine	38,000	37,138	97·7
Cookstown	21,581	21,637	100·3
Craigavon	54,855	54,520	99·4
Derry	64,643	63,309	97·9
Down	41,656	40,656	97·6
Dungannon	31,854	32,354	101·6
Fermanagh	38,636	39,112	101·2
Larne	22,536	22,318	99·0
Limavady	20,608	19,282	93·6
Lisburn	72,538	69,472	95·8
Magherafelt	25,391	25,611	100·9
Moyle	10,700	10,509	98·2
Newry and Mourne	57,870	58,207	100·6
Newtownabbey	56,057	55,155	98·4
North Down	55,272	54,464	98·5
Omagh	31,889	30,973	97·1
Strabane	25,271	25,319	100·2
Total	1,158,660	1,141,324	98·5

HOME DEPARTMENT

Satellite Television

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received from those members of the public who have paid for de-coders which enable them to receive a satellite programme called "Red Hot Dutch."

Mr. Jack: None have so far been addressed to the Home Office.

Obscene Publications Act

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with groups representing women, parents, children, the police, the legal profession, the churches and the retail trade about reform of the Obscene Publications Act 1959; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We receive frequent representations both from groups and from individuals on the subject of obscenity and are aware of the concern which is felt in many quarters. The application of the Obscene Publications Act is kept under constant review and we are currently considering, in consultation with the police, the Crown prosecution service and other Government Departments, whether any changes in practice might be made to improve the enforcement of the law.

Sri Lankan Refugees

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of Sri Lankan refugees seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom on 25 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 31 December 1992, around 4,450 applications by Sri Lankan citizens, excluding dependants, for asylum in the United Kingdom were awaiting a decision. Specific information for 25 January 1993 is not available.

Police, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis indicating the change in the number of police officers available for service in the London borough of Greenwich in each of the last two years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 29 December 1992 the policing strength within the London borough of Greenwich was recorded as 261 and for the same date in 1991 it was 281. Between these dates the method of manpower recording changed. There has, in fact, been no reduction in the number of police officers available for operational duty.

Customs Barriers

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take action to ensure that the removal of customs barriers between Great Britain and continental EC countries does not lead to a flood of automatic weapons being brought into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All European Community states are bound by the EC weapons directive, which came into effect on 1 January 1993. Under the directive the possession of automatic firearms is prohibited throughout the Community.

Also under the directive, movements of other firearms are subject to a new licensing system. As before, anyone purchasing a firearm in another EC state must have prior permission from the police to bring it into the United Kingdom. But in addition to this, notice of each transfer of a firearm to this country will now be sent to my Department via a new Community-wide information system. The information will be passed to police and customs officers who will investigate any apparent irregularities.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's current policy on the protection of Mr. Salman Rushdie from terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It remains the policy that protection should be provided where it appears appropriate in the operational judgment of the chief officer of police. In Mr. Rushdie's case decisions on the level of police protection to be provided are a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Female Prison Officers

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prison officers are employed in prisons in the United Kingdom; and how they are deployed throughout the service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of December 1992, there were 1,967 female prison officers employed in prison service establishments in England and Wales—41 principal officers, 126 senior officers and 1,800 officers. A total of 682 were employed in female establishments, 1,124 in male establishments and 161 in dual-sex establishments.

Beckard Pollitzer Ltd.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his decision to contract out the warehouse and distribution function of the supply and transport branch of his Department to Beck and Pollitzer Ltd.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to her question on 4 February.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision has been made for compensation to be payable to Beck and Pollitzer should his Department withdraw from the contracting out of supply and transport functions of the Home Office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No provision has been made for compensation to be paid to Beck and Pollitzer.

Prison Service Dog Section

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to market-test the prison service dog section; what consideration he has given to the applicability of the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison dog service is one of the candidates in my Department's current market testing programme. Work on this project is due to commence on 8 March. As part of it we will be considering the applicability of the TUPE regulations.

Mr. Bashir Uddin

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider compensation to Mr. Bashir Uddin following his acquittal of assault at the Inner London Crown court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: If Mr. Bashir Uddin applies to the Home Office, his application will be carefully considered in accordance with the current relevant arrangements for the payment of ex-gratia compensation which were described by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) on 29 November 1985 at column 691-92.

Safer Cities Programme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grant aid budget those safer cities projects due to close in March 1994 have for the financial

year 1993-94; how much of this each project has already committed; and what money is available within each project for new initiatives.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* Each of the 16 projects due to close in March 1994 has £100,000 available in grant funding in 1993-94 to support local crime prevention schemes. The records of approved schemes held at the Home Office show the following amounts already committed and still available for initiatives. Plans to use uncommitted expenditure may already be at a fairly advanced stage locally.

Project	*Amount committed (£ thousand)*	*Amount available from £100,000 (£ thousand)*
Birmingham	42·1	57·9
Bradford	32·1	67·9
Bristol	0·0	100·0
Coventry	92·9	7·1
Hartlepool	108·6	0·0
Hull	96·9	3·1
Islington	0·0	100·0
Lewisham	54·6	45·4
Nottingham	76·4	23·6
Rochdale	21·4	78·6
Salford	80·7	19·3
Sunderland	12·5	87·5
Tower Hamlets	35·0	65·0
Wandsworth	31·5	68·5
Wirral	56·0	44·0
Wolverhampton	50·3	49·7

In addition, each of these projects has access to further funds in 1993-94 from a central pool of £500,000 which has been set aside to assist the development locally of continuing structures for the maintenance of multi-agency crime prevention work.

Immigration

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of individuals who are given work permits are eventually given leave to remain indefinitely.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* In recent years, the number of acceptances for settlement after four years employment with a work permit has represented around 12 to 14 per cent. of the total number of non-trainee work permits (both for long and short-term employment), issued four years previously.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Benefits Agency's decision not to pay income support to the Woolwich constituent national insurance No. PW130335D following the decision by the social security appeal tribunal on 28 October 1992.

Mr. Burt: I understand that Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency has already replied directly to the hon. Member, advising that the independent adjudication officer intends to appeal to the commissioner about his constituent's case.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures estimating, on the same basis as estimates made in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", the cost of a split retirement scheme in which the basic pension is payable at age 60 years and SERPS at age 65 years assuming an alignment of contracting-out terms with the new pension ages, giving figures for *(a)* 2015, *(b)* 20205, *(c)* 2035 and *(d)* 2045.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table.

Year	*Cost (£ million)*
2015	600
2025	600
2035	400

Notes:
1. Figures given at 1990-91 prices.
2. Information for 2045 not available.
3. Figures refer to net public sector borrowing requirement cost.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 2015, *(c)* 2025, *(d)* 2035 and *(e)* 2045 of abolishing national insurance contributions for men aged 60 to 65 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The cost in income foregone to the national insurance fund of abolishing the employee national insurance contributions for men aged 60 to 65 would be as follows:

Year	*Cost £ million*
1993-94	600
2015	800
2025	900
2035	900
2045	800

Notes:
1. Figures given in 1993-94 prices.
2. 1·5 per cent real earnings growth assumed.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of the training provided to *(a)* benefits inquiry line staff and *(b)* adjudication officers working on disability living allowances and attendance allowance, including the dates and duration of training courses provided on these benefits; what percentage of the annual training budget for these benefits has already been spent; and what plans he has to increae this budget in real terms in the financial year 1993-94 and in subsequent years.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January, col. 218-19]:* The chief executive has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 4 February 1993.

I wrote to you on 18 January in reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social

Security concerning the training provided to Benefits Enquiry Line (BEL) staff and adjudication officers working on Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance. In that letter I said that I would write to you again with details of the dates of the training for BEL staff.

Training courses for the BEL operators were held for the whole of April 1991 to June 1991, when BEL was initially set up. Courses were subsequently held on the following dates:

1 October 1991 to 31 October 1991 (condensed course)
11 November 1991 to 31 December 1991
1 July 1992 to 31 July 1992 (condensed course)
10 August 1992 to 18 September 1992
12 October 1992 to 20 November 1992
7 December 1992 to 8 January 1993 (condensed course)

Courses will continue to be held as new operators are taken on.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the successful prosecutions undertaken at the Crown court for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 during 1992 and in 1993 to the most recent practicable date together with the sentences imposed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is presently only available for the period 1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992 and this is given in the following table. I will arrange for the information covering the period 1 April 1992 to 31 January 1993 to be made available once it has been checked for accuracy.

Successful prosecution action taken by HSE Inspectorates in the Crown Court, 1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992

Company	*Crown Court*	*Date of hearing*	*Sentence* £
Ashby Demolition	Knightsbridge	2 January 1992	7,500
Sansoms (Newport) Ltd.	Newport	6 February 1992	2,500
Caird Environmental Ltd.	Birmingham	23 March 1992	50,000
Fletchers Bakeries Ltd.	Sheffield	25 March 1992	10,000

Pit Closures

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the costs of redundancy payments to those who are likely to lose their jobs in related industries as a result of the intended pit closures announced on 13 October 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: It has not yet been determined which pits are to close, and it is therefore quite impossible to attribute consequential job losses to particular closures. It cannot be estimated what redundancy entitlements, if any, affected employees might have.

Overseas Qualifications

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish the conclusions of her Department's investigation into the recognition of overseas qualifications held by adults; when the conclusion will be implemented; and how they will be funded.

Mr. McLoughlin: The first diploma directive, 89/48/EEC, was implemented in the United Kingdom in April 1991, covers degree qualifications and is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry. The second diploma directive, 92/51/EEC will cover those qualifications awarded on completion of higher education courses of up to three years duration and equivalents including national and Scottish vocational qualifications. Both directives will allow individuals to have their qualifications recognised when seeking employment in another member state, in an occupation regulated according to the directives.

The Employment Department has responsibility for the second diploma directive and represented the United Kingdom interest in negotiations towards its adoption by the European Council in June 1992. The directive is due to be implemented in member states' law by June 1994.

Work Permits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list for the last five years the number of applications for work permits that are *(a)* categorised as tier 1 applications and *(b)* categorised as tier 2 applications;

(2) if she will list for the last five years *(a)* the number of tier 1 applicants for work permits and *(b)* the number of tier 2 applicants for work permits and the outcomes of these applications;

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The two-tier procedure for making work permit applications was introduced in October 1991, together with changes in the way applications are recorded. The following table shows for the last five years the number of applications received for categories of permit now dealt with under the two-tier procedure.

	Number
1988	28,295
1989	34,784
1990	40,065
1991[1]	37,086
1992	32,789

[1] Changes made to the arrangements for recording applications.
Note: Over this period on-average approximately 50 per cent. of these applications were approved.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Right to Silence

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the law on the right to silence and the implications in child cruelty cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have received three letters from Members of Parliament and one from a member of the public regarding the right to silence and its implications in child cruelty cases.

As regards my views on the general issue, I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 18 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *4*. I do not advocate creating special arrangements for specific categories of offences.

R. *v.* Uddin

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set up a full inquiry into the accuracy of information that the Crown prosecution service gave to defence lawyers in the recent case of R. *v.* Uddin in the Inner London crown court.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on the 27 January 1993 at column *708*. A full explanation has been provided by the branch Crown prosecutor in a letter to solicitors acting on behalf of Mr. Uddin and I do not consider that any further inquiry is necessary. As I stated in my answer to the hon. Member for Leyton, a copy of the letter containing this explanation has been placed in the Library.

WALES

Education

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings he or his departmental officials had recently with representatives of county councils in Wales to discuss the current and projected levels of educational provision managed by councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance (WCCLGF) and its settlement working group (SWG) are the appropriate fora for discussions with local authorities on local government finance issues. I chaired meetings of WCCLGF on 26 November and 12 January. My officials met officers from local authorities at a meeting of SWG on 21 December.

Disability (Schools)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of schools in each area in Wales have been adapted for the use of disabled pupils and teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally. Local education authorities are responsible for providing facilities for disabled pupils and teachers at their schools.

Homelessness

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the number of people made homeless in Wales in each of 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what estimate has been made of the percentage in each case made homeless as a result of mortgage repossessions.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is available for those persons accepted as homeless by local authorities and is provided in the following table:

	Persons accepted as homeless	
	Total	*From action by mortgagee Per cent.*
1990	19,675	16
1991	24,025	23
[1]1992	18,021	17

[1] January to September only
Source: Welsh Office local authority returns

Education Funding

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from and what meetings he has held with the parent-teacher associations of Wales about the levels of financial provision for education in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received one representation from a parent-teacher association about levels of financial provision for education in Wales. I have received no request for meetings.

Wind Farms

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish further planning guidelines to authorities on the subject of wind farms in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Following public consultation, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment issued a planning policy guidance note on renewable energy on 3 February 1993.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received on the level of the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from Welsh Members of Parliament, the Welsh farming organisations and individual farmers in respect of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in Wales. I have also recently met representatives from the Welsh farming unions to discuss the matter.

Housing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of Tai Cymru regarding its decision on the designation of development status housing associations operating in *(a)* neighbourhood renewal areas and *(b)* the west of Cardiff;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of Tai Cymru regarding guidelines for the minimum size and number of housing associations with a development role operating in inner city neighbourhood renewal areas.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These are matters for the board of Housing for Wales.

Dolgellau to Bala Road

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the improvements to the Drws-y-Nant section of the Dolgellau to Bala road are to be commenced; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Design work on this scheme is progressing with the intention of commencing the work in 1994 subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made in his Department to implement the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Within Wales, these regulations apply to the small number of employers whose business undertakings might conceivably come within their scope, and to the county councils as part of their emergency planning responsibilities. The Welsh Office has no direct responsibility for their implementation but the Department will be one of the organisations consulted by the county councils under section 4(3) of the regulations.

Goosanders and Cormorants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to issue any licences for the culling of goosanders and cormorants in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 licences may be granted by the Department to kill these birds in order to prevent serious damage to fisheries.

Further Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the colleges of further and higher education in Wales indicating the capacity limit figures for each college and actual numbers of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students during each of the last three academic years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not held centrally on the student capacity of colleges. The number of students at colleges of further and higher education is shown in the table.

(a) Full time[1]

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Colleges of further education[2]			
Aberdare college	312	302	487
Afan college	627	719	814
Barry college of further education	712	850	1,130
Bridgend college	807	814	1,120
Carmarthen college of technology	1,515	1,510	1,682
Ceredigion college of further education	508	483	576
Coleg Glan Hafren	1,138	1,443	1,790
Coleg Glynllifon	38	48	52
Coleg Meirionnydd	303	326	355
Coleg Pencraig	289	384	369
Coleg Powys	812	897	1,033
Crosskeys college	1,550	1,712	2,046
Ebbw Vale college of further education	304	273	307
Gorseinon college	885	1,010	1,169
Gwynedd technical college	1,016	1,102	1,199
Llandrillo technical college	1,487	1,532	1,783
Llysfasi college of agriculture	29	88	226
Merthyr Tydfil college	395	370	437
Neath college	1,323	1,337	1,451
Newport college of further education	827	786	1,098
Pembrokeshire college of further education	655	942	1,105
Pencoed college	31	52	129
Pontypool college	1,072	1,130	1,515
Usk agricultural college[3]	67	52	
Pontypridd college	907	1,027	1,301
Rhondda college	213	216	339
Swansea college	1,486	1,892	2,056
Welsh college of horticulture	175	154	189
Ystrad Mynach college	754	742	880
Colleges of higher education[4]			
Cardiff institute of higher education	3,246	3,415	3,887
Gwent college of higher education	1,601	1,636	1,925
Normal college Bangor of higher education	528	628	760
North East Wales institute	3,217	3,580	4,159
Swansea institute of higher education	1,879	2,031	2,428
Trinity college	691	849	1,071
University of Glamorgan	4,774	5,031	5,948
University of Wales			
Aberystwyth	3,617	3,712	4,171
Bangor	3,328	3,523	4,002
Cardiff	8,279	8,866	9,887
St. David's Lampeter	854	961	1,057
Swansea	5,272	5,639	6,556
College of medicine	950	1,001	1,137
Welsh agriculture college	173	207	323
Welsh college of music and drama	293	312	369

[1] Includes sandwich students.
[2] Includes students following courses of higher education at colleges of further education.
[3] Usk agricultural college merged with Pontypool college in 1991-92.
[4] Includes students following courses of further education at colleges of higher education.

(b) Part time[1]

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Colleges of further education[2]			
Aberdare college	1,209	1,130	1,098
Afan college	1,317	1,402	1,385
Barry college of further education	2,251	2,016	2,136
Bridgend college	3,383	3,299	3,148
Carmarthen college of technology	2,540	2,509	3,368
Ceredigion college of further education	1,204	1,265	1,268
Coleg Glan Hafren	3,470	3,345	3,270
Coleg Glynllifon	75	61	43
Coleg Meirionnydd	520	719	761
Coleg Pencraig	759	654	582
Coleg Powys	4,096	3,313	3,229
Crosskeys college	1,791	2,052	1,745
Ebbw Vale college of further education	2,172	1,516	1,589
Gorseinon college	1,047	1,233	1,097
Gwynedd technical college	2,378	2,141	1,963
Llandrillo technical college	3,927	3,858	4,033
Llysfasi college of agriculture	434	340	319
Merthyr Tydfil college	1,643	1,845	2,060
Neath college	2,839	2,816	3,104
Newport college of further education	3,812	3,820	4,383
Pembrokeshire college of further education	1,386	1,492	1,253
Pencoed college	569	574	523
Pontypool college	2,069	2,071	1,920
Usk agricultural college[3]	394	345	
Pontypridd college	2,880	2,925	2,721
Rhondda college	1,337	1,425	1,317
Swansea college	4,004	3,926	3,841
Welsh college of horticulture	153	134	150
Ystrad Mynach college	1,444	1,718	1,809
Colleges of higher education[4]			
Cardiff institute of higher education	2,877	2,523	2,391
Gwent college of higher education	2,788	2,664	2,834
Normal college Bangor of higher education	115	99	73
North East Wales institute	5,839	5,362	5,113
Swansea institute of higher education	2,060	1,830	1,736
Trinity college	—	—	—
University of Glamorgan	1,485	1,760	2,150
University of Wales			
Aberystwyth	312	301	331
Bangor	278	296	289
Cardiff	1,021	1,203	1,178
St. David's Lampeter	43	51	93
Swansea	453	417	568
College of medicine	170	200	218
Welsh agriculture college	22	—	—
Welsh college of music and drama	213	218	242

[1] Includes evening only, open/distance learning and linked students at colleges of further and higher education but excludes students on continuing education courses at the University of Wales.
[2] Includes students following courses of higher education at colleges of further education.
[3] Usk agricultural college merged with Pontypool college in 1991-92.
[4] Includes students following courses of further education at colleges of higher education.

Milk (Sulphur-35)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how often his Department conducts sampling of the sulphur-35 radioactive content of bulk milk samples near the Trawsfynydd and Wylfa nuclear plants.

Mr. David Hunt: The food science division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food co-ordinates the monitoring for sulphur-35 activity in milk samples from around Trawsfynydd and Wylfa nuclear power stations on behalf of my Department. Milk samples are collected weekly from certain local farms and are bulk tested every quarter.

Monitoring results show that levels found as a result of discharges from Trawsfynydd and Wylfa nuclear power stations are well within international and national guidelines.

This particular monitoring forms part of a comprehensive programme for monitoring radioactivity levels in food and agricultural products in England and Wales. The results are published annually in the "Terrestrial Radioactivity Monitoring Programme" (TRAMP) reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

One-stop Shops

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Reort*, c. 99, if he will give the names of the members of the enterprise and business support working group; when they started work; and when he estimates they will produce an interim report on one-stop shops for business and technology information.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The names of the members are:

Mr. B. Adcock, Council of Welsh Districts
Mr. J. Driscoll, Coopers, Lybrand Deloitte
Mr. P. Fortune, Wales Enterprise
Mr. A. Fretter, Assembly of Welsh Counties
Mr. R. Geldard, Federation of Welsh Chambers of Commerce
Mr. G. Jackson, Development Board for Rural Wales
Ms. B. Pold, Computer Advisory Services
Mr. E. Roberts, Assembly of Welsh Counties
Mr. M. Robinson, National Westminster Bank Plc
Mr. P. Sheldon, South Glamorgan TEC
Mr. M. Thomas, Welsh Development Agency
Mr. J. Troth, North East Wales TEC
Mr. A. Williams, Mid Glamorgan TEC
Mr. T. Withnall, Dependable Packs Ltd.

The Group is chaired by Mr. J. F. Craig, a deputy secretary at the Welsh Office. In addition the following officials of my Department attended the meetings: Mr. C. L. Jones, Mr. M. J. Clancy, Mr. D. T. Richards, Dr. R. J. Loveland.

The group has been asked to produce its report by May 1993.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, c. 99, when the Welsh Office received the request for financial assistance from the Welsh Economic Research Unit.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A request from the South East Wales Economic Forum was first received on 15 May 1992.

Business and Technology Information

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, c. 99, on business and technology information, if he will specify which are the five colleges for which technology audits are being carried out, and which are the three colleges being assisted via the EC STRIDE programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Technology audits are being carried out in the University of Wales colleges of Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Swansea and North Wales, and also in the University of Glamorgan.

The Carmarthenshire college of technology and art; the North East Wales institute of higher education; and the University of Glamorgan have been offered assistance via the EC STRIDE programme.

Health Line Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 February how many calls there have been since 30 November 1992 on Health Line Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Between 30 November 1992 and 29 January 1993 a total of 211 telephone calls were received by Health Line Wales.

Wilprint Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of his departmental printing budget was awarded to the Wilprint Group in the years 1990 to 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The proportion of the departmental printing budget awarded to the Wilprint Group was:

1. Central Printing Budget:
   1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991: All work placed via HMSO
   1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992: 1·2 per cent. of work placed with Wilprint

2. Publicity Budgets (including design and delivery)
   1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991: 10·8 per cent. of work placed with Wilprint
   1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992: 2·3 per cent. of work placed with Wilprint

3. Programme Budgets
   The information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Press Releases

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to issue departmental press releases by electronic mail.

Mr. David Hunt: None, but the matter is kept under review.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each local education authority for each of the last three years the number of appeals made against statements of special educational needs; and what is the estimated cost of running the system in each local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not held centrally on the number of appeals against the provision in a statement of special educational needs which went before a local appeals committee nor of the costs of running the system in each local education authority. However, the number of appeals against statements to my right hon. Friend are shown as follows:

LEA	*Appeals made*			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Gwynedd	[1]2	1	—	—
Clwyd	1	—	2	—
South Glamorgan	[2]4	—	—	—
Powys	[1]1	—	—	—
Dyfed	—	1	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	1	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—

[1] One withdrawn.
[2] Three withdrawn.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Armenia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's response to the recent appeal by the President of Armenia for international emergency aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom gave £450,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at the end of 1992 for their emergency relief work in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. We also contribute through the European Community; Armenia's 38 mecu (£26·4 million) share of the EC's 1·25 becu loan to the FSU for humanitarian needs is currently being drawn down.

The major problem at the moment is getting supplies into Armenia, and we have been working with our partners to overcome these difficulties. Following the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 1 February, an urgent assessment is being undertaken and we have expressed the view that it should concentrate particularly on the political and logistical problems of delivering supplies. The Commission also confirmed its readiness to use part of its emergency humanitarian aid reserve (circa 10 mecu (£7 million) in 1993) for Armenia if needed. Officials of the EC's technical assistance programme, who are in Armenia, are assessing food needs.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the supply of food and medical aid from the European Community to Armenia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* Last winter Armenia received a share of the Community's 250 mecu (£175 million) humanitarian aid grant for the whole of the former Soviet Union. Additionally, an EC loan facility to the value of 38 mecu (£26·4 million) is available to Armenia as a whole, of which the Armenian Government have allocated 36 mecu (£25 million) for food stuffs and 2 mecu (£1·4 million) for medical supplies. The bulk of the supplies have not yet arrived owing to the problems of transportation through neighbouring states.

We have been working with our partners to try to overcome these problems. Following the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 1 February, an urgent assessment is being carried out and we have expressed the view that it should concentrate particularly on the political and logistical problems of delivering supplies. The Commission also confirmed its readiness to use part of its emergency humanitarian aid reserve (circa 10 mecu (£7 million) in 1993) for Armenia if necessary.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the European Community is providing to the care and treatment of Armenian and Azeri refugees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* Last year the Community gave 2 mecu (£1·4 million) of emergency humanitarian aid specifically to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. The EC has also made available a 38 mecu (£26·4 million) loan facility for humanitarian purposes to Armenia as a whole.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the amount of financial aid given to Sri Lanka in each of the last five years; what specific projects this aid was given for; and where in Sri Lanka these projects were to be developed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The amount of aid given to Sri Lanka in each of the last five years is as follows:

Project aid

£ thousand

	Financial aid (excluding ATP)	*Technical co-operation (excluding ATP)*	*Aid and trade provision*	*Programme aid*	*Other technical co-operation*	*Debt relief*	*Humanitarian assistance*	*Total*
1987-88	2,181	6,139	5,496	—	137	—	63	14,017
1988-89	4,848	7,599	7,230	—	42	—	—	19,719
1989-90	5,289	6,968	1,248	—	48	—	78	13,631
1990-91	1,654	9,681	2,845	—	34	—	194	14,409
1991-92	1,658	7,179	591	—	30	—	70	9,528

Source: British Aid Statistics.

This aid was provided for a wide range of projects including:

Project	*Location*
Agriculture and livestock	
Agricultural research scholarship scheme	Country-wide application
Cambridge/Peradeniya veterinary link	Kandy
Audio visual centre, Peradeniya	Kandy
Reading—Ruhuna link	Ruhuna
Peradeniya collaboration project	Kandy
Coconut processing	Country-wide
Grain storage	Country-wide
Draught animal research	Country-wide
Forestry	
Victoria land use mapping project	Central uplands of Sri Lanka
Forestry and land use mapping; management and plantation; forestry research and information	Emphasis on forest conservation and planting in the uplands; some aspects of wider application
Sri Jayawardenepura university	Colombo
Oxford Forestry Institute/Peradeniya	Kandy
Fishing	
Sandskipper	South East coastal zone

Project	*Location*
Ruhuna—Stirling link	Ruhuna
Mahaweli hatchery	Central uplands
Bay of Bengal project	Coastal Sri Lanka
Land development and irrigation	
BGS radial wells project	Country-wide
Energy	
Wood burning stoves	Country-wide
Samanalawewa hydro project	Samanalawewa
Power IX	Colombo
Samanalawewa archaeological project	Samanalawewa
Construction	
Victoria dam	Upper Mahaweli
Roads	
Colombo roads	Colombo
Monaragala roads feasibility study	Monaragala
Roads development authority	Colombo
Air Transport	
Colombo airport security	Colombo
Transport	
Tractor rehabilitation	Country-wide/Colombo
Buses	Country-wide/Colombo
Assistance to state transport board	Country-wide
Public administration	
Sri Lanka institute for development administration	Colombo
Bradford project planning	Colombo
Water and sanitation	
Loughborough WEDC	Country-wide
Hill country water supply	Central uplands
Housing	
Galle housing project	Galle
Education	Colombo
English teacher training college	
Regional English support centres	Country-wide
Department of English education	Colombo
Staff college for education and rehabilitation	Country-wide
Leeds—Moratuwa textile link	Moratuwa
DPU workshop	Country-wide
Loughborough—Moratuwa construction	Moratuwa
Technical education project	Colombo
Batticaloa Sussex link	Batticaloa
Jaffna university equipment	Jaffna
Cultural triangle project	North-central Sri Lanka
Testing and evaluation project	Colombo
Health and welfare	
Anti-malaria campaign	Country-wide/Colombo
Cleft lip palate/project	Country-wide
Matara health education	Matara
Jaffna hospital equipment	Jaffna
Primary health care	Country-wide
Institutional and other	
Sarvodaya	Country-wide except north and east
Save the Children Fund (reconstruction and rehabilitation)	North and east
Oxfam (reconstruction and rehabilitation)	North and east
Makandura village project	Makandura
Colombo municipal council workshops	Colombo
Colombo municipal council technical training	Colombo
Colombo municipal institutional development	Colombo

Note: The designation "country-wide" in the list above means that the project was with a national institution and not location-specific in character.

Third World (Financial Reforms)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the International Monetary Fund and World bank to ensure that the poorest people in third world debtor countries are protected when internationally required financial reforms are implemented.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have supported the efforts the International Monetary Fund and the World bank are making to help their member Governments ensure that economic adjustment programmes take account of the needs of the poorest members of society, both through the overall pattern of public expenditure and through specific projects and programmes.

Third World (Military Expenditure)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to urge the multilateral, financial and aid institutions to require the reduction of military expenditure as a condition of third world countries receiving loans; and to what extent this is a criterion when deciding on allocations of United Kingdom overseas aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is for each country to assess and provide for its own legitimate defence needs. However, the United Kingdom actively supports the increased emphasis placed by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank in recent years on the implications for economic and social development of the composition of public expenditure. In the recently completed negotiations on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA), donors urged that in reviews of public expenditure, IDA management should address the question of whether adequate levels of development expenditures in the budgets of recipient countries are being crowded-out by the weight of large or rising non-development expenditures, including military expenditure, and to take up this question with the Government concerned wherever appropriate.

We have made it clear that we consider the setting of an appropriate level of military expenditure to be an important part of good government. It is therefore one of the factors we take into account when deciding our allocations of bilateral aid.

United Nations (Disaster Assistance)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to encourage the United Nations to co-ordinate international assistance to areas affected by famine and natural disasters more effectively.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We encourage greater co-ordination of international humanitarian assistance in all fora of the United Nations, including the governing bodies of the various agencies concerned. Specifically we initiated the proposal which led to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the formation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in April 1992. We will continue to support the efforts of that Department to ensure good co-ordination, more effective responses to the victims' needs and better value for money.

PRIME MINISTER

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Prime Minister what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

The Prime Minister: Appointments (including reappointments) made by me between 1 November 1992 and 31 January 1993 have been as follows:

	Number
Trustees of museums and galleries	10
Civil service appointments	2
Members of pay review bodies	2
Other appointments	6

Any political affiliations those appointed may have are not relevant to their appointments.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a table indicating the rate in pounds sterling of the uniform business rate in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* England in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The uniform rate was not in operation before 1 April 1990. The information for the last three years is given in the folowing table.

Year	*Wales*	*England*
1990-91	0·368	0·348
1991-92	0·408	0·386
1992-93	0·425	0·402

The poundage for Wales and England were set in 1990 at a level which ensured that the overall yield from ratepayers remained at the 1989-90 level in real terms. Since 1990 poundages have been uprated in line with the annual increase in the retail prices index as at September in the preceding year.

Honours System

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to make an announcement on his review of the honours system.

The Prime Minister: An announcement will be made shortly.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions Her Majesty's Government have used Crown privilege in criminal cases in the last three years.

The Prime Minister: Crown privilege is now described by the courts as public interest immunity. No central records of such claims are maintained. On 1 February 1993 at column *18* my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General provided particulars of cases conducted by the prosecuting authorities superintended by him, in which claims had been supported by ministerial certificates.

Southwark (Visits)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister how many official visits he has made to Southwark since he became Prime Minister; and if he will give details of the date and purpose of each visit.

The Prime Minister: I visited Guy's hospital on 24 July 1991.

DEFENCE

Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the role and function of building A1.1 at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston;

(2) if he will make a statement on the role and function of building A41 at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: Although we have provided information on the new A90 complex it is not our general policy to disclose the role and function of individual buildings at atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about the death of Walter Mallin from injuries received at Aldermaston; what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident; in what part of the site the accident took place; and how many other persons were injured in this accident;

(2) if he will make a statement about the death of Terence Bishop from injuries received at Aldermaston; what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident; in what part of the site the accident took place; and how many other persons were injured in this accident;

(3) if he will make a statement about the death of Norman Adams from injuries received at Aldermaston; what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident; in what part of the site the accident took place; and how many other persons were injured in this accident;

(4) if he will make a statement about the death of Douglas Whittaker from injuries received at Aldermaston; what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident; in what part of the site the accident took place; and how many other persons were injured in this accident;

(5) if he will make a statement about the death of Peter Allen from injuries received at Aldermaston; what operations were being carried out at the time of the accident; in what part of the site the accident took place; and how many other persons were injured in this accident;

(6) how many workers have died from injuries sustained in accidents at Aldermaston, listing for each worker his or her name and the date of the accident.

Mr. Aitken: AWE records show that a total of seven fatalities among the AWE work force or contractors employed by AWE have occurred as a result of incidents on the Aldermaston site. The dates of each incident and the names of those who died are listed:

11 December 1957; Mr. D. Whittaker died as a result of injuries received when he was sprayed with molten metal which was accidentally released from the equipment on which he was working in a research area of AWE. Five other workers were injured.

26 February 1959; Mr. T. Bishop and Mr. J. W. Malin sustained fatal injuries as a result of the accidental detonation of a conventional high explosive which they were transporting on an electric vehicle in an explosives area. One other worker was injured.

13 May 1959; Mr. N. Adams, an employee of a firm contracted to do work associated with the construction of pressure vessels, died as a result of being struck by a metal plate which blew out from the high pressure line on which he was working. The accident occurred in a nuclear reactor building prior to commissioning. There were no others injured.

14 September 1973; Mr. T. Hughes, a contractor's employee, died as a result of a fall from a boilerhouse chimney stack which he was inspecting. There were no others injured.

23 July 1979; Mr. P. Allen died as a result of an explosive charge detonating close to or on his left temple. The incident occurred within the explosives area, but in a room which was not authorised for explosives detonation. The inquest recorded an open verdict. There were no others injured.

25 November 1986; Mr. R. Preston, a contractor employed as a night watchman, died as a result of injuries received in a road accident on the Aldermaston site. There were no others injured.

In addition, a contractor was killed on 2 November 1985 as a result of falling from scaffolding whilst carrying out construction work on a new boilerhouse at Aldermaston. The boilerhouse was not, however, under AWE management control at the time and therefore the incident is not a matter for detailed AWE recording.

The hon. Member will be aware that my Department did not assume responsibility for AWE, Aldermaston until 1973 and that the earlier accidents occurred when it was within the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. We sympathise with all of the bereaved families who have had to live through these sad experiences, and I am sure that no useful purpose would be served by making further statements on individual cases.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the date of the start of construction of building A1.1 at AWE Aldermaston; on what date construction was completed; on what date the building was declared operational; and how long he expects the building to remain operational.

Mr. Aitken: Construction of building A1.1 began in the second half of 1950 and was completed in 1951. It became operational in 1952, and is expected to remain operational for some years.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which buildings at AWE Aldermaston will be removed from operational service once *(a)* the A90 complex and *(b)* the A91 complex are declared operational.

Mr. Aitken: A90 and A91 are planned to replace current facilities which will then be taken out of use and decommissioned.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost, so far, in constructon and commissioning of *(a)* the A90 complex and *(b)* the A91 complex at AWE Aldermaston; and what is the estimated expenditure required for completion.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to disclose cost details of individual buildings at Aldermaston.

Arms Transfers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) of 22 January,

Official Report, column *464*, when he intends to place in the Library the British contribution to the United Nations register of conventional arms transfers.

Mr. Aitken: The British contribution to the United Nations register of conventional arms transfers will be placed in the Library as soon after its compilation as possible. It is due to be forwarded to the United Nations by 30 April 1993.

Amphibious Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in making a decision on orders for the proposed amphibious helicopter carrier.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 January to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) at col. *840*.

Portland Naval Base

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which organisations and individuals responded to his consultation on the future of Portland naval base; what was the consensus of the responses to the consultation; when he expects to make a final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responses have been received from the Ministry of Defence industrial and non-industrial trade unions, the Portland Joint Trade Union Action Committee, Dorset county council, Weymouth and Portland borough council and Plymouth city council. My hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) and for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) have made valuable contributions to the consultation process. In addition there have been a number of letters from members of the public. These responses are currently being considered and I expect to make a decision shortly.

Redundancies

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate for the number of service redundancies that have, and are likely to arise, as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" cuts and of the overall cost of redundancy payments involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, 5,969 service personnel have been selected for redundancy as a result of the restructuring of our armed forces. In addition, approximately 6,400 army personnel are due to be notified later this month of their selection for redundancy. For these 12,369 personnel, the estimated cost of redundancy payments—special capital payments—is £363 million All three services are considering carefully what further redunancies will be necessary.

Drugs Offences

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel have been discharged from the services as a result of drugs-related offences in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of personnel dismissed from the services following court martial or summary proceedings for offences of importing, supplying or possessing drugs since 1986, the earliest date for which the information is available, is:

	Number
1986	58
1987	55
1988	59
1989	68
1990	116
1991	160
1992	—[1]

[1] Not yet available.

In addition, the numbers of Army and Royal Air Force personnel administratively discharged for drug offences, since 1982, are as follows:

	Number
1982-83	36
1983-84	31
1984-85	57
1985-86	49
1986-87	13
1987-88	24
1988-89	9
1989-90	31
1990-91	38
1991-92	82
1992-93	[1]287

[1] to 4 February

The Royal Navy record administrative discharges as dismissed only and do not refer to the specific offence.

The armed forces have a comprehensive drug abuse prevention programme and the measures taken to combat drug abuse are regularly reviewed.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those nuclear submarines that have been removed from service and are awaiting disposal, indicating the location of each submarine, and stating whether *(a)* the reactor fuel and *(b)* the reactor core of each submarine has been removed.

Mr. Aitken: The reactor core and the fuel are one and the same thing. The information requested is as follows:

HM Submarines	*Location*	*Reactor core status*
Dreadnought	Rosyth Naval Base	Removed
Warspite	Devonport Naval Base	Removed
Churchill	Rosyth Naval Base	Removed
Conqueror	Devonport Naval Base	Removed
Courageous	Devonport Dockyard	Undergoing removal
Swiftsure	Rosyth Naval Base	Removed
Revenge	Rosyth Dockyard	On board awaiting removal

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Butter and Meat

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those categories of people eligible to qualify for EC butter and EC meat.

Mr. Curry: People in receipt of income support, family credit, disability working allowance, the homeless and destitute and those living in welfare hostels are eligible to receive food under the arrangements for implementing the EC surplus food scheme in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet a delegation of pensioners from Stoke on Trent, North to discuss eligibility for EC butter and meat.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to do so. I am aware of the views expressed by pensioners. To extend the scheme to all pensioners would spread the available food so thinly that it would be of little benefit to anyone.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the amount of *(a)* butter and *(b)* meat which will be destroyed because of non-take up by those deemed eligible.

Mr. Curry: None. The Intervention Board Executive Agency arranges reallocation among other designated organisations for distribution to eligible categories of people.

Agricultural Land (Lancashire)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area of agricultural land in (i) Lancashire and (ii) Pendle is currently subject to set-aside under the CAP; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Curry: The latest available figures show that 243 hectares of agricultural land are currently set aside under the five-year scheme in Lancashire. Payments to farmers, in respect of this land are estimated at £50,000 this financial year. Similar information for Pendle is not readily available. Information on land set aside under the new arable area payments scheme will not be available until growers have to declare the area later this year.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Curry: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Hill Sheep Farmers

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what estimate he has made of the number of hill sheep farmers in Cumbria who will suffer a reduction in income due to the change in hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what plans he has to compensate such farmers;

(2) if he will make a statement on the impact of the reduction of hill livestock compensatory allowances on hill sheep farmers in Cumbria.

Mr. Curry: About 2,300 farmers in Cumbria will be affected by the reduction in sheep headage payment rates under the 1993 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme. The resultant loss of income by the hill sheep sector in Cumbria will be more than offset by significant increases in the 1992 ewe premium, the final instalment of which will be paid in the spring.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average level of income for hill sheep farmers in Cumbria for each year since 1978-79; and what was the percentage change each year.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available.

HEALTH

Contraceptives

173. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of contraceptive pills, coils, diaphragms and spermicides available free on prescription and the number of prescriptions for each named item given by general practitioners in the last year.

Dr. Mawhinney: To release data on the number of prescriptions issued by general practitioners for each named drug would indicate the trading position, and could affect the business, of the manufacturers concerned. It is therefore treated as commercial in confidence. However, the numbers of prescriptions issued in England in 1991 for contraceptives as indicated in the "British National Formulary" chapter 7.3 was 7·7 million. The figures for 1992 are not yet available. The remaining information requested is in the table.

Contraceptives prescribed in England 1991

BNF Drug Name
Binovum Contracep Tab
Brevinor Contracep Tab
C-Film Contracep
Cilest Contracep Tab
Conova 30 Contracep Tab
Delfen CRN Pack B
Delfen Foam B Aero 20G
Delfen Foam Pack A
12·5 per cent. plus Applic 20G
Double check spermicide VAG inserts
Duracreme CRM 2 per cent.
Duragel Jelly 2 per cent.
Emko VAG Foam kit 40G
Emko VAG Foam refill
Eugynon 30 Contracep Tab
Eugynon 50 Contracep Tab
Femodene-Ed Contracep Tab
Femodene Contracep Tab
Femulen Contracep Tab
Gynol 11 Contracep Jelly
Gynovlar 21 Contracep Tab
Loestrin 20 Contracep Tab
Loestrin 30 Contracep Tab
Logynon-Ed Contracep Tab
Logynon Contracep Tab
Marvelon Contracep Tab
Mercilon Contracep Tab
Microgynon 30 Contracep Tab
Micronor Contracep Tab
Microval Contracep Tab (30MCG)
Minilyn Contracep Tab
Minovlar Ed Contracep Tab
Minovlar Contracep Tab
Minulet Tab
Meocon 1/35 Contracep Tab
Neogest Contracep Tab
Norgeston Contracep Tab (30MCG)

Noriday Contracep Tab
Norimin Contracep Tab
Norinyl-1 Contracep Tab
Noristerat Inj 200MG/1ML Amp
Ortho-Creme Crm Pack B
Ortho-Forms Pess
Ortho-Gynol Jelly Pack B
Ortho-Novin Contracep Tab 1/50 Pushpack
Ovran 30 Contracep Tab
Ovranette Contracep Tab
Ovran Contracep Tab
Ovulen 50 Contracep Tab
Ovysmen Contracep Tab
PC4 Contracep Tab
Rendells Pess
Staycept Jelly
Staycept Pess
Synphase Contracep Tab
Trinordiol Contracep Tab
Trinovum ED Contracep Tab
Trinovum Contracep Tab

Schizophrenia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many sufferers form schizophrenia were detained *(a)* under section 2, *(b)* under section 3, *(c)* under section 37 and *(d)* under sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each year since 1984;

(2) how many sufferers from schizophrenia were detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each year since 1984, in each regional health authority area;

(3) how many *(a)* non-offender and *(b)* mentally disordered offender patients detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 in each year since 1984 were suffering from schizophrenia.

Mr. Yeo: The available information is given in the tables.

These data are not the number of patients as a person may be admitted more than once during the year.

Information on a comparable basis is not held centrally for later years.

Admissions (with a diagnosis of schizophrenia) to mental illness hospitals in England detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 during each year 1984-1986, by regional health authority
Mental Health Act 1983; Section 136

Regional health authority	Year 1984	1985	1986
Northern	26	10	16
Yorkshire	2	5	11
Trent	3	11	4
East Anglian	6	3	2
North West Thames	149	109	81
North East Thames	178	159	131
South East Thames	87	79	73
South West Thames	93	94	80
Wessex	4	3	5
Oxford	0	1	0
South Western	2	2	2
West Midlands	5	2	5
Mersey	2	3	2
North Western	7	10	15
England	564	491	427

Admissions (with a diagnosis of schizophrenia) to mental illness hospitals in England detained under selected sections of the Mental Health Act 1983 during each year 1984 to 1986

	Mental Health Act 1983 Section			
Year	2	3	37	47 and 48
1984	1,886	859	483	32
1985	2,122	912	382	21
1986	2,164	864	395	27

Admissions (with a diagnosis of schizophrenia) to mental illness hospitals in England detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 during each year 1984 to 1986: (a) non-offenders and (b) mentally disordered offenders

Year	Mental Health Act 1983 (a) non-offenders	(b) mentally disordered offenders
1984	4,348	594
1985	4,547	522
1986	4,334	550

Hospitals (Activity Returns)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *690*, what was the total number of hospitals making activity returns in England in 1992, distinguishing between *(a)* the NHS, *(b)* joint users and contractuals and *(c)* independent acute.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 9 December 1992 at column 690. In addition to the 1,578 national health service sites making activity returns in 1990-91 there were 217 independent hospitals which had an operating theatre and could therefore be classified as acute. There are no sites classified as joint users and contractuals making returns to the Department.

The information requested is not available after 1990-91.

Ethnic Communities

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what surveys have been undertaken by her Department as to the health service provision available to elderly members of ethnic communities in *(a)* London and *(b)* England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: District health authorities are responsible for assessing the health care needs of their resident populations, including their ethnic communities, and for ensuring that appropriate services are available. Monitoring access to and use of services by members of ethnic groups will be introduced nationally from April and will provide health authorities with information which they can use in planning services.

The Age Concern Institute of Gerontology has recently completed two studies of health and social services provision for ethnic elders, covering a wide range of localities, including some in London. This work was funded by the Department and the reports are currently being considered.

Chiropodists and Physiotherapists

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider introducing legislation to apply the principles of the Osteopaths Bill to state-registered chiropodists and physiotherapists.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so. The state-registered chiropody and physiotherapy professions are already regulated under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider the preparation of a factsheet on chiropody in the health service "Careers" series.

Mr. Sackville: The need for national health service careers information for a range of occupational groups is regularly reviewed.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which her Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Sackville: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been collated. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Down's Syndrome

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which health authorities provide *(a)* full funding and *(b)* partial funding for pregnant women to undergo the Bart's test for Down's syndrome;

(2) how many pregnant women have had the Bart's test for Down's syndrome in the last two years; and if she will break down the figure by age group;

(3) what information she has on the availability of the Bart's test through *(a)* non-trust hospitals and *(b)* self-governing trust hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines her Department has issued on the use or sale of the Bart's test for pregnant women for Down's syndrome.

Mr. Sackville: The provision of advice to clinicians and practitioners on medical procedures is a matter for the professional bodies concerned. No specific guidance has been issued by the Department in respect of biochemical screening for Down's syndrome.

RU486

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement detailing the progress which has so far been made in identifying the source of the pills of the abortifacient drug RU486 which were imported into the United States of America from the United Kingdom, and about which she has received correspondence from the hon. Member for Congleton.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 4 November 1992 at col. *291*.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures expressed as a figure and as a percentage of relevant population.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 October 1992 at col. *476*.

Neither the mid-1992 population estimates nor the 1993 electorate figure is yet available. The Registrar General expects to publish the mid-1992 population estimates in October 1993.

Dentistry

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to assist those patients having difficulty registering for NHS dental services in west Cumbria.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of family health services authorities (FHSAs) to ensure that national health service dental treatment remains accessible locally. FHSAs can apply for permission to employ salaried dentists if they consider it necessary to maintain services. Cumbria FHSA is able to assist those people who need help obtaining NHS dental treatment.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices in west Cumbria are now accepting new NHS patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Cumbria family health services authority, Mr. J. R. Wills, for details.

Registered Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what distinction is made in departmental guidance to local authorities between adult family placement schemes and small homes due to be registered when the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 comes into force on 1 April.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's guidance to local authorities on the implementation of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 highlights a number of factors which need to be considered in the case of adult placement schemes. These include the fact that registration is not required unless both board and personal care are provided; the possibility of modifying usual registration procedures where checks have already been made on people belonging to a scheme; the scope for local authorities to waive fees; and the fact that placement scheme organisers may be able to help carers fulfil their duties under the Act.

Nurse to Bed Ratio

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the nurse to bed ratio for national health service hospitals, annually, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* The information requested is in the table.

Years	*Nurse to bed ratio*
1979	0·98
1980	1·03
1981	1·10
1982	1·13
1983	1·15
1984	1·18
1985	1·22
1986	1·26
1987-88	1·34
1988-89	1·41
1989-90	1·47
1990-91	1·55
1991-92	1·62

NATIONAL FINANCE

GDP

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *662*, if he will give the actual figures underlying the figures listed for shares of total gross domestic product.

Mr. Nelson: The information for the years 1981 to 1991 is published in table 2·1 of the 1992 edition of the "United Kingdom National Accounts", the Central Statistical Office Blue Book, which is available in the House of Commons Library. Figures for earlier years are held on the CSO database which can be accessed by the Library.

Fuel Differentials

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the price differential and *(b)* the tax differential between unleaded petrol and diesel fuel in each EC member state.

Sir John Cope: The information is as follows, based on data for December 1992 using exchange rates as at 1 October 1992—the date used by the European Commission as the reference for exchange rates.

Member State	*Price (pence per litre)*			*Duty (pence per litre)*		*VAT rate per cent*	*Tax differential duty plus consequential VAT (pence per litre)*
	unleaded	*diesel*	*differential*	*unleaded*	*diesel*		
Belgium	56·9	48·2	8·7	29·9	22·2	19·5	9·2
Denmark	51·6	49·3	2·2	23·6	20·3	25·0	4·1
France	58·3	42·2	16·1	34·3	20·2	18·6	16·7
Germany	55·2	43·0	12·2	33·2	22·0	[2]14·0	12·7
Greece	58·7	41·4	17·3	32·7	21·4	18·0	13·3
Ireland	61·8	56·7	5·1	27·8	23·7	21·0	4·9
Italy	69·1	53·8	15·2	39·1	28·8	19·0	12·2
Luxembourg	39·4	35·4	4·0	20·4	14·4	15·0	[1]8·2
Netherlands	63·3	40·3	22·9	36·3	17·3	17·5	22·3
Portugal	62·5	50·9	11·7	35·5	26·9	16·0	10·0
Spain	56·1	44·5	11·6	29·1	21·5	15·0	8·7
UK	46·4	46·9	−0·4	23·4	22·9	17·5	0·7

[1] Luxembourg levies VAT at a rate of 15 per cent for diesel and 6 per cent for unleaded petrol.
[2] Now 15 per cent.

Bank Notes

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the size, layout and printing on the £5, £10, and £20 bank notes to make it easier for visually impaired people to distinguish one value note from another.

Mr. Nelson: The design of Bank of England notes is the responsibility of the bank. The bank advises that it keeps the designs of its notes under constant review. In designing the new series of notes the bank consulted widely with representatives of the blind and partially-sighted. Differential sizes were retained for each denomination to help the blind, and a distinctive bold-coloured symbol was included on the front of each note specifically to help the partially sighted.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the practice in respect of treating a limited partnership and the general partner of the limited partnership as one entity for VAT purposes.

Sir John Cope: Where there is one general partner in a limited partnership he is the taxable person for VAT purposes. However, one VAT registration can cover the activities of that limited partnership in addition to any other activities undertaken by the general partner as an individual.

Newcastle Tax Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the staff at the Newcastle tax offices was on 1 April 1991, 1 April 1992 and at the most recent available date; and what further changes in numbers of staff are proposed.

Mr. Dorrell: The staff at Newcastle tax offices was as follows:

	1 April 1991	*1 April 1992*	*Now*
Newcastle 1 Tax District	137	146	145
Newcastle 2 Tax District	25	25	24
Newcastle 3 Tax District	64	68	64

	1 April 1991	1 April 1992	Now
Newcastle 4 Tax District	74	83	78
Newcastle Collection	53	53	48
Totals	353	375	359

There will be a reduction of approximately four full-time units in the staff allocated to Newcastle 1 tax district following the removal of trust work from that office in March 1993.

The Inland Revenue is reviewing the organisation and structure of its Newcastle tax offices with the aim of increasing the quality of service to taxpayers and the efficiency of the operations. No decisions have yet been made about the structure and staff numbers needed.

Automatic Weapons (Import)

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Customs and Excise take to prevent the import of automatic weapons from France by individuals arriving at Dover.

Sir John Cope: Though all systematic customs controls on intra-Community traffic ended on 1 January 1993, customs continue to make targeted anti-smuggling checks to prevent the importation of illicit goods, including weapons which represent a serious threat to society.

Television (Expenditure)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has concerning the average weekly household expenditure on *(a)* cable television, satellite television, video recordings, and other broadcast media and *(b)* the BBC licence fee.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The information required is published annually at current prices in "Family Spending", the report on the family expenditure survey. The most recently published report is that of 1991. Copies of this volume are available from the House of Commons Library.

Gilt Issues

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish on a monthly basis for the period 1965 to date *(a)* net gilt issuance, *(b)* gross gilt issuance and *(c)* outstanding sterling denominated national debt.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* Figures on gilt issuance appear in table 3 of the Bank of England "Quarterly Bulletin" for issues published before March 1976 and in table 8 of the Bank of England "Quarterly Bulletin" for issues published between March 1976 and November 1991 inclusive. Figures for 1991 onwards may be found in table 3.5 of Financial Statistics, published by the Central Statistical Office. Figures are published on a quarterly rather than a monthly basis.

Detailed information about the nominal national debt (the total liabilities of the National Loans Fund) is compiled annually. The sterling national debt is published in the February issue of "Financial Statistics" (table S1). The supplementary statements to the Consolidated Fund and the National Loans Fund, published each December as a House of Commons Paper also show the oustanding national debt and its components as at 31 March each year.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the amount of capital receipts likely to be released in the smallest area for which figures are available which covers the Hyndburn constituency during the calendar year 1993 and the financial year 1993-94 from the sale of council-owned dwellings under the right-to-buy legislation.

Mr. Baldry: At the time of last year's autumn statement it was estimated on the basis of local authorities estimate for 1992-93 that around £2¾ billion of capital receipts would be raised by local authorities in the United Kingdom in 1993-94, mainly from the sale of council houses. No estimates are available for individual local authorities or regions of the United Kingdom, nor for the 1993 calendar year.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the structure of the means test for home improvement grants; what is the grant withdrawal rate for a couple, a couple with one child, and a couple with two children assuming receipt of community charge benefit and/or family credit; and how many such grants were awarded in each nation and region in the last complete year.

Mr. Baldry: The details of the means test for house renovation grants are set out in the Housing Renovation etc, Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990 (SI 1990 No 1189) as amended. These regulations are summarised in the Department's circulars 12/90 and 5/91 on house renovation grants. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

The level of grant awarded depends in the financial circumstances of each applicant and the cost of the proposed works. The Department does not collect information on the grant withdrawal rates for the groups listed.

Information on renovation grants awarded is available only for England as a whole but data are available for numbers of grants paid in each English region. The figures are as follows:

	Number
Grants Awarded	
England	38,141
Grants Paid	
England	18,731
By Region	
North	1,954
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,027
East Midlands	2,038
East Anglia	908
Greater London	1,608
South East	2,976
South West	1,828
West Midlands	2,227
North West	3,165

The renovation grant systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the appropriate Secretary of State.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that mandatory grants for house improvement should remain mandatory.

Mr. Baldry: A number of changes to the house renovation grant system are being considered for inclusion in the consultation paper announced by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Housing and Planning on 12 January at columns *707-8*. Nothing is being ruled out at this stage.

Housing Associations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses or flats have been bought in each local authority area under the grant to housing associations announced in the autumn statement for the purchase of properties; how many of these properties in each area have been newly built; what has been the average price paid in each authority area for newly built properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have today deposited in the Library a table providing the information requested.

I am delighted that purchases have already been approved in over 90 per cent. of the local areas in England, which will take over 13,000 properties off the market. The proportion of purchases approved from builders and developers so far has been around 60 per cent., as these deals are typically the quickest to complete. Last week only a third of approvals were for such purchases, and the great majority of the remainder were for purchases from private individuals. The Housing Corporation estimate that housing associations will be able to buy some 17,000 properties in England by the end of March as a result of these measures, and another 3,500 purchases will be made possible through cash grants to tenants. Taken together with recent substantial falls in interest rates, this package should certainly have a very positive impact on the housing market.

Council Tax

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the booklet "How to Appeal", in relation to council tax, will be made available to local authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is planned to publish the booklet later this month, when regulations introducing the appeals system have been made. The final text of the booklet was sent to authorities on 2 February.

Ecolabels

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he regards the testing of cosmetics on laboratory animals as a relevant criterion in assessing fitness of a product for an ecolabel award by the Ecolabelling Board;

(2) what guidelines have been provided to member states by the European Commission in relation to the scope for life cycle assessment studies for ecolable criteria studies; and if he will place the guidelines in the Library;

(3) what is the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board's target for the range of market share to be obtained by products receiving an ecolabel; if the board intends to issue an ecolabel to at least one brand of each product; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that an adequate objective standard is met in all cases where an ecolabel is issued.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has been established to administer and promote the European Community ecolabelling scheme nationally and has responsibility for dealing with the operational aspects of the scheme. I have therefore asked the board to reply to the hon. Member direct.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has had from Body Shop in relation to the standards of assessment established by the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board; what response has been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has received no representations from the Body Shop on this matter. I understand, however, that the Body Shop has raised the matter with the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board and I have asked the board to reply to the hon. Member direct.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board to be financially self-sufficient; and what impact on the timetable for self-sufficiency he expects the rate of awarding labels will have.

Mr. Maclean: One of the aims of the UK Ecolabelling Board is that it should ultimately become self-financing. My Department has asked the board to prepare a plan for covering its costs in the sixth year of operation. This target will be reviewed annually following discussions of the board's corporate plan and in the light of the success of the scheme.

Urban and Inner City Policies

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give a breakdown of the £10 billion referred to in the oral statement by the Home Secretary of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column 167, as having being spent by the Government on urban and inner city policies since 1985-86;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the £4 billion a year referred to in the oral statement by the Home Secretary of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column 167, as being spent by the Government on projects in the inner cities.

Mr. Robin Squire: Government support for urban regeneration of £10 billion is based on the total of expenditure for 1988-89 (£3 billion), 1989-90 (over £3 billion) and 1990-91 (£4 billion).

The £4 billion a year total divides broadly into support of £1 billion under each of the following heads:

Targeted urban group of programmes
Housing programmes
Employment, Trade and Industry programmes
Other Action for Cities programmes, and Scotland and Wales

Refrigerators (Disposal)

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the provision for safe disposal of refrigerators in each local authority.

Mr. Maclean: Local waste regulation authorities are required to produce plans detailing the arrangements needed to treat, recycle or dispose of controlled waste likely to arise or be situated in their areas. Waste disposal and treatment facilities may be provided by waste disposal authorities or by the private sector; regulation of such facilities is the responsibility of waste regulation authorities.

Where refrigerators are controlled waste, compliance with the duty of care requires the waste producer to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the waste goes only to legally authorised destinations. These would be sites that are licensed to treat or dispose of this type of waste, or specially exempt from the requirement to be licensed, or operated by a local authority under a resolution under section 11 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Local authorities may bid for supplementary credit approvals for the provision of facilities for recycling chlorofluorocarbons. £15 million is available for recycling facilities in 1993-94.

Waste Management

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue an updated version of waste management paper No. 25.

Mr. Maclean: A revised version of waste management paper No. 25 is in preparation and it is hoped a public consultation draft will be issued shortly for comment.

Owner Occupiers

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to assist overcrowded owner-occupiers trapped by *(a)* negative equity and *(b)* low income.

Mr. Baldry: Reductions in average mortgage rates mean that they are now lower than at any time since March 1969, and mortgage repayments as a proportion of earnings are at their lowest since 1978. Mobility is also made easier by the raising of the ceiling on unsecured loans by building societies, and by measures in hand to allow the security of the new property to be substituted for that of the old without the loss of mortgage interest tax relief.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he received prior to his decision to overrule the Boundary Commission recommendation in relation to Leyton and Redbridge; from whom they were received; which favoured an overruling of the Boundary Commission; and on what dates they were received.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Secretary of State has accepted all the proposals of the Local Government Boundary Commission for the boundary between Leyton and Redbridge, with one minor modification to the proposal for Hollybush hill, thereby moving the boundary from the centre to the western edge of the road to ease highway maintenance. This modification was made in the light of a letter of 17 June 1992 from the chief executive of the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy as President of the European Environment Council to place the issue of the environmental risk of transporting plutonium from Europe to Japan on the agenda for the European Community-Japan bilateral meeting on environmental co-operation to be held on 3 and 4 December in Brussels.

Mr. Maclean: *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* No. The meeting on 3 and 4 December is one between officials of the Commission of the European Communities and Japan. Shipments of plutonium take place only in compliance with stringent internationally agreed standards.

Area Cost Adjustment

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now list by how much each local authority benefits from the area cost adjustment in 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* I have placed in the Library a table showing all those authorities which benefit from the area cost adjustment, and by how much, within standard spending assessments for 1993-94. All other authorities receive an area cost adjustment of zero.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the consultation on the local government finance settlement for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 28 January, column* 854]: I am today placing in the Library and the Vote Office a further table showing the standard spending assessment and grant entitlement of each local authority. These reflect small revisions to the tax base of some authorities as a result of the treatment of boundary changes.

TRANSPORT

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost to the Exchequer of the decision not to proceed with the construction of the Birmingham northern relief road as a publicly funded road; and if he will break down the cost into its component parts.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Following the decision to seek private finance for the Birmingham northern relief road, the Department reimbursed some £38,000 to individuals and organisations who had incurred costs in objecting to proposals for a publicly-funded road. In addition about £1,000 was paid to engineering consultants who arranged storage of data on the public scheme. The total cost of the public scheme taken to the inquiry was estimated at about £310 million at 1990 prices. The decision not to proceed with a publicly-funded BNRR has therefore produced a substantial saving to the Exchequer.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate at current prices the total identifiable

expenditure incurred by Her Majesty's Government in relation to the proposed Birmingham northern relief road *(a)* as a public road and *(b)* as a toll road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: About £11·4 million was spent by my Department in working up proposals for a publicly-financed Birmingham northern relief road, mainly on consultants' fees, purchase of land and objectors' costs. The subsequent costs to date of selecting a private sector promoter, negotiating a concession agreement, purchasing land and contributing to the preparation of draft orders are currently estimated at about £6·3 million. Both figures are at outturn prices: figures at current prices could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Some costs of land purchase are recoverable.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the public inquiry into the Birmingham northern relief road will start; what is the name of the inspector appointed to carry out that report; what is the length of time allocated to carry out the inquiry; and what is the venue involved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I cannot answer any of these questions because the draft orders for the Birmingham northern relief road are yet to be published. Upon publication my Department will take the necessary steps, along with the planning inspectorate, to make arrangements for the public inquiry.

ATOLs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the steps taken by the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure that all passengers whose travel is arranged through package operators are adequately protected through the holding of air transport organiser's licences.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority examines each ATOL licence holder annually to ensure that it is managed by persons who are fit to hold a licence and have a financial bond as a guarantee of security against financial failure. Should the bond prove inadequate in the event of failure, the Air Travel Trust, which is managed by Civil Aviation Authority officials, is designed to meet claims which would properly have been payable from the bond.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the types of bookings on scheduled air services which require the organiser to hold an air transport organiser's licence.

Mr. Norris: Under The Civil Aviation (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL)) Regulations 1972, as amended, an ATOL licence is required where a person selling air seats on scheduled flights is acting as a principal in the sale to the public rather than acting as the agent of the airline. An airline does not need an ATOL in order to advertise or sell tickets for carriage on its own aircraft.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what protection exists for clients of packaged air travel operators who do not hold an air transport operator's licence and do not satisfy EC regulations.

Mr. Norris: Most air tour operators are required by The Civil Aviation (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) Regulations to hold an ATOL. ATOL holders are required to show their ATOL number in all their brochures, leaflets and advertisements.

There are some air tour operators without an ATOL who may currently have alternative bonding arrangements with the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), pending the completion of requirements for an ATOL.

Hereford Bypass

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a detailed break-down of the Q2/1992 prices for construction of the A49-465 Hereford bypass using the *(a)* published route and *(b)* western alternative route 1C; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, a public inquiry into the proposals for the Hereford bypass was held between March and September 1991 and in May 1992. The inspector heard evidence on the relative merits of the Department's published route and objectors' alternative route 1C and much of what the hon. Gentleman now asks, with many other issues, was discussed, in principle, at that time.

The inspector has submitted his report to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport. They are presently considering his recommendations and will announce their decision soon. It would not be right for me to comment further on the merits of the eastern and western routes.

Shipping

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all British ships registered by his Department on 23 January, 1 April 1992, 1 April 1991 and 1 April 1990; and if he will, in each case, indicate whether the vessel is *(a)* an oil tanker, *(b)* a passenger/freight ferry and *(c)* carrying out North sea offshore operations.

Mr. Norris: I have placed in the Library lists of vessels on the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man registers on the nearest available dates.

Road Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of the President of the Board of Trade of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *472*, what assessment has been made of the effect on road safety of requiring motor advertisers to include within advertisements a safety warning that speed kills.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such assessment has been made and I am not convinced that there would be any substantial safety benefit in imposing this requirement on motor advertisers.

All vehicle advertisements are assessed by the Advertising Standards Authority against its code of practice and those which are regarded as placing an undue emphasis on speed are already banned. I am encouraged to see that there is an increasing compliance with the code and that numerous manufacturers are now choosing to advertise their vehicles on safety grounds. This indicates a welcome increase in market demand for safer vehicles.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many representations he has had since 1 January 1992 about *(a)* the change in the size in the British merchant fleet, *(b)* the change in the number and quality of vessels flying flags of convenience sailing in United Kingdom waters, *(c)* the change in the level of the United Kingdom's invisible earnings from shipping and *(d)* the ability of the merchant fleet to support the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We have received a number of representations from interested parties covering these and other shipping issues.

A detailed breakdown of meetings, discussions and correspondence on these issues cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Cash Limits

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits and running costs limit for his Department for 1992-93.

Mr. MacGregor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limits in class VII will be changed as follows:

Class and vote	*Current cash limit*	*Changes*	*Revised cash limit*
VII, 1	2,124,259,000	[1]—6,314,000	2,117,945,000
2	215,205,000	[12]—2,300,000	212,905,000
4	171,769,000	[23]—785,000	170,984,000
5	439,851,000	[4]900,000	440,751,000

[1] Transfers of £3,000,000 to the Department of Environment, Class VIII, Vote 3 for the Bristol Spine Road and of £4,814,000 to Class VII, Vote 3 to cover payments to British Rail pension funds in respect of pre-1975 obligations. These are offset by a transfer from Class VII, Vote 2 of £1,500,000 for certain running costs.
[2] A transfer of £800,000 to Class VII, Vote 4 in respect of certain running costs.
[3] A reduction of £1,585,000 in respect of demand financing.
[4] An increase of £900,000 in grant to the Humber Bridge Board.

My Department's gross running costs limit has been decreased by £1,585,000 from £393,458,000 to £391,873,000 as a consequence of *(c)* above.

Where increases are involved these will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Westminster Pier

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is part of his transport strategy for London that commuters on the River Thames should have access to Westminster pier; and how many people he estimates would benefit from this.

Mr. Norris: I understand from the Port of London Authority, which owns Westminster pier, that the pier is used to capacity in the summer months by existing contractual licence holders, who are primarily geared to meeting the needs of tourists, and that in its present form the pier could not safely accommodate extra commuter services of the type, for instance, operated by Riverbus.

The River Thames working group, which I established recently, will be studying the general issue of commuter access to the river, including the potential benefits which improved access could bring.

Air Navigation Licences

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licences under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airports Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences already issued but not yet operated upon, in circumstances where no public announcement of the issue of the licence was made;

(2) if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licences under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airport Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences already issued but not yet operated upon, in circustances where the operation of the licence could affect the operations of an airport within a 30-mile radius;

(3) if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licences under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airports Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences alrady issued but not yet operated upon, in circumstances where the putative licence operator has previously given assurances that no such operation would be commenced and the operations under the order will cause financial damage to private citizens;

(4) if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licenses under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airports Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences already issued but not yet operated upon, in circumstances where no planned permission has been obtained;

(5) if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licences under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airports Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences already issued but not yet operated upon, in circumstances where the operation of the licence would affect the value of an airport within a 30-mile radius.

Mr. Norris: Licensing of airfields under the Air Navigation Order, and the grant of applications under section 38 of the Airports Act are matters for the Civil Aviation Authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has no powers to direct the Civil Aviation Authority in these circumstances.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue any further licences under the Air Navigation Order 1989, or under section 38 of the Airports Act 1986, and to withdraw any licences already issued but not yet operated upon, in circumstances where there would be potential environmental damage, and a full environmental impact assessment has not been carried out and publicly discussed.

Mr. Norris: No. The circumstances under which a full environmental impact assessment would be required for an airport/aerodrome development, are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Israel

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the appropriate

steps that will be taken to ensure that Israel complies with United Nations Security Council resolution 799 on the Palestinian deportees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have repeatedly urged the Israeli Government to comply with Security Council resolution 799. Their decision to allow 100 of the deportees to return is a useful step in the right direction. We hope they will build on this. We are stressing to all concerned that the top priority is to resume the peace process.

Muslims, India

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence has been gathered from the Foreign Office posts in India about violence towards Muslims on account of their religion; and what discussions have taken place with the Government of India about this problem.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received regular reports from our posts in India about the recent communal violence there. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed the situation with the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to India in January. We have condemned the violence and support the principles of Indian secular democracy and protection for religious minorities.

Cyprus

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Turkish Government about progress made by the United Nations on Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary discussed Cyprus with their Turkish counterparts in London on 23 November. The Secretary of State has since kept in close touch via our ambassador in Ankara. He has made clear to the Turks that we expect them to encourage the Turkish Cypriots to work actively towards a settlement.

Birmingham Summit

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *563*, how the costs of the Birmingham summit were met.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The costs of the Birmingham summit were met from public funds.

UN Charter

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on adapting article 2(7) of the United Nations charter to take into account humanitarian aspects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Article 2(7) prohibits the United Nations from intervening in matters which are "essentially" within domestic jurisdiction. Article 55 requires the United Nations to promote human rights, which are now a matter of international concern. The prohibition in article 2(7) does not apply to enforcement measures under chapter VII.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by officials at the post in Islamabad concerning applications by Shenaz Begum (DOB: 5:7:1979); Afsar Khan (DOB: 31:10:1980) and Shaira Begum (DOB: 5:7:1989) to join their father in the United Kingdom; when their applications were submitted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British High Commission at Islamabad is not satisfied that Shenaz Begum, Afsar Khan and Shaira Begum are British citizens by descent from Mr. Mohammed Gham Ghani as claimed on their passport applications made in October 1991. This is because, according to Mr. Ghani's certificate of registration as a citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies, his wife's name is Zaitoon Jan. The children's mother Zartaj Bibi, claims that she is his first and only wife. The decision to withhold passport facilities from the children was communicated to Zartaj Bibi on 17 January 1993.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on an application to the post in Islamabad by Mrs. Janat Begum (Ref: B6038) to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The High Commission in Islamabad agreed on 3 February to issue entry clearance to Mrs. Janat Begum to join her husband in the United Kingdom. The entry clearance officer will write to Mrs. Begum, inviting her to call in to collect her visa.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on an application made at the post in Islamabad by Mr. Raja Ibrar Hussain, who was born on 8 November 1962, to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A decision was taken by the British High Commission in Islamabad on 15 November 1992 to refuse entry clearance to Mr. Raja Ibrar Hussain as the entry clearance officer was not satisfied, as he is required to be under the immigration rules, that Mr. Hussain was related to his wife as claimed; that the primary purpose of the marriage was not to gain entry to the United Kingdom; and that there was adequate support and accommodation available for Mr. Hussain in this country without recourse to public funds.

Iran

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have recently been made in international bodies over the continued human rights abuses in Iran.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: The UN Secretary-General's special representative on human rights in Iran presented his latest report to the UN General Assembly in November. We and our EC partners co-sponsored the critical resolution reflecting his concerns, which was adopted on 18 December. The Edinburgh Council's conclusions on Iran at the EC summit in December made

it clear that improvement in Iran's human rights record, among other factors, will be important in determining the extent to which relations with and confidence in Iran can be developed.

South Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the withdrawal of British personnel from South Korea.

Mr. Archie Hamilton I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 18 January at column *50*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answers to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 18 January, *Official Report*, column 38, when he expects to introduce primary legislation on the chemical weapons convention; and which interested bodies he will consult on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Sainsbury: Legislation to implement the United Kingdom's obligations under the chemical weapons convention will be introduced when the parliamentary timetable permits.

Consultation arrangements have not yet been finalised, but those to be consulted will include the Chemical Industries Association, the British Chemical Distributors and Traders Association, and the Confederation of British Industry.

Steel

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the Government of the United States of America concerning duties imposed by the United States department of commerce on imports of flat rolled steel from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: The provisional anti-dumping duties of 109·22 per cent. on British Steel exports of steel plate are unwarranted and wholly disproportionate.

The actions, brought by the highly protected US steel industry, will not help efforts to secure a much needed international settlement in the multilateral steel agreement negotiations.

The President of the Board of Trade has written to US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown urging him to focus on these matters at the earliest opportunity. The issue was raised at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 February.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the recently imposed United States tariffs on steel imports.

Mr. Needham: The provisional anti-dumping duties of 109·22 per cent. on British Steel exports of steel plate are unwarranted and wholly disproportionate. They were in addition to the earlier countervailing duties imposed on United Kingdom exports of plate and bar. To penalise genuinely privatised companies which have not received subsidies for over six years is unfair and economically unsound.

The actions, brought by the highly protected US steel industry, will not help efforts to secure a much needed international settlement in the multilateral steel agreement negotiations.

The President of the Board of Trade has written to US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown urging him to focus on these matters at the earliest opportunity. The issue was raised at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 February when the actions were condemned as unacceptable.

International Trade Commission

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases have been brought against United Kingdom-based companies, by United States companies, to the International Trade Commission in each of the last five calendar years; and what United Kingdom Government advice or assistance is available to companies faced with such hearings.

Mr. Needham: The table details, according to the best information readily available, the number of cases against United Kingdom companies with the US International Trade Commission.

The British embassy in Washington monitors the filing of complaints. My officials notify any United Kingdom companies affected by these quasi-legal investigations.

My department is not in a position to offer financial assistance for legal fees. But DTI and the British embassy do provide general advice and assistance to British companies on such matters as tactics and procedure and in anti-dumping cases are prepared to raise particular points with the Department of Commerce, in support of the European Community, if it appears that the US authorities are not operating their rules fairly. My Department is in any event directly involved in any countervailing duty cases as these involve questions of government subsidy.

Total number of petitions filed with the ITC involving United Kingdom firms

Year	*Anti-dumping*	*Countervailing*	*Section 337*
1988	2	—	—
1989	1	—	1
1990	4	—	1
1991	—	—	—
1992	4	2	2

Intangible Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans Her Majesty's Government have to introduce legislation to control the export of intangible technology.

Mr. Needham: While current export controls apply only to technology in a tangible form, they in practice enable significant transfers of technology to be controlled.

The control of intangible technology raises very considerable practical difficulties and while the Government have no immediate plans to introduce such legislation, it is keeping the position under review.

Nature Conservation Bodies

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the role of statutory nature conservation bodies under the new arrangements for the out-of-round award of petroleum production licences.

Mr. Eggar: The role of statutory conservation bodies under the new arrangements for out-of-round awards of petroleum production licences is the same as their role in licencing rounds. It is our general and established policy, before offering blocks for licence in any part of the United Kingdom continental shelf, to consult relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies (including conservation bodies) in advance of any announcement and to attach licence conditions agreed with such bodies which reflects each block's sensitivities.

Petroleum Production Licences

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he consulted the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and other appropriate statutory conservation agencies before making his decision to award petroleum production licences for North sea blocks 39/1 and 39/2.

Mr. Eggar: The Joint Nature Conservation Committee and other appropriate statutory conservation agencies were consulted about blocks 39/1 and 39/2 in March, as part of the 14th round consultation process. At that time no out-of-round application had been received for these blocks and it was envisaged that they would be offered in the 14th round.

Biofuels

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether his Department has analysed the potential of bio-diesel as a transport fuel in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry has today published through HMSO a review of the potential of bio-diesel as a transport fuel which was prepared by the energy technology support unit. The report assesses the economics of bio-diesel production and concludes that a subsidy of approximately 15p per litre would be required for bio-diesel to be commercially viable in the United Kingdom. It also considers the environmental implications of bio-diesel production and use. The review will inform those contemplating growing oil seed rape, investing in the conversion plant or using bio-diesel as a vehicle fuel. A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Coal Review

Mr. Beggs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements he has made for making the evidence submitted to his Department's coal review available to the public in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eggar: Copies of the evidence to the review, other than commercially confidential material, have been placed in the following libraries, where members of the public may call, by appointment, to view it:

Edinburgh:
The Library, Scottish Office, St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DH.
Cardiff:
The Library, Welsh Office, New Crown Buildings, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NQ.
Belfast:
The Library, Department of Economic Development, Netherleigh, Massey Avenue, BT4 2JP.

In addition copies of individual pieces of evidence, other than confidential evidence, may be ordered from the DTI Energy Library and Information Centre, 1 Palace street, London, SW1E 5HE.

SCOTLAND

Car Crime

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reduce car crime in Scotland and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office launched a major advertising campaign aimed at reducing car crime in April 1992. Scottish police forces have taken complementary local initiatives. Recent statistics point to an overall reduction in car crime following the campaign.

Decisions on the priority to be given to car crime in the crime prevention programme for 1993-94 have yet to be taken.

Motorways

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are without central reservation crash barriers; and what percentage of the total mileage this represents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are 285 km (178 miles) of motorway in Scotland of which, by the end of March 1993, approximately 32 km (20 miles) will be without central reserve safety fencing. This represents 11 per cent of the total length.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are unlit at night; and what percentage of the total mileage this represents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Of a total of 178 miles of motorway in Scotland, 145 miles are unlit, which equates to approximately 81 per cent.

Health Boards (Revenue Allocation)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board their revenue allocation for 1992-93 and 1993-94, the percentage change for each health board between the two periods after allowing for inflation and the percentage variation from Scottish health authoritities resources equalisation parity for each health board for each period.

Mr. Stewart: Details of individual board revenue allocations for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are contained in the table.

Health Board	£ million Revenue Allocation 1992-93	[1]Distance from Parity (Under)/Over per cent. after 1992-93 Allocation	£ million Revenue Allocation 1993-94	[1]Distance from Parity (Under)/Over per cent. after 1993-94 Allocation	Percentage change between 1992-93 and 1993-94 after allowing for Inflation
Argyll and Clyde	220·299	(0·49)	229·154	(0·87)	1·24
Ayr and Arran	171·197	(5·90)	180·855	(5·31)	2·81
Borders	54·407	(2·17)	57·467	(1·98)	2·80
Dumfries and Galloway	77·968	(1·17)	80·548	(1·19)	0·54
Fife	158·162	(3·85)	167·956	(3·07)	3·35
Forth Valley	126·674	(1·97)	137·369	(1·28)	5·54
Grampian	252·837	(2·66)	266·766	(2·12)	2·61
Greater Glasgow	560·259	4·41	594·379	3·93	3·17
Highland	106·800	(0·17)	110·492	(0·45)	0·61
Lanark	239·761	(1·68)	253·617	(2·13)	2·87
Lothian	403·552	1·00	409·112	0·67	−1·41
Orkney	11·169	(1·27)	11·337	0·63	−1·29
Shetland	12·768	0·08	13·542	1·40	3·15
Tayside	240·393	4·45	240·627	3·62	−2·66
Western Isles	20·638	(0·95)	22·704	1·70	6·99

Note: A further £159 million will be distributed during 1993-94 for cardiac surgery, breast cancer screening, bridging finance and other specific initiatives.

[1] Distance from parity affected by demographic change between 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Drug and Alcohol

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve aftercare facilities for drug users in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office has made available to health boards £2·4 million in the current financial year specifically for the support and provision of drug misuse services. Assistance is also given to local authorities through the urban programme for drug-related projects. The planning and development of services are primarily the responsibility of health boards and local authorities, in consultation with the voluntary sector and having regard to local circumstances.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of notifications of drug addicts and the proportions of the communities in *(a)* Greenock, *(b)* Port Glasgow, *(c)* Paisley, *(d)* Strathclyde and *(e)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* Information on addicts notified to the Home Office from Scotland is collected on a health board rather than town or regional basis. The table gives the number of notifications and the proportions of the population they represent in 1989, 1990 and 1991 for *(a)* Argyll and Clyde health board, within which Greenock, Port Glasgow and Paisley lie; *(b)* Strathclyde; and *(c)* Scotland. Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

	1989		*1990*		*1991*	
	Number of Addicts Notified	*Proportion[1] of Population (per 100,000)*	*Number of Addicts Notified*	*Proportion of Population (per 100,000)*	*Number of Addicts Notified*	*Proportion of Population (per 100,000)*
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	21	5: 100,000	29	7: 100,000	55	13: 100,000
Strathclyde Region[2]	268	12: 100,000	370	16: 100,000	483	21: 100,000
Scotland	728	14: 100,000	1,184	23: 100,000	1,480	29: 100,000

[1] The figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

[2] Aggregation of figures for Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire and Arran, Greater Glasgow and Lanarkshire Health Boards.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions are to be made for residential care and treatment for drug and alcohol abuse and misuse under the new community care arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: *[holding answer 4 February, 1993]:* From 1 April 1993, under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, local authorities will make provision within community care plans for people who misuse alcohol and drugs. They will be responsible for assessing the social needs of individual alcohol and drug misusers and arranging appropriate packages of care, including residential care provision. Residential services offer a number of different treatment approaches, and local authorities will need to ensure that individuals are referred to a service best suited to their needs. The Scottish Home and Health Department will shortly be issuing special guidance to local authorities, encouraging them to give special attention to the needs of alcohol and drug misusers within community care.

Breast Screening

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the preliminary results of the breast screening programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: A report on the Scottish breast screening programme will be published towards the end of March 1993 in conjunction with similar reports for England and Wales and I shall place a copy in the Library of the House.

The data of the Scottish report will relate to 1991-92 which was the first full year of operation. Preliminary results indicate that attendance was 72 per cent. of women invited and that the rate of cancers detected was 6·3 per 1,000 women screened.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of long-term unemployed people in each travel-to-work area in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The information is available on the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information.

Investment

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total value of investment and the names of organisations or companies invested in by each local enterprise company in Scotland and by Highland Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Stewart: Investments made by local enterprise companies are a matter for these bodies, subject to their respective delegated authorities. The most significant investments made by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in terms of value and proportion of capital held, are reported in the bodies' published annual accounts, copies of which are in the Library. I am arranging for the chairmen of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to write to the hon. Member with details of the remainder of their investments.

Right to Buy

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the right of tenants to buy houses owned by par value co-ops including their eligibility for the relevant discounts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are two types of par value co-operatives: non-fully mutual co-operatives, and fully mutual co-operatives. Secure tenants of local authorities who transfer to a non-fully mutual co-operative have a preserved right to buy and are eligible to purchase their houses at a discount in accordance with section 128 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. Fully mutual co-operative tenants do not have a statutory right to buy. Their rights are defined by the tenancy agreements drawn up between them and the co-operatives.

Dentistry

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many patients have been de-registered by their dentists for NHS treatment in *(a)* each Scottish health board and *(b)* Argyll and Bute since (i) 1979, (ii) 1 October 1990 and (iii) 8 July 1992.

Mr. Stewart: Formal arrangements for patients to be registered with a specific dentist were introduced under the new contract for general dental services on 1 October 1990. No information about de-registration is therefore available prior to October 1990. Information about de-registrations since 1 October 1990 supplied by health boards for their area is contained in the table. Information for individual local government districts is not available.

Number of Patients de-registered by dentists in Scotland by Health Board area

Health Board	*1 October 1990 to 7 July 1992*	*8 July 1992 to 29 January 1993*
Argyll and Clyde	49	2,222
Ayrshire and Arran	46	1,060
Borders	14	1,186
Dumfries and Galloway	72	3,394
Fife	10	241
Forth Valley	140	304
Grampian	18	1,864
Greater Glasgow	116	432
Highland	30	189
Lanarkshire	34	231
Lothian	142	330
Orkney	Nil	Nil
Shetland	Nil	Nil
Tayside	47	184
Western Isles	Nil	11
Scotland (Total)	718	11,648

Lambs

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has of infringements of the law regarding the time limit on the castration of lambs in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I have no reports of infringements relating to the castration of lambs.

This practice is regulated by the Protection of Animals (Scotland) Act 1912 which prohibits castration without the use of an anaesthetic from the age of three months.

The code of recommendations for the welfare of sheep stipulates that castration must be carried out only in strict accordance with the law and by a competent trained operator. Where anaesthetic is used, the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, as amended, restrict operators to veterinary surgeons only.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council recently reconsidered the general practice of castration of farm animals. On its recommendation the Government are funding a research programme which is now in progress.

Legal Aid

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average legal aid cost per case at *(a)* the sheriff court in a solemn procedure trial and *(b)* a High Court trial, where (i) there is one accused and (ii) there is more than one accused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1991-92 the average legal aid cost of a case in *(a)* a Sheriff court solemn procedure trail was £2,049 and in *(b)* a High Court trial was £5,716.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average legal aid cost of a High Court of Justiciary trial day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1991-92 the average legal aid cost of a case in a High Court trial was £5,716.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average legal aid cost per case at *(a)* the sheriff

court in a solemn procedure trial and *(b)* a High Court trial applicable to (i) the advocate involved and (ii) the solicitor involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: For 1991-92 the information is as follows:

Average cost per case (£)

	Counsel	*Solicitor*
Sheriff Court—solemn trial	182	1,702
High Court—trial	1,960	3,358

Note: In addition various outlays such as payments to witnesses, may be payable.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average legal aid cost per case at the sheriff court in summary trials.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1991-92 the average cost per case was £798.

Records Office

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future organisation of the Scottish Records Office.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that, under the next steps initiative, the Scottish Record Office should be considered for executive agency status.

MV Braer

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the aftermath of the grounding of the MV Braer.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* Follow-up action to the Shetland oilspill received the highest priority. The Government's bridging fund for businesses facing economic hardship is now in place; the health survey of people living in the vicinity has started; the remit and chairman, Professor William Ritchie, of the ecological steering group have been announced and the remaining membership will be shortly; and the fishery exclusion zone has been extended. The Government will continue to ensure that all necessary steps are taken.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* business frauds, *(b)* cheque, credit and cash card frauds, *(c)* thefts from companies, *(d)* thefts from employees, *(e)* offences of shoplifting, *(f)* offences of vandalism against business and *(g)* assaults at the work place were committed (i) in Scotland and (ii) in each police force area in 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The only available information collected centrally is given in the table.

Number of Cases of theft by shoplifting recorded by the police in Scotland, 1991

Police Force	*Number*
Northern	905
Grampian	2,329
Tayside	2,918
Fife	1,064
Lothian and Borders	5,750
Central	1,723
Strathclyde	14,862
Dumfries and Galloway	547
Scotland	30,098

Disability

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has held recently with the Council of Scottish Local Authorities concerning the new arrangements for the provision of personal assistance services to people who would previously have been eligible for financial assistance from the independent living fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: *[holding answer 4 February, 1993]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State most recently met representatives of the convention's social work committee on 2 October 1992 when a number of community care issues were discussed. This meeting preceded the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People on 24 November about the future of the independent living fund and its successor body arrangements to be introduced from 1 April.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland subsequently announced on 2 December that in 1993-94 £2·8 million was being added to both Government supported expenditure and to aggregate exchequer finance to cover costs to local authorities arising out of their responsibilities under the new arrangements.

Disadvantaged Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances in the Highlands region; and how many of those are located in severely disadvantaged areas.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 February, 1993]:* In Highland region 3,989 producers were paid hill livestock compensatory allowances under the 1992 scheme. Of these 3,955 were located in severely disadvantaged areas.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 8 February 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judicial Appointments

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish the specification for the post for each category of judicial appointment, outlining the selection criteria.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The criteria employed by the Lord Chancellor are set out in the latest edition of the booklet "Judicial Appointments: the Lord Chancellor's Policies and Procedures", which was published in November 1990. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Judiciary

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to reform the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has confidence in the judiciary in its present form. However, he is always ready to bring forward proposals for reform which he considers to be desirable in the public interest. For example, the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill *[Lords]*, at present before this House, provides among other things for reduction of the retirement age of judges to 70.

Law Officers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what requirements there are that *(a)* the Lord Chancellor, *(b)* the Attorney-General and *(c)* the Solicitor-General be legally qualified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor must be a person able to discharge duties as the President of the Supreme Court of Judicature—that is, the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the Crown court—and also as the presiding chairman of the House of Lords in its judicial capacity and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General must be legally qualified in order that they may perform their general duties; and are members of the Bar in order that they may represent the Crown in each of the Queen's courts in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland.

Barristers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to make available to barristers who are unsuccessful in an application for silk the grounds on which he decided not to put their names forward.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Competition for appointment as Queen's counsel is intense. It is inevitable that many able applicants will be disappointed. However, it is always open to any unsuccessful applicant to see a senior official of the Lord Chancellor's Department to discuss his or her application and the view the Lord Chancellor took in that case. Each year a number of practitioners avail themselves of this facility.

Court Lists

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what instruction he has given to magistrates courts regarding the imposition of charges for court lists; if he will list the level of such charges in all courts in England and Wales: and whether these are levied across the board or apply only to specific groups.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None; however, in 1989 the Home Office advised magistrates courts that the news media should be asked to meet the costs of providing copies of court papers. The charges, and the circumstances in which they may be sought, will vary from court to court and details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what number and proportion of cases granted legal aid in each of the past five years are those where the involvement of a solicitor could have been avoided because other agencies could have helped free of charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. However, advice agencies are able to provide a high standard of advice on a wide range of matters, such as housing and employment difficulties, about which solicitors are also consulted.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iran

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Iranian authorities to stop executions, with particular reference to cases where defendants claim that they have not had a fair trial.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Together with EC partners we made representations to the Iranian authorities in May 1992 about the high number of executions in Iran and specifically the summary execution of a member of the Baha'i community. In October we made representations about the death sentences passed on two other Baha'is following summary trials and the right of defendants to a lawyer. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also raised these latest cases with the Iranian Foreign Minister at the United Nations General Assembly in September. They are now being reviewed by the Iranian authorities. International concern at the high number of executions and the absence of guarantees of due legal process in Iran was highlighted in the resolution on human rights in Iran, which we and our EC partners co-sponsored, and which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December.

Council of Europe

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government were represented at the fourth part of the forty-fourth ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1 to 5 February.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Parliamentary Session on 2 February, in his capacity as chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, to deliver the statutory report of that body and to answer questions from the parliamentarians. He took the opportunity to make a short statement in his national capacity.

Bosnia

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the relative contributions of countries providing military support towards the United Nations humanitarian aid effort in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following troops have deployed to the United Nations protection force in Bosnia to offer protective support for convoys of humanitarian aid and released detainees:

	Number
United Kingdom	2,500
France	1,800
Canada	1,200
Spain	750
Netherlands	580
Denmark	150
Belgium	120
Norway	35
Portugal	12

Council of Ministers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals or decisions have been made for the presidency or secretariat of each Council of Ministers of the European Community to issue an official minute of each of their meetings, to include a reflection of the views expressed, the decisions reached and the record of votes cast.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Council secretariat already issues press releases after each Council meeting providing brief details of the discussion and of any agreements reached. Following a decision by the Edinburgh European Council, the Council secretariat will include in this press release the record of the vote, including explanations of the vote where delegations request these, whenever a formal vote is taken in Council.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding his policy towards the renewal of the United Nations mandate in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We consider renewal of the mandate of the United Nations protection force in Croatia to be crucial to the peace process and will pursue it in the Security Council when it falls due. Initial discussions are already under way.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the numbers of displaced persons currently in Bosnia Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are some 740,000 displaced people in Bosnia Herzegovina; of these 480,000 are in central Bosnia and western Herzegovina.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the prevalence of war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are appalled by the numerous allegations that violations of international humanitarian law have taken and continue to take place in the territory of former Yugoslavia. The United Nations Security Council has established a commission of experts to examine and analyse information on such breaches submitted by states.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom staff are employed in Her Majesty's embassies in *(a)* Zagreb and *(b)* Belgrade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 8 February, there were seven United Kingdom-based staff at the British embassy in Zagreb and 28 United Kingdom-based staff at the British embassy in Belgrade.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the supply of arms and munitions to Serbian irregulars, militia and Chetniks currently operating in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of allegations in the media concerning the supply of arms to these groups. We have no specific information to corroborate these reports.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of current United Nations sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The economic effects of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro are becoming increasingly evident. In concert with our EC and other partners, we are offering assistance to the Danube's riparian states in order to prevent the recurrence of the recent breaches of the embargo. On 4 February, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe appointed an executive sanctions co-ordinator, who will be responsible for ensuring that sanctions are applied as rigorously as possible.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has of the number of people killed through artillery fire in the current conflict in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are unable to provide definitive statistics about casualties caused by artillery fire in Croatia and Bosnia. Reports of numbers killed differ radically according to source.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Southern Africa

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest assessment by Her Majesty's Government of the capacity of the Governments of the south African region adequately to feed all their people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The prospects are that this year's harvest will be much better than last year's, but it is still too early to make an accurate assessment.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements exist within his Department to assess need for aid to Sierra Leone and monitor its use.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Officials of ODA's west and north Africa department, in conjunction with the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and with the high commission at Freetown, make regular assessments of economic and social conditions in Sierra Leone, and thus of the need for aid. British aid activities in that country are monitored by the high commission and by officials from the Overseas Development Administration.

Lithuania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new applications he is considering for the use of the know-how fund in Lithuania.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund is considering four new projects which will benefit the agriculture and energy sectors and small business creation. These are valued at approximately £366,000. Other smaller projects are also in the pipeline, but have not yet been costed.

UNESCO

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on Overseas Development Administration programmes in the first and second years of a return by the United Kingdom to UNESCO.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No decision has been taken to rejoin UNESCO.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research Councils

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the total identifiable expenditure *(a)* of all and *(b)* of each of the research councils (i) has been spent in England and in Wales in each of the last five years and (ii) is intended to be spent in England and Wales in 1993-94.

Mr. Robert Jackson: In 1991-92 the research councils collectively spent approximately 72 per cent. of their grant in aid in England, and approximately 4 per cent. in Wales. The respective percentage figures for the individual Research Councils were as follows:

	Per cent.
Agricultural and Food Research Council	84 and 7
Economic and Social Research Council	81 and 2
Medical Research Council	82 and 1
Natural Environment Research Council	75 and 15
Science and Engineering Research Council	67 and 2

Figures for earlier and subsequent years are not available.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what procedures are employed in the selection of members of *(a)* research councils, *(b)* the boards of research councils and *(c)* the funding committees of research councils; and what independent mechanism within his Department exists to ensure the fairness of the process and the distribution of members among the various institutions active in each field of research;

(2) what procedures are employed to ensure that membership of research councils, the boards of those councils and the funding committees of those councils does not give any undue advantage in the allocation of funds to institutions to which the members belong.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Members of the research councils are appointed after wide consultation with interested Departments and the councils themselves. The Government aim to secure an appropriate balance of academic and industrial expertise and experience.

The composition of their committees is a matter for the councils themselves, as is the allocation of funds to institutions. Each council operates a system of peer review, aimed at securing the highest scientific quality in competition for the funds available.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

"Red Hot Dutch"

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many complaints he has received from those members of the public who have paid for decoders which enable them to receive a satellite programme called "Red Hot Dutch".

Mr. Brooke: I have received some 450 letters from members of the public about the satellite television channel "Red Hot Dutch", now renamed "Red Hot Television". Most of those who have written appear not to be subscribers to the channel; but it is not possible to be sure of that.

BBC Income

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the total income of the BBC in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how much and what percentage of that income was derived from the licence fee in each of those years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	Net licence fee income £ million	Total income £ million	Licence fee income as a percentage of total income Per cent.
1982-83	683·2	694·4	98·39
1983-84	702·0	718·9	97·65
1984-85	723·1	736·0	98·25
1985-86	922·9	935·7	98·63
1986-87	960·7	983·2	97·71
1987-88	1,019·6	1,069·6	95·33
1988-89	1,080·1	1,116·4	96·75
1989-90	1,171·5	1,212·6	96·61
1990-91	1,274·6	1,298·8	98·14
1991-92	1,393·6	1,413·4	98·53

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

35. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will outline the proposed restructuring of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns).

37. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the policy relating to criminal prosecutions by the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service applies the principles set out in the "Code for Crown Prosecutors". A copy of the code is in the Library.

Lambeth Council

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration the Serious Fraud Office has given to the issues arising out of the recent report under section 5 of the Local Government Act 1988 on the conduct of some departments of Lambeth council.

The Attorney-General: The director of the Serious Fraud Office has been in contact with the Audit Commission in connection with this report and has asked the Metropolitan police to keep him informed of matters brought to their attention regarding Lambeth council so that he can decide what, if any, action by the Serious Fraud Office might be appropriate.

TRANSPORT

Disabled People (Public Transport)

12. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with local authorities regarding access to public transport for the disabled.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is in close and regular touch with local authorities on a wide range of issues to improve services for the disabled including the introduction of low-floor buses, design standards for light rapid transit systems and accessible taxis.

Coach Safety

13. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has recently had with the European Commission on the subject of coach safety.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has regular communication with the European Commission on directives covering various aspects of vehicle safety, including those affecting coach safety.

Rail Privatisation

14. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support he has received from the United Kingdom freight industry for his proposals to privatise British Rail freight.

Mr. MacGregor: Our discussions suggest that the great majority of existing rail freight users support our proposals to privatise British Rail's freight businesses. Like us, they believe that they offer the best hope of providing a rail freight industry for the future which will be competitive and respond to customers' needs.

15. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of his legislative proposals for British Rail upon the lines north and west of Inverness.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State announced on Second Reading of the Railways Bill, ScotRail, which includes the services north and west of Inverness, will be one of the first groups of services to be prepared by BR for franchising.

18. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to ensure that the present standards of safety currently held by British Rail are imposed upon new private sector operators.

Mr. Freeman: We have accepted all the Health and Safety Commission's recommendations for a safety regime which will ensure that high safety standards on the railways are maintained after privatisation. The recommendations have also been endorsed by the chairman of BR.

23. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of rail services in south Wales after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in this House on 2 February in the debate on the Second Reading of the Railways Bill.

27. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the subsidy required to maintain the Southampton-Eastbourne railway service after the franchising of this route.

Mr. Freeman: I have made no such estimate. In the process of franchising British Rail passenger services, subsidy requirements will in future be market tested. It has not yet been decided whether this service would be franchised on its own or as part of a larger grouping.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps will be taken to ensure that a privatised British Rail will cater adequately for disabled passengers.

Mr. Freeman: Under our proposals for railway privatisation, all railway operators will be required by the terms of their operating licences to have regard to the needs of passengers with mobility handicaps. The regulator will be responsible for issuing and checking compliance with railway licences and he will have a specific statutory duty to look after the interests of disabled passengers.

Regional Airports

16. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to develop regional airports within the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: We believe that future development at regional airports is best undertaken in the private sector. That is why we are encouraging their privatisation. We are also providing more opportunities for air services from regional airports through our liberalisation policies.

Traffic Cameras

17. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will extend the use of red light and speed cameras in London.

Mr. Norris: It is for the Metropolitan police and the City of London police to decide on the deployment of red light and speed cameras in their respective areas of London.

Jubilee Line

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position on the plans to extend the Jubilee line.

Mr. MacGregor: Negotiations are continuing with the administrators of Olympia and York Canary Wharf on the terms of an agreement on which they are to contribute towards the cost of the Jubilee line extension. We have made provision for the construction of the extension subject to a satisfactory agreement being reached.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make statement on the current outturn of expenditure on the Jubilee line development relative to budget.

Mr. Norris: Through London Underground Ltd., the Government have spent nearly £160 million preparing to build the Jubilee line extension. The latest approved estimate of the total cost of the extension is £1·5 billion at June 1990 prices—something over £1·8 billion cash.

Railway Closures

20. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to keep in place the present procedures which must be undertaken before a railway is closed.

Mr. Freeman: The Railways Bill sets out new closure procedures no less rigorous than the present ones. The current arrangements will continue to apply to lines and stations which are not currently operated by British Rail.

Buses (Urban Areas)

21. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has taken to encourage the use of buses in urban areas.

Mr. Freeman: I recently announced the allocation of over £15 million to local authorities in England for bus priority measures in 1993-94. This represents a substantial increase on the sum originally budgeted for. Some £4 million was allocated in 1992-93 for similar schemes.

Bypasses

22. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses he plans to start building in the next financial year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We plan to start 19 new bypasses, 83 miles in length, in the next financial year.

In addition to these schemes, there are 22 other national schemes planned to start in England next year. Although not described as bypasses, most of these relieve one or more communities of through traffic.

My Department is also funding the construction of 24 local bypasses and relief roads through the transport supplementary grant and borrowing approvals announced in December.

London Transport (Investment)

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the level of London Transport's investment in 1993-94.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about London Transport's investment plans for 1993-94 and subsequent years. These have included letters from hon. Members, local councillors and members of the public.

M1 (Lighting)

25. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to extend the lighting on the M1 motorway.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is proposed to extend the lighting on the M1 between junctions 40 and 42 and to light the M1/M62 interchange. Further lighting is expected on sections of the M1 as they are widened to four lanes.

Waterloo-Exeter Line

26. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when British Rail expects to introduce the proposed new trains on the Waterloo-Exeter line.

Mr. Freeman: The first new train for the Waterloo-Exeter line was delivered to British Rail on 23 January. It will enter passenger service shortly. The remaining trains should be in service by July.

Public Transport (London)

28. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of his Department's budget for London is spent on public transport.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not have a separate budget for expenditure in London. But, in the current financial year, London Transport and Network SouthEast are expected to invest in total about three times the amount which the Department will be spending on the construction and capital maintenance of roads in London.

London Underground

29. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has received from London Transport on capital investment for the modernisation of London Underground.

Mr. Norris: My Department regularly receives investment proposals from London Underground. Spending plans for 1993-94 and following years have not yet been finalised.

The Minch

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Minch is designated by Her Majesty's Government as an internal sea or an internationally recognised navigable strait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: By virtue of the United Kingdom Territorial Water Order in Council 1964 the area known as the Minches is within the internal waters of the United Kingdom.

By virtue of article 5 of the UN convention on the territorial sea and contiguous zone 1958, ratified by the United Kingdom on 14 March 1960 there exists a right of innocent passage through that area.

Rail Freight

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the results of his review of section 8 grants.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's speech during the Second Reading of the Railways Bill on 2 February, *Official Report*, columns 164-65.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase the section 8 grant budget.

Mr. Freeman: This will depend on demand and other calls on public expenditure. The budget is kept under review and to date no schemes have been turned down through lack of funds. The need for additional funding will be considered in the light of the proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend on 2 February, *Official Report*, columns 164-65.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list what information he has of individual items of traffic transferred from rail freight distribution and train load freight to roads since July 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter between British Rail and its customers.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the operational and infrastructure cost savings he expects for the rail freight sector following privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Privatisation and open access to the network will transform rail freight from a public sector monopoly into a competitive privately owned industry. Operators will need to improve constantly to stay ahead of their competitors. They will be free from public sector constraints on finance and will be able to benefit directly from the cost and service improvements they make.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the report by Mercer Management Consultants into the future of the rail freight industry.

Mr. Freeman: No. The report will contain commercially confidential information. We will be publishing proposals on the future of British Rail's freight businesses after we have studied Mercer's report.

MV Braer

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his written answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *1*, what evidence the marine accident investigation branch has now taken or plans to take in respect of the progress of the steps that were being taken by the owners of the MV Braer at the time of its accident to renew the insurance cover of the vessel.

Mr. Norris: The conduct of the inquiry into the Braer accident is a matter for the inspector, and I cannot discuss the evidence which is being obtained in the course of the investigation.

M66–A664 (Report)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report of the public inquiry into the M66 junction A664; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Soon.

Eastgate Cement Works

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government funding has been spent on providing freight facilities at Eastgate cement works since 1975 to help transfer freight from road to rail.

Mr. Freeman: There has been no Government assistance towards facilities at Blue Circle's Eastgate cement works. However, a 50 per cent. freight facilities grant under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 was awarded in January 1984 towards the provision of modern wagons, for the movement of cement from Eastgate to northern destinations, and for work at two of the reception depots. The award led to a total grant payment of £728,000. In common with all awards the traffic has continued to be monitored annually and the results have shown that the original grant has been more than justified.

Passengers Charter

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will amend the passengers charter so as to require British Rail to offer a full discount on fares on InterCity trains which arrive at their destination one and half hours or more late.

Mr. Freeman: Under the passengers charter, a full refund is available if the train a passenger planned to catch is cancelled or delayed, and the journey is not made. In addition, British Rail offer vouchers of 20 per cent. or more of the fare paid if a journey, or any leg of it, is delayed by more than an hour. Where delays are particularly serious, the compensation offered can be as much as 100 per cent. I believe that these arrangements provide reasonable recompense to those who are seriously inconvenienced.

Shipping Routes

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made for the submission of evidence to Lord Donaldson's inquiry into possible measures to protect United Kingdom coastlines from pollution by merchant shipping.

Mr. MacGregor: Lord Donaldson held a preliminary hearing at Church house, Westminster on 29 January at which he invited written submissions to the inquiry to reach the secretariat by the end of February. Lord Donaldson emphasised that although his Inquiry was set up in reaction to the Braer accident, he will not be investigating that accident. It is already the subject of investigations by the marine accident investigation branch and the Liberian Government. Nor does his inquiry cover the ecological effects of the Braer oil spill, which will be assessed by the ecological steering group appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Lord Donaldson said he would consider any issues within his terms of reference which appear to him to be relevant but he expects to concentrate on finding answers to four questions:

What incidents could occur in the future which could cause damage to the coastline of the United Kingdom? The inquiry is likely to concentrate on oil pollution but other pollutants will be considered if they appear to be relevant.

How might such incidents arise?

What practical steps can be taken to make such incidents much less likely to arise?

What practical steps can be taken to reduce or eliminate the adverse effects of such an incident if it does arise?

At this stage, the following topics have been identified as ones which the inquiry expects to consider:

Navigational issues, including routeing, weather forecasting and position finding.

Vessel structure, including design, classification by the classification societies and standards and systems of maintenance.

Vessel operation including who takes crucial decisions, whether the responsibility of ships masters is being eroded, training officers and crews and communications.

Effectiveness of existing national and international legislation, and possible improvements.

Lessons from worldwide experience of accidents and near-accidents.

Insurance and compensation, as they influence decisions taken in potentially dangerous situations.

Salvage and whether present and traditional arrangements are satisfactory in the context of a hazardous cargo.

Treatment of pollution, including means of preventing pollutants reaching the coast, treatment of pollutants which do reach the coast and contingency planning.

Lord Donaldson hopes that a very wide range of individuals and organisations with relevant expertise will send written submissions on these matters to the inquiry. These should be sent to:

The Secretary to Lord Donaldson's Inquiry
Room 3/2, Sunley House
90-93 High Holborn
LONDON
WC1V 6LP

Freight

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will allow private sector freight interests access to British Rail's operational and infrastructure accounts.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail does not produce separate operational and infrastructure accounts at present.

British Rail (Accounts)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct British Rail to produce accounts separating infrastructure accounting from operations, in accordance with the relevant EC directive.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is already making preparations for the implementation in its accounting year 1993-94 of the provisions of Council directive EEC 91/440 requiring that the accounts for business relating to the provision of transport services and those for business relating to the management of railway infrastructure are kept separate.

Northern Ireland Railways

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what property, rights or liabilities of Northern Ireland Railways are affected by the Railways Bill.

Mr. Freeman: It is not the intention that Northern Ireland Railways should be affected in any way by the provisions of the Railways Bill.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what property, rights or liabilities of British Rail relate to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Freeman: That is a matter for British Rail, but I understand that the board has no significant property, rights or liabilities in Northern Ireland.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Norris: A provisional list of regulations that impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Darlington-Bishop Auckland Railway Line

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present apportionment of costs between British Rail sectors for the Darlington to Bishop Auckland railway line; and what will be the change in apportionment of track costs following withdrawal of cement trains later in the current year.

Mr. Freeman: This is primarily a matter for British Rail. The route between Darlington and Bishop Auckland is Regional Railways sponsored. In such cases, freight flows are charged only incremental costs and there is not, therefore, likely to be any effect.

Rail Track Costs

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what legislation inhibits the public payment of rail track costs for freight operators; and if he will seek to revoke that legislation.

Mr. Freeman: The proposed new grant towards track changes would be paid under EC regulation 1893/91,

subject to the designation of the Secretary of State as the competent authority for that purpose. It would take effect when Railtrack is established and when the new regime for track access and charging commences.

Forth Bridge

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests for funding he has received from British Rail for the maintenance of the Forth bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None.

MVs Derbyshire and Tribulus

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will contact the European Shipping Commissioner and Mr. Alex Underwood of Salmond street, Gateshead to collect further evidence about the MV Derbyshire and the MV Tribulus.

Mr. Norris: My Department is in frequent contact with the EC Commissioner responsible for shipping matters.

If anyone has information about the MV Derbyshire which they regard as "new and important" evidence under the terms of section 57 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970, it should be sent to my Department for consideration. Any information about the MV Tribulus accident in 1990 should be sent to the Isle of Man marine administration, with which the ship is registered.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider his decision not to order a full public inquiry into the sinking of MV Derbyshire.

Mr. Norris: A formal investigation into the loss of the MV Derbyshire was held between October 1987 and March 1988. I have no plans to order a further public inquiry.

Passenger Services

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the increase in public service obligation grant that will be required to maintain passenger services at their present level following withdrawal of freight services.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is in the process of preparing its budget for 1993-94, which will provide the basis for determining public service obligation grant for next year. The board's claim for grant will take account of the impact of any expected changes in the pattern of freight flows on the finances of the grant-supported businesses.

London Transport (Sub-contractors)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to apply the policy of prompt payment of sub-contractors towards new developments by London Transport.

Mr. Norris: I am advised that London Transport has a policy of settling payments to all suppliers and contractors strictly in accordance with the terms agreed in its contracts with them. This applies equally to investment in the existing infrastructure and in new development.

British Rail (Capital Investment)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the capital investment at constant prices by British Rail in 1991-92, 1992-93, planned for 1993-94 and 1994-95, in the 1991 autumn statement and now proposed for 1993-94 and 1994-95, excluding spending associated with the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail invested a total of £1,005 million in 1991-92, of which £751 million was spent on the existing railway. British Rail is planning to invest around £1·5 billion in 1992-93, over £1 billion of which is expected to be spent on the existing railway. BR is currently considering plans for future years as part of its 1993-94 budget and 1993 corporate plan.

InterCity (Timetabled Journeys)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with British Rail concerning the lengthening of timetabled journeys on InterCity arising from track maintenance shortfall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to plan its track maintenance programme within available resources. Prudent timetabling must have regard to the implementation of this programme.

West London Rail Links

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for improvements to rail transport arrangements between Ealing, Greenford, Hanwell, Perivale, Northolt and Paddington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Most stations in these areas will benefit from the £750 million upgrading of London Underground's Central line with new trains and signalling or from the £240 million modernisation of Network SouthEast's Thames and Chiltern division with new trains, signalling and station improvements.

Jubilee Line Extension

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects construction work to start on the Jubilee line extension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: That depends upon the settlement of detailed terms for the private sector contribution to the cost of the extension, upon which negotiations with the administrators of Olympia and York continue.

M1

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects junction 2 on the southbound section of the M1 to reopen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Given reasonable weather conditions, the junction should be reopened before the end of March.

PRIME MINISTER

Relate

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are taken to co-ordinate the work of the United Kingdom Departments and Scottish and Welsh Offices concerned with Relate; and if he will make a statement on the grants for Relate for future years.

The Prime Minister: Consultations take place within government on this matter as necessary. The Home Office grant to Relate supports marriage guidance in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grant for 1993-94 of £1,530,000 is 38 per cent. higher than that for 1991-92. It is planned to increase the grant for Relate in 1994-95 by 4 per cent. over the 1993-94 level, subject to public expenditure constraints. The Scottish Office provides a grant to Marriage Counselling Scotland. In 1993-94 this will amount to £87,288, an increase of one and half times compared with 1992-93.

Coal Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if he will undertake a comparative study of the employment effects of any tax or consumer subsidy for coal mining on the existing job in nuclear energy supply and in the offshore gas and oil industry.

The Prime Minister: The coal review being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is considering, among other options, methods and costs of reducing the price of British Coal by providing support to the coal industry, for example by subsidy or levy arrangements, and the implications for other energy providers and customers. The effect of any measures on employment in other energy sectors is one of the factors being considered. Evidence on this has been submitted to the review from organisations and individuals within the nuclear, oil and gas industries, and is being given full consideration.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vehicle-Taking Offences

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the current legislation to introduce stiffer penalties where death has occurred as a result of aggravated vehicle-taking offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: It is not our present intention to change the sentencing provisions of the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992. We have, however, made clear our intention to raise the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous or drink driving to 10 years as soon as a suitable legislative opportunity is available.

Drug Problems

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies he intends to promote to tackle drug problems in Mansfield and in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Jack: The Government's strategy for tackling drug misuse is aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs. In Nottingham a local drugs prevention team has been set up under the Home Office drugs prevention initiative—DPI—and they will continue to work with the local community in finding effective ways of preventing the spread of drug misuse. As the work of the 20 local teams is evaluated and lessons are learnt from it, we aim to ensure that other areas of the country have the opportunity to benefit from the DOI's experience.

Nottinghamshire, like other areas, will benefit from other aspects of the Government's drug strategy such as the measures in the Criminal Justice Bill to tighten the law on drug trafficking and money laundering, the assistance we are providing to other countries to help reduce the supply of drugs into this country and the tougher controls which we are introducing on precursor and essential chemicals.

At the national level, we are committed to bringing forward proposals to ensure that the control of drug misuse is co-ordinated effectively, and the Criminal Justice Bill which we hope to bring before the House shortly, further tightens the law on drug trafficking and money laundering.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies his Department intends to promote to tackle drug problems in Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government's strategy for tackling drug misuse is aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs. Within the Greater London area, six local drug prevention initiative teams are working in key areas with the local community in developing imaginative strategies specifically designed to tackle local drugs problems. In addition, the London drug policy forum, which receives funding from the Home Office, has initiatives in hand for promoting the co-ordination of local authority effort on drug-related matters.

At the national level, we are committed to bringing forward proposals to ensure that the control of drug misuse is co-ordinated effectively and the Criminal Justice Bill, which we hope to bring before the House shortly, further tightens the law on drug trafficking and money laundering.

Offenders (Rehabilitation)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to prepare and motivate for employment those who are subject to a court sentence in *(a)* Mansfield and *(b)* Nottinghamshire as part of their rehabilitation.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 11 January to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) at column *600*. It is the responsibility of the Nottinghamshire probation service to prepare and implement local plans to achieve the objective of ensuring effective provision for offenders under its supervision in relation to training and employment; in partnership with training and enterprise councils, the employment service and others locally.

In relation to those who receive a custodial sentence, the prison service has been working closely with the employment service to introduce preparation for job search courses and job clubs in prisons to improve the help given to prisoners in preparing for and finding jobs.

The Home Office funds two national voluntary organisations, Apex Trust and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, which provide employment services for offenders and ex-offenders. Part of their programme of work is to assist probation services with employment and training for offenders under their supervision, and to assist the prison service in preparing prisoners for release.

Sri Lanka (Deportations)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of Sri Lankans deported from the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table.

Sri Lankan citizens removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process

Year	*Number*
1988	8
1989	12
1990	4
1991	4
[1]1992	5

[1] January to September.

Race Relations

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *798*, if he will give a breakdown by region of the number of posts at present funded or part-funded by section 11 grant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 11 is not administered on a regional basis. The table shows approximate numbers of posts, in full-time equivalent terms, for which payment of grant has been approved to local authorities and other eligible bodies, grouped on a geographical basis:

	Number
North West	1,320·6
North East	1,587·9
Wales	66·8
West Midlands	1,545·6
East Midlands	701·4
East Anglia	131·7
South West	89·1
London	3,784·5
South East	898·5

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *798*, how many posts at present funded or part-funded under section 11 grant, are engaged in *(a)* education in schools, *(b)* training, *(c)* advice work and *(d)* economic development.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the form requested. Approval for funding has been given for some 8,876 posts, in full-time equivalent terms, in education. A large proportion of these posts are school-based. In addition, approximately 1,250 posts, in full-time equivalent terms, have been approved in other service areas, including social services, housing employment, training and enterprise.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many posts in *(a)* Hampshire county council and *(b)* district councils in Hampshire are currently funded under section 11; what is the total cost of these posts; and if he will list the number and purpose of each post funded in each authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Numbers of posts approved for funding from 1 April 1992 are given in the table, with current full-year potential grant cost:

Local authority	*Total No. of full-time equivalent posts*	*Total grant cost £*
Hampshire county council	52·9	681,698
Southampton city council	1·62	19,550
Overall total:	54·52	701,248

Hampshire county council's posts provide a school and college-based English language development service. Southampton city council's posts are concerned with support services for Asian women experiencing domestic violence.

European Election Boundaries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *595*, when he proposes to bring forward legislation on the European election boundaries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's proposals on the basis for this legislation will be brought forward shortly. The legislation itself will be introduced at the appropriate time bearing in mind the dates of future elections.

Prisoners (Media Interviews)

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many media interviews with convicted prisoners have been published in the last two years; and what are the criteria for allowing such interviews.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications to interview prisoners are generally processed through the Home Office public relations branch. Each application is dealt with on its merits and a decision to proceed is made by the public relations branch in conjunction with prison governors, senior officials and, where necessary, Ministers.

At the outset, the journalist involved would need to outline fully his or her request and justify the need to interview prisoners.

If the interview is allowed to proceed for research or private purposes, an undertaking would need to be given that none of the material obtained would be used in any publication or broadcast.

Statistical information about the number of media interviews with convicted prisoners, published or broadcast during the last two years, is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Relate

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase, in real terms, the grant to the charity Relate.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the question from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ms. Walley) on 4 February at columns *288-89*.

Bingo Clubs

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what way and for what reason he intends that licensed bingo clubs should be regulated differently from the proposed national lottery.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The arrangements for the regulation of licensed bingo clubs are set out in the Gaming Act 1968 and the Gaming (Bingo) Act 1985. The proposed regulatory framework for the national lottery is set out in the National Lottery Etc. Bill currently before the House. The differences between the two sets of controls reflect the different nature of the activities involved.

Telephone Tapping

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been instituted for illegal telephone tapping since the coming into force of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Interception of Communications Act 1985 came into force on 10 April 1986. From 1986 to 1991 there have been six prosecutions under section 1(1) of the Act. Information collected centrally does not identify whether the communications were by post or by means of public telecommunication systems.

Firearms

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of offences recorded by each police force in England and Wales in which firearms are reported to have been used in each quarter of 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Jack: The tables give the information requested. Statistics for 1992 are not yet available.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in England and Wales
1987

Force	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	20	19	31	11	81
Bedfordshire	31	40	19	13	103
Cambridgeshire	8	15	17	19	59
Cheshire	17	19	14	12	62
Cleveland	8	11	6	6	31
Cumbria	7	18	31	11	67
Derbyshire	42	29	32	21	124
Devon and Cornwall	30	41	36	19	126
Dorset	1	4	3	5	13
Durham	15	22	29	21	87
Essex	73	89	74	62	298
Gloucestershire	1	6	6	1	14
Greater Manchester	118	111	131	122	482
Hampshire	48	65	49	44	206
Hertfordshire	18	42	31	29	120
Humberside	81	110	78	83	252
Kent	50	63	58	45	216
Lancashire	29	25	14	17	85
Leicestershire	12	20	19	29	80
Lincolnshire	29	26	16	23	94
London, City of	10	5	13	2	30
Merseyside	87	124	133	84	428
Metropolitan Police	561	555	589	575	2,280
Norfolk	17	17	10	15	59
Northamptonshire	35	30	30	35	130
Northumbria	104	105	110	68	387
North Yorkshire	23	15	19	11	68
Nottinghamshire	47	104	64	68	283
South Yorkshire	88	90	63	51	292
Staffordshire	30	48	36	26	140
Suffolk	16	24	29	24	93
Surrey	20	17	23	13	73
Sussex	21	20	33	18	92
Thames Valley	55	55	100	33	243

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Warwickshire	18	16	18	14	66
West Mercia	23	33	29	17	102
West Midlands	174	153	150	131	608
West Yorkshire	106	139	130	106	481
Wiltshire	15	19	19	8	61
Dyfed Powys	12	7	12	11	42
Gwent	10	8	4	7	29
North Wales	23	46	16	31	116
South Wales	63	29	76	31	199
TOTAL	2,196	2,434	2,400	1,972	9,002

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in England and Wales
1988

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon and Somerset	23	15	20	23	81
Bedfordshire	23	12	21	15	71
Cambridgeshire	22	27	21	10	80
Cheshire	20	29	23	9	81
Cleveland	18	6	16	14	54
Cumbria	10	9	20	11	50
Derbyshire	30	33	36	21	120
Devon and Cornwall	31	43	34	20	128
Dorset	5	2	4	2	13
Durham	5	12	8	12	37
Essex	61	56	54	43	214
Gloucestershire	7	4	2	8	21
Greater Manchester	128	113	112	88	441
Hampshire	34	50	46	40	170
Hertfordshire	27	41	27	29	124
Humberside	79	97	91	69	336
Kent	28	64	49	56	197
Lancashire	18	42	25	22	107
Leicestershire	27	28	21	18	94
Lincolnshire	22	27	19	19	87
London, City of	10	1	9	3	23
Merseyside	120	95	87	91	393
Metropolitan Police	530	619	628	597	2,374
Norfolk	22	20	27	21	90
Northamptonshire	28	28	31	24	111
Northumbria	75	72	90	82	319
North Yorkshire	14	23	10	22	69
Nottinghamshire	64	65	89	42	260
South Yorkshire	78	52	67	56	253
Staffordshire	35	44	41	27	147
Suffolk	17	31	20	29	97
Surrey	13	38	16	24	91
Sussex	21	23	42	17	103
Thames Valley	63	50	47	42	202
Warwickshire	11	16	21	20	68
West Mercia	17	17	15	21	70
West Midlands	145	136	133	122	536
West Yorkshire	92	123	112	88	415
Wiltshire	12	9	7	10	38
Dyfed Powys	8	11	9	11	39
Gwent	18	13	6	8	45

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
North Wales	26	32	20	23	101
South Wales	45	47	34	48	174
TOTAL	2,082	2,275	2,210	1,957	8,524

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in England and Wales
1989

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon and Somerset	38	29	15	25	107
Bedfordshire	13	14	7	17	51
Cambridgeshire	20	30	24	21	95
Cheshire	21	18	30	12	81
Cleveland	23	35	18	23	99
Cumbria	12	18	13	5	48
Derbyshire	34	47	28	32	141
Devon and Cornwall	32	38	37	31	138
Dorset	5	1	5	4	15
Durham	26	21	18	14	79
Essex	73	58	53	42	226
Gloucestershire	1	2	6	—	9
Greater Manchester	135	149	119	130	533
Hampshire	71	35	60	48	214
Hertfordshire	35	31	20	22	108
Humberside	89	115	120	88	412
Kent	49	54	75	71	249
Lancashire	14	11	10	12	47
Leicestershire	36	38	30	36	140
Lincolnshire	18	18	19	23	78
London, City of	7	11	6	5	29
Merseyside	91	106	123	86	406
Metropolitan Police	594	658	605	783	2,640
Norfolk	26	31	31	22	110
Northamptonshire	24	26	36	23	109
Northumbria	94	134	102	142	472
North Yorkshire	22	24	21	14	81
Nottinghamshire	69	84	74	57	284
South Yorkshire	81	88	85	79	333
Staffordshire	29	26	27	7	89
Suffolk	21	13	26	18	78
Surrey	19	22	18	23	82
Sussex	44	38	46	37	165
Thames Valley	41	55	69	79	244
Warwickshire	17	28	27	14	86
West Mercia	33	46	28	16	123
West Midlands	114	168	142	151	575
West Yorkshire	92	89	102	95	378
Wiltshire	10	12	15	1	38
Dyfed Powys	9	5	17	7	38
Gwent	4	18	6	12	40
North Wales	24	29	13	19	85
South Wales	38	33	39	37	147
TOTAL	2,248	2,506	2,365	2,383	9,502

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in England and Wales
1990

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon and Somerset	45	45	35	38	163
Bedfordshire	14	10	19	23	66
Cambridgeshire	31	38	29	36	134
Cheshire	23	43	25	16	107
Cleveland	37	39	31	28	135
Cumbria	14	28	9	10	61
Derbyshire	35	71	54	25	185
Devon and Cornwall	29	20	21	25	95
Dorset	9	8	4	3	24
Durham	18	12	11	20	61
Essex	62	91	71	68	292
Gloucestershire	2	2	2	—	6
Greater Manchester	140	131	120	166	557
Hampshire	36	70	63	63	232
Hertfordshire	22	25	19	29	95
Humberside	118	141	115	88	462
Kent	59	73	65	63	260
Lancashire	32	47	25	42	146
Leicestershire	39	34	38	40	151
Lincolnshire	17	22	13	14	66
London, City of	8	6	6	5	25
Merseyside	67	96	109	105	377
Metropolitan Police	691	666	704	678	2,739
Norfolk	23	33	32	31	119
Northamptonshire	42	22	31	17	112
Northumbria	123	115	97	112	447
North Yorkshire	24	22	16	18	80
Nottinghamshire	76	87	57	62	282
South Yorkshire	81	88	85	71	325
Staffordshire	40	51	34	37	162
Suffolk	26	25	25	32	108
Surrey	24	27	31	26	108
Sussex	43	63	44	43	193
Thames Valley	71	72	90	77	310
Warwickshire	29	37	26	30	122
West Mercia	28	27	16	11	82
West Midlands	153	137	124	169	583
West Yorkshire	145	131	108	118	502
Wiltshire	5	4	2	1	12
Dyfed Powys	10	22	18	5	55
Gwent	10	22	10	11	53
North Wales	20	32	20	14	86
South Wales	39	57	65	32	193
TOTAL	2,560	2,792	2,519	2,502	10,373

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in England and Wales
1991

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Avon and Somerset	46	17	39	21	123
Bedfordshire	28	26	21	34	109
Cambridgeshire	39	38	53	41	171
Cheshire	13	32	28	27	100
Cleveland	41	39	32	28	140

Force	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Cumbria	13	20	17	12	62
Derbyshire	45	34	63	52	194
Devon and Cornwall	25	18	22	19	84
Dorset	11	14	9	4	38
Durham	14	36	31	24	105
Essex	75	54	63	85	277
Gloucestershire	4	11	9	11	35
Greater Manchester	173	155	169	210	707
Hampshire	68	77	68	70	283
Hertfordshire	31	34	18	18	101
Humberside	128	136	136	114	514
Kent	72	77	70	86	305
Lancashire	64	36	70	36	206
Leicestershire	28	58	44	32	162
Lincolnshire	10	19	23	15	67
London, City of	3	4	4	4	15
Merseyside	86	101	118	93	398
Metropolitan Police	834	959	929	969	3,691
Norfolk	33	22	40	21	116
Northamptonshire	17	28	33	31	109
Northumbria	132	107	100	109	448
North Yorkshire	20	30	24	27	101
Nottinghamshire	57	109	105	101	372
South Yorkshire	51	84	84	86	305
Staffordshire	31	50	44	51	176
Suffolk	21	24	24	22	91
Surrey	26	29	38	27	120
Sussex	42	44	43	55	184
Thames Valley	85	67	63	86	301
Warwickshire	20	29	29	36	114
West Mercia	18	25	13	20	76
West Midlands	148	168	203	178	697
West Yorkshire	104	173	145	152	574
Wiltshire	1	—	2	2	5
Dyfed Powys	23	16	14	9	62
Gwent	11	13	17	4	45
North Wales	43	36	33	39	151
South Wales	47	55	44	49	195
TOTAL	2,781	3,104	3,134	3,110	12,129

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all homicides since January 1987 by the police in England and Wales in which firearms are reported to have been used, including the date of recording, the names of individuals killed, the police force area for each incident, and whether in each case a person or persons have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted in respect of each incident.

Mr. Jack: The table gives a summary of the information sought. Similar information for 1992 is not yet available.

I will write to the hon. Member with the individual details of each case.

Offences Currently Recorded as Homicide where Method of Killing was by Shooting—England and Wales 1987-91

Police Force and Outcome[1]	Total	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total						
Total	268	78	42	38	58	52
Convicted	134	43	23	17	35	16
Charged	29	4	2	4	6	13
No Charge	105	31	17	17	17	23
MPD						
Total	78	22	12	9	23	12
Convicted	37	13	6	5	12	1
Charged	17	3	2	2	4	6

Police Force and Outcome[1]	Total	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No Charge	24	6	4	2	7	5
Cumbria						
Total	2	2	0	0	0	0
Convicted	2	2	0	0	0	0
Lancashire						
Total	6	1	2	0	1	2
Convicted	6	1	2	0	1	2
Merseyside						
Total	5	2	1	1	0	1
Convicted	4	2	0	1	0	1
No Charge	1	0	1	0	0	0
Greater Manchester						
Total	16	2	3	5	1	5
Convicted	7	1	2	2	1	1
Charged	3	1	0	0	0	2
No Charge	6	0	1	3	0	2
Cheshire						
Total	4	0	1	0	2	1
Convicted	3	0	1	0	2	0
No Charge	1	0	0	0	0	1
Northumbria						
Total	7	2	0	1	4	0
Convicted	5	2	0	0	3	0
Charged	2	0	0	1	1	0
Durham						
Total	3	1	0	0	1	1
Convicted	2	0	0	0	1	1
No Charge	1	1	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire						
Total	3	1	1	0	1	0
Convicted	1	0	1	0	0	0
No Charge	2	1	0	0	1	0
West Yorkshire						
Total	6	2	0	1	3	0
Convicted	4	2	0	0	2	0
No Charge	2	0	0	1	1	0
South Yorkshire						
Total	3	1	0	0	2	0
Convicted	3	1	0	0	2	0
Humberside						
Total	4	0	0	2	0	2
Convicted	1	0	0	0	0	1
No Charge	3	0	0	2	0	1
Cleveland						
Total	1	0	0	0	0	1
Convicted	1	0	0	0	0	1
West Midlands						
Total	7	2	3	0	2	0
Convicted	3	0	2	0	1	0
No Charge	4	2	1	0	1	0
Staffordshire						
Total	3	0	0	2	1	0
Convicted	1	0	0	1	0	0
No Charge	2	0	0	1	1	0
West Mercia						
Total	5	1	1	1	1	1
Convicted	2	1	0	0	1	0
No Charge	3	0	1	1	0	1
Warwickshire						
Total	2	1	1	0	0	0
Convicted	1	0	1	0	0	0
No charge	1	1	0	0	0	0

Police Force and Outcome[1]	Total	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Derbyshire						
Total	3	1	0	1	1	0
Convicted	2	1	0	1	0	0
No charge	1	0	0	0	1	0
Nottinghamshire						
Total	6	0	0	1	0	5
Convicted	3	0	0	1	0	2
No charge	3	0	0	0	0	3
Lincolnshire						
Total	2	2	0	0	0	0
Convicted	1	1	0	0	0	0
No charge	1	1	0	0	0	0
Leicestershire						
Total	4	1	1	0	2	0
Convicted	3	1	0	0	2	0
No charge	1	0	1	0	0	0
Northamptonshire						
Total	1	0	0	0	0	1
Convicted	1	0	0	0	0	1
Cambridgeshire						
Total	3	2	0	0	0	1
Convicted	2	2	0	0	0	0
No charge	1	0	0	0	0	1
Suffolk						
Total	6	3	1	0	2	0
Convicted	5	3	0	0	2	0
No charge	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bedfordshire						
Total	2	0	0	0	0	2
Charged	2	0	0	0	0	2
Hertfordshire						
Total	3	1	2	0	0	0
Convicted	3	1	2	0	0	0
Essex						
Total	2	1	0	0	1	0
Convicted	2	1	0	0	1	0
Thames Valley						
Total	21	16	2	1	0	2
Convicted	2	0	0	0	0	2
No charge	19	16	2	1	0	0
Hampshire						
Total	4	0	0	1	1	2
Convicted	1	0	0	0	0	1
Charged	1	0	0	0	1	0
No charge	2	0	0	1	0	1
Surrey						
Total	4	0	1	0	0	3
Charged	1	0	0	0	0	1
No charge	3	0	1	0	0	2
Kent						
Total	11	3	1	2	3	2
Convicted	7	2	1	1	3	0
Charged	2	0	0	1	0	1
No charge	2	1	0	0	0	1
Sussex						
Total	6	1	1	2	0	2
Convicted	2	0	0	2	0	0
Charged	1	0	0	0	0	1
No charge	3	1	1	0	0	1
Devon and Cornwall						
Total	2	1	1	0	0	0
Convicted	1	1	0	0	0	0

Police Force and Outcome[1]	Total	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No charge	1	0	1	0	0	0
Avon and Somerset						
Total	5	2	0	0	1	2
Convicted	3	2	0	0	0	1
No charge	2	0	0	0	1	1
Gloucestershire						
Total	2	1	0	1	0	0
Convicted	1	1	0	0	0	0
No charge	1	0	0	1	0	0
Wiltshire						
Total	4	1	1	1	0	1
No charge	4	1	1	1	0	1
Dorset						
Total	3	0	1	1	1	0
Convicted	1	0	1	0	0	0
No charge	2	0	0	1	1	0
North Wales						
Total	2	0	2	0	0	0
Convicted	1	0	1	0	0	0
No charge	1	0	1	0	0	0
Gwent						
Total	5	1	0	1	1	2
Convicted	2	1	0	1	0	0
No charge	3	0	0	0	1	2
South Wales						
Total	5	1	3	1	0	0
Convicted	5	1	3	1	0	0
Dyfed-Powys						
Total	7	0	0	3	3	1
Convicted	3	0	0	1	1	1
No charge	4	0	0	2	2	0

[1]CONVICTED refers to a case decided at court to be homicide and suspect found guilty.
CHARGED refers to a case where a suspect was charged with homicide but no conviction was recorded, e.g. the case is still pending or the suspect was acquitted and a further suspect is being sought.
NO CHARGE refers to a case where no suspect has been charged with homicide. This could be because it was not possible to charge a potential suspect (e.g. where suspect died before charge could be brought) or where the case remains unsolved.

Canonbury Academy (Seminar)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the cost of the policing and security measures undertaken in relation to the seminar at the Canonbury academy, Canonbury place, London N1, on 27 January 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not the Government's policy to disclose details of the resources devoted to the subject of anti-terrorism.

Devon and Cornwall Police

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the last tranche of recruits began service with the Devon and Cornwall constabulary; when the next tranche of recruits is expected to begin service with the constabulary; and how many police officers are expected to retire between these two dates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The last tranche of recruits began service on 7 December 1992. The next tranche is expected to begin service in either May or June this year. The force anticipates 25 retirements between December 1992 and May 1993.

Released Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy that facilities and support for those released from prison after a delayed appeal or miscarriage of justice will *(a)* be generous and immediate and *(b)* be arranged in a way which leaves the ex-prisoner free to accept or reject what is on offer;

(2) if he will publish standard arrangements to meet the needs of people released from prison after a delay of appeal or miscarriage of justice.

Mr. Jack: I intend that it should remain the case that there should be no compulsion on any person who is released from prison following the quashing of a conviction to accept support, financial or otherwise, from any official body. I am not at present convinced that it would be either practicable or right to attempt to establish comprehensive arrangements on a contingency basis to deal with a category of case that I hope in future will diminish in frequency.

But I believe that compensation should be available in appropriate cases. That is the case now. Thus, under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, my right hon. and learned Friend may authorise payment of compensation in the case of a convicted quashed on an appeal out

of time where a new or newly discovered fact has arisen which shows beyond reasonable doubt that a miscarriage of justice has occurred. Moreover, he may also offer ex-gratia payments from public funds in other exceptional circumstances; the criteria which he considers in such cases were set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) on 29 November 1985, *Official Report*, columns *689-90*.

A successful appellant is under no obligation to apply for compensation or to accept any offer of compensation. The amount of any award of compensation is determined according to the assessment or advice of an independent assessor who applies principles analogous to those governing the assessment of damages for civil wrongs. Subject to the agreement of the assessor, an interim payment may be made.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a study of former hostages and the problems they have experienced as part of research to determine the facilities needed for ex-prisoners released from gaol after a delayed appeal or miscarriage of justice.

Mr. Jack: I have no present plans to do so. Our current research programme does not enable us to undertake the study suggested.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake an investigation into the experience of prisoners released from goal after a delayed appeal of miscarriage of justice and publish a report identifying the common problems they have experienced.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

Unit Fines

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hon. Members have written to him about the new unit fines system.

Mr. Jack: The provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 relating to unit fines were implemented on 1 October 1992. Since that date some 50 right hon. and hon. Members have written about the sentencing provisions of the Act. Thirty seven of these letters were concerned either in whole or in part with the unit fines system.

Travel Documents

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the fee for issuing and renewing all forms of Home Office travel documents.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is in accordance with our normal practice and within the provisions of the 1951 and 1954 conventions to charge a fee similar to that for a standard British passport. The fee for a passport was recently increased to £18 and my right hon. and learned Friend has therefore decided that, with effect from today, the fee for issuing and renewing Home Office travel documents should be £18.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were refused entry clearance to come to the United Kingdom or to vary their leave once in the United Kingdom on grounds of *(a)* lack of maintenance, *(b)* lack of maintenance and accommodation and *(c)* lack of accommodation, in each year since 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The available information is given in the tables for spouses, fiancés and children refused entry clearance or variation of leave on the grounds of lack of accommodation, or of maintenance or of both accommodation and maintenance. For entry clearance refusals, information is available only for the Indian sub-continent.

Refusals[1] of after-entry applications to vary leave, solely on grounds of lack of accommodation, or maintenance or both accommodation and maintenance, by husbands, wives and fiancés[2], 1986 to 1992 (January to September)[3].

United Kingdom — *Number of Persons*

Category of Refusal	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992[3]*
Spouses							
Refusals on grounds of accommodation[4]							
Husbands	13	9	5	8	8	1	3
Wives	1	—	2	4	1	8	2
Refusals on grounds of maintenance[4]							
Husbands	24	8	8	2	3	3	1
Wives	6	4	4	1	3	3	6
Refusals on grounds of maintenance and accommodation							
Husbands	31	13	12	5	3	5	3
Wives	8	7	4	1	1	3	3
Refusal of settlement[5]							
Husbands	17	14	20	24	30	37	23
Wives	—	—	2	14	33	48	
Fiances							
Refusals on grounds of maintenance and accommodation							
Male fiancés	1	1	3	1	3	—	
Female fiancées	2	—	—	1	1	—	

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] Information on refusals of dependent children is not separately identifiable in the statistics.
[3] January-September—Information for the fourth quarter of 1992 is not yet available.
[4] Refusals solely on the grounds of maintenance or accommodation, excluding those refusals made on the grounds of primary purpose and accommodation or maintenance.
[5] Refusal of settlement after probationary year on general considerations, including recourse to public funds.

Refusals[1] of entry clearance, solely on grounds of lack of accommodation, or maintenance or both accommodation and maintenance, for husbands, wives, fiances and children from the Indian sub-Continent, 1986-1992 (January-September)[2].

Indian sub-Continent — *Number of persons*

Category of refusal	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[2]1992*
Accommodation							
Husbands	1	1	—	—	1	7	8
Wives	—	4	5	10	15	17	19
Male fiancés	1	1	1	2	2	—	—
Female fiancées	—	—	—	2	1	3	1
Children	—	5	—	1	24	16	14
Maintenance							
Husbands	—	1	1	6	8	11	31
Wives	—	1	—	6	33	34	70
Male fiancés	3	—	3	—	3	1	2
Female fiancées	—	—	—	—	—	3	2
Children	1	2	3	6	31	10	24
Maintenance and accommodation							
Husbands	1	8	12	17	44	48	71
Wives	9	13	12	97	164	122	128
Male fiancés	—	1	5	3	3	3	3
Female fiancées	1	1	3	4	6	17	6
Children	7	8	10	152	326	122	61

[1] Excluding dependents.
[2] January to September—Information for the fourth quarter of 1992 is not yet available.

Prison Education

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department began consideration of the effect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the contracting out of prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 8 December, *Official Report*, columns *555-56*. When the decision was made to invite competitive tenders for the future provision of education in prisons, the view was taken that the tendering of an already contracted-out service would not necessarily involve the transfer of an undertaking. This view was confirmed in legal advice which the Prison Service obtained.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contingency plans he has made for the timetable for contracting out prison education if the original planned start date becomes impossible.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to her questions on 27 January at columns *715-16*. Where the existing providers agree, the present arrangements will continue until 31 August 1993. Where the existing providers do not, contracts will be awarded to take effect from 1 April 1993 under the recent competitive tender.

Departmental Contracts

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements will be made for monitoring any of his Department's functions which are contracted out.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* In the case of a contracted out prison monitoring is undertaken by a controller. In the case of contracted-out prisoner escort arrangements, monitoring is undertaken by a prison escort monitor. These posts can be held only by Crown servants, appointed by the Secretary of State under the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

In the case of other functions, where an external contractor is appointed, an in-house contract control manager will have the responsibility of ensuring that the benefits of contracting out are delivered.

D Notices

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances D notices are issued to the press in relation to seminars and conferences taking place on private property, organised by private companies, organisations or individuals; and what difference there is in applicability between national newspapers and local newspapers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

It is not the practice to issue D notices in respect of specific seminars or conferences. They are provided by the

Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee to editors and publishers as general guidance on matters which engage aspects of national security. Editors are invited to consult the D notice secretary if they are in doubt about their particular application.

Any advice given by the secretary on issues of national security is equally applicable to national and local newspapers.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Money Supply

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what weight he gives to his monitoring range of 4 to 8 per cent. for broad money; and what are the consequences for the economy for a fall in the annual growth in M4 to below the bottom of the range.

Mr. Nelson: Broad money—M4—is one of the indicators taken into account in conducting monetary policy and setting interest rates. The monitoring range has been set at a level which is believed to be consistent with progress towards the Government's inflation objectives. The recent fall in M4's 12-month growth rate to below the lower limit on the monitoring range was one of the reasons for the decision to cut interest rates on 26 January.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average growth in consumption and average growth in gross domestic product for each year since 1979 and the cumulative percentage change over the same period.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested for the years 1987 to 1991 can be derived from table 3 of "Economic Trends", January 1993 edition No. 471, which is available in the House of Commons Library. Figures for earlier years are available in "Economic Trends Annual Supplement", 1993 edition. They are also held on the Central Statistical Office database which can be accessed by the Library. The CSO database identifiers are:

	Identity
Consumers' expenditure	CCBH
Gross domestic product	CAOP

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the average consumption per capita and average gross domestic product per capita for each year since 1979 together with the cumulative percentage change for both over the period.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested for the years 1988 to 1991 can be found in table 8 of "Economic Trends", January 1993 edition No. 471, which is available in the House of Commons Library. Figures for earlier years are held on the CSO database which can be accessed by the Library. The CSO database identifiers are:

	Current prices	*Constant prices*
Consumers' expenditure per capita	FBCC	FBCF
Gross domestic product per capita	CAQB	CAQC

Bank Charges

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has had from the business community in relation to bank charges.

Mr. Nelson: Between 1 November 1992 and 3 February 1993 the Treasury has received some 780 complaints from small businesses about their banks. Thirty-five of these were solely about bank charges and a significant number of the rest included references to charges, but an exact figure cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

In addition, I recently met representatives of the Bank Action Group to discuss their complaints, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has recently seen the chief executive of the Forum of Private Business at which relations with banks were discussed.

Wealth Distribution

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the distribution of wealth implied by the 1989 Inland Revenue study of 35 per cent. of the adult population.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates for the distribution of personal wealth, including provisional figures for 1989 and 1990, are published in section 11 of the 1992 edition of "Inland Revenue Statistics".

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The firms of consultants used by Treasury for work relating to the market testing programme since November 1991, are Touche Ross, Prime Strategy Consultants and Ernst and Young. The spend to date has been £26,000 and there is a further committed expenditure of £55,000.

Banking and Insurance Industry

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for further regulation of the banking and insurance industry.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already outlined to the House—*Official Report*, 22 October 1992, column 576—the steps that we intend to take to implement the recommendations in the Bingham report which bear on the regulation of banking.

The House has recently passed legislation to implement into United Kingdom law the second banking co-ordination directive, which along with the second directive on consolidated supervision, the solvency ratio directive and the own funds directive, came fully into force on 1 January 1993. Further measures will be taken later in the year to implement the large exposures directive, which comes into force on 1 January 1994, and any of the other directives currently under discussion which may be adopted for implementation by that date.

The regulation of insurance is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. He will

shortly be laying before the House regulations to strengthen the appointed actuary system. Later this year he will be bringing forward for approval regulations to implement the third non-life and life insurance directives and the insurance accounts directive.

International Monetary Fund

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to visit the IMF to discuss structural adjustments.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend will be attending the next meetings of the interim committee of the IMF on 30 April 1993 and the joint development committee of the World bank and the IMF on 1 May. I expect aspects of structural adjustments to feature in the discussions.

Auditors

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to bring forward proposals for imposing a duty on auditors to report suspicion of fraud or other criminal activity to the proper authorities.

Mr. Nelson: We will be publishing shortly a consultation document which will include draft regulations imposing a statutory duty on auditors to report to the Bank of England any information which they believe to be relevant to their client bank's fulfilment of the authorisation criteria in the Banking Act.

The consultation document will also include draft regulations extending a similar duty to report to the relevant regulatory authority, for auditors of building societies, friendly societies, companies regulated under the Financial Services Act 1986 and, at the initiative of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, companies regulated under the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will provide an estimate based on the most recent census of production of the added value per head in British manufacturing industry (i) as a whole and (ii) in plants in the United Kingdom of enterprises based in *(a)* other EC countries, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will provide an estimate based on the most recent census of production of added value relative to final sale value in British manufacturing industry (i) as a whole and (ii) in plants in the United Kingdom of enterprises based in *(a)* other EC countries, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: The required information is available from "Business Monitor PA 1002, Report on the Census of Production, Summary Volume". Tables 1 and 2 give information for all public and private sector enterprises operating in the United Kingdom. Table 18 gives further information on private enterprises in the United Kingdom controlled from overseas. Copies of this volume for years up to 1990 are available from the Library of the House.

Income Tax

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the practice of the Inland Revenue in accepting payments in instalments for arrears of tax for small businesses and individual traders; and what plans he has to review this practice to take account of the current economic climate.

Mr. Dorrell: The first duty of the Inland Revenue is to collect tax that is properly due and in carrying out this duty it aims to treat all taxpayers fairly and impartially. The Revenue recognises that businesses may face temporary financial difficulties and in such circumstances the collector should be contacted at the earliest opportunity to discuss how the difficulty may be resolved. All reasonable offers of payments, including payment by instalments, are considered. This practice will continue to operate.

Whiskey and Whisky

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *255-56*, if he will list the dates and the changes in *(a)* duty rate and *(b)* total duty, in real terms, received on whisky and whiskey in each of the last 15 years; and what assessment he has made of the main reasons for the domestic volume changes that underlay the fluctuations in estimated duty on whiskey and whisky in the years from 1981-82 to 1985-86.

Sir John Cope: The information is as follows:

Date of Budget	*Excise duty on spirits (£ per litre of pure alcohol)*		*Estimated whisky/whiskey duty in real terms*	
	Rate	*Rate in real terms*		*£ millions*
1978 11 April[1]	10·44	28·95	1977-78	1,278
1979 12 June[1]	10·44	25·62	1978-79	1,495
1980 27 March	11·87	25·39	1979-80	1,303
1981 11 March	13·60	25·82	1980-81	1,131
1982 10 March	14·47	24·91	1981-82	1,095
1983 16 March	15·19	24·99	1982-83	[2]784
1984 14 March	15·48	24·18	1983-84	[2]1,284
1985 20 March	15·77	23·23	1984-85	882
1986 18 March[1]	15·77	22·29	1985-86	1,007
1987 17 March[1]	15·77	21·43	1986-87	911
1988 15 March[1]	15·77	20·71	1987-88	917
1989 14 March[1]	15·77	19·20	1988-89	844
1990 20 March	17·35	19·54	1989-90	747
1991 19 March	18·96	19·72	1990-91	761
1992 10 March	19·81	19·81	1991-92	730

[1] No change in duty rate.
[2] Receipts in 1982-83 and 1983-84 were substantially affected by the introduction of duty deferment on wines and spirits in February 1983. If duty deferment had not been available, receipts of duty from spirits in 1982-83 would have been higher than those recorded and conversely lower than recorded in 1983-84.

The real terms figures have been calculated using the RPI. Estimated whisky duty is at 1991-92 prices. Duty rates are at March 1992 prices and use the RPI applying in the Budget month where as December RPI is normally used or revalorisation.

For information on the percentage duty changes I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to him on 20 January 1993, at column *256*.

Stock Exchange

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what percentage and amount of the equities bought on the stock exchange are bought by *(a)* pension funds, *(b)* insurance companies and *(c)* each other type of financial institution; and how these percentages have changed since 1979;

(2) what percentage of shares bought on the stock exchange is bought by *(a)* financial institutions and *(b)* individuals.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The amount and percentage of ordinary shares, in terms of market capitalisation, owned in United Kingdom companies listed on the London stock exchange, excluding issues on the unlisted securities market, as at 1 January 1992 are set out in the table.

	£ billion	*Percentage*
Pension funds	165·0	31·1
Insurance companies	109·7	20·7
Banks	1·1	0·2
Unit trusts	30·4	5·7
Other financial institutions	14·5	2·8
All financial institutions	320·7	60·5
Individuals	104·8	19·8
Unincorporated businesses	1·3	0·2
Non-profit making bodies	11·4	2·2
Public sector	6·8	1·2
Industrial and commercial companies	17·5	3·3
Overseas	67·8	12·8
All sectors	530·2	100·0

Note: Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

Other financial institutions comprise: building societies, unit trusts, securities dealers and other miscellaneous financial institutions. They also include SEPON—the stock exchange account into which shares are placed while in transit between buyer and seller—in 1992, amounting to around £3·1 billion and around 0·6 per cent.

Comparable figures for 1979 are not available, but percentages for 1981, the nearest available year, are as follows:

	per cent.
Pension Funds	26·7
Insurance Companies	20·5
Banks	0·3
Unit Trusts	3·6
Other Financial institutions	6·8
ALL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	57·9
Individuals Unincorporated businesses	28·2
Non-profit making bodies	2·2
Public Sector	3·0
Industrial and commercial companies	5·1
Overseas	3·6
TOTAL	100·0

Further details and information for earlier periods is available in an article "The 1992 Share Register Survey", published in "Economic Trends" No. 466 which is available from the Library.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 4 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *270-74*; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* There have been only two changes to the list of appointees to the public bodies for which the Chancellor is responsible. Dr. C. Swan, Garter King of Arms, has been appointed as a member of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. Mr. N. Fox Bassett, lawyer, has been appointed to the Building Societies Commission.

No details are held of the political affiliation of appointees to any of the public bodies for which the Chancellor is responsible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pit Closures

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from mining equipment manufacturing companies about the effects on export and domestic business of a programme of pit closures.

Mr. Eggar: Representations have been made both by a number of individual companies and their trade associations. The Government have made it clear that they will give every proper assistance to the industry, including help to build upon their impressive export record.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and I intend to meet representatives from the industry again shortly.

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total cost of the consultants' reports commissioned as part of the review of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated total cost to the Department of consultants commissioned to carry out studies and advise in respect of the coal review is £1·4 million.

Electricity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to *(a)* the competition and *(b)* other implications of the granting of

permission to individual large users of electricity to buy electricity directly from a generator at a cheaper rate than other industrial users; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in dialogue with larger users of electricity about their electricity prices. We have noted the recommendations by the Trade and Industry Select Committee that large users with unvarying demand should be able to bypass the pool and that the fossil fuel levy should be tapered, so that larger users pay a lower percentage.

Engineering Employers Federation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the Engineering Employers Federation on industrial strategy since October 1992; and what response he has made.

Mr. Sainsbury: Ministers and officials at my Department have a continuing dialogue with the EEF. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade wrote to the EEF on 14 December in response to the launch of the EEF's industrial strategy document and is due to meet with representatives of the EEF shortly.

Intellectual Property Rights

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what actions his Department is taking in order to incorporate considerations relating to intellectual property rights in the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The draft final act of the GATT Uruguay round presented by the GATT director general, Mr. Dunkel, in December 1991 included an agreement on trade-related intellectual property rights. The views of business, industry and other organisations were actively sought and carefully considered as part of the negotiations. The draft agreement is considered to be a good text which we are encouraging other countries to accept without any amendments, as part of an overall agreement in the Uruguay round.

Energy Policy

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he is making to section VII on opencast, of the first report of Session 1992-93 from the Trade and Industry Committee on British energy policy and the market for coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The findings of the Trade and Industry Committee report are being considered and the Government will respond in due course.

Fuel Prices

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish his estimate of the trend in world prices of oil, natural gas and coal over the next 10, 20 and 30 years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* As part of a study of energy-related CO_2 emissions the Department of Trade and Industry recently published a range of fuel price assumptions in Energy Paper No. 59, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the Health and Safety Commission's emergency planning consultative document No. 32 concerning the definition of zones for radiation emergencies.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, together with the Secretary of State for Scotland, has responsibility for the regulations proposed in this consultative document. The consultative document proposed that the existing arrangements for determining the scope of detailed and extended planning should continue following the introduction of the Off-Site Plan (Licensed Nuclear Installations) Regulations. Some commentators sought a wider planning area, but most supported the existing basis for planning.

Regional Preferential Assistance

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give a breakdown of regional preferential assistance in constant prices for each United Kingdom region for each year since 1980-81.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 5 June to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), *Official Report*, columns *675-78*. The regional schemes that were included in the answer are the same as those that make up regional preferential assistance.

International Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the International Atomic Energy Authority concerning increased levels of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* None. I expect the agency to submit proposals for its regular budget in March.

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average class size in Hampshire in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in each year since 1987 as calculated (i) including non-teaching heads and (ii) excluding non-teaching heads.

Mr. Forth: The average sizes of classes taught by one teacher in maintained primary and secondary schools in Hampshire local education authority for each year 1987 to 1992 are shown in the table. The figures may include some classes taught by head teachers, but it is not possible to identify these classes separately.

Average sizes of classes taught by one teacher—Hampshire LEA

	Primary schools	*Secondary schools*
1992	26·5	20·7
1991	26·8	20·6
1990	26·0	20·4

	Primary schools	Secondary schools
1989	26·0	20·4
1988	26·0	20·5
1987	25·8	21·0

Primary Education

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average spending per primary school pupil in Southampton in 1979 and in 1992 on *(a)* teaching costs and *(b)* non-teaching costs; and if he will express those figures in actual and 1979 values.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is collected by local education authorities only, so separate figures are not available for Southampton. Average net institutional expenditure per pupil in primary and nursery schools in Hampshire are shown in the table. The table shows spending in cash for 1979-80 and 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available, and at 1979-80 prices.

	Teaching costs £	Non-Teaching costs £
1979-80 (cash)	274	110
1990-91 (cash)	830	431
1990-91 (in 1979-80 prices)	383	199

Notes to table:

1. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. For 1990-91, figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.
2. Figures for teaching posts include gross salaries and employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions. Non-teaching costs include all other items of net institutional expenditure.
3. Figures for 1990-91 have been repriced to 1979-80 prices using the GDP (Market Prices) Deflator index.

Correspondence

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the hon. Member for Hammersmith can expect a reply to his letter to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State dated 7 December 1992 and referring to his answer of 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *134*.

Mr. Forth: A full reply was sent on 3 February.

Autism

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many autistic children and adults are currently receiving specialist educational help in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available centrally. It is the responsibility of local education authorities and schools to ensure that individual autistic pupils receive the special education they require. The Department for Education and the Department of Health are currently jointly funding a research project into the education and treatment of children with autism in England and Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what specialist educational services are provided for autistic children and adults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities and schools have statutory responsibilities to ensure that pupils with special educational needs, including individual autistic pupils, receive appropriate special educational provision. The Department for Education and the Department of Health are currently jointly funding a research project into the education and treatment of children with autism.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions have been made by his Department to ensure legislation regarding the special needs of autistic children and adults in education is implemented in a fair and consistent way.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill currently before Parliament would require the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice to which local education authorities would have to have regard when carrying out their statutory duties towards children with special educational needs including those with autism. The national code will encourage consistency. The special educational needs tribunal will ensure fairness in the code's implementation.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what specialist education and welfare provisions are provided to ensure the specific needs of autistic children are met effectively in schools; and what steps his Department is taking to identify those who need help.

Mr. Forth: There is a range of provision available for children with autism, both in schools maintained by local education authorities and in schools run by voluntary organisations. The Department for Education and the Department of Health are currently funding a research project into the education and treatment of children with autism.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken to ensure that all grant-maintained schools have adequate insurance cover; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: On becoming incorporated all grant-maintained schools are required to sign a financial memorandum. This makes it clear that, unless otherwise agreed with the Department, the governing body must obtain insurance cover for building and contents and employers' and public liability. It is the responsibility of each school to ensure that the cover which it arranges is adequate for its needs.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to amend the arrangements for insurance cover for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: There are no plans at present to amend the arrangements for insurance cover for grant-maintained schools.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance has been laid down for the number of companies which must be invited to tender to provide insurance services to a grant-maintained school before a contract can be entered into.

Mr. Forth: The financial memorandum which all grant-maintained schools sign sets out the procedures that governing bodies should follow to ensure that they obtain value for money for all purchases of goods and services. Contracts should normally be placed on a competitive tender basis and the lowest tender accepted unless there are good reasons to the contrary.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools in England are, or have been, in dispute with a statutory body over property jointly used or owned by the local community; and how many grant-maintained schools are currently in litigation with a statutory body over property jointly used or owned by the local community.

Mr. Forth: There is one case where the Education Assets Board has been unable to reach agreement with a local authority on the transfer of facilities used jointly by the school and local community. The matter has been referred to my right hon. Friend to determine.

I am not aware of any grant-maintained school in litigation with the Education Assets Board.

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all schools in the Greater London area which have opted to adopt grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information, correct on 5 February, is listed in the table:

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM

Inner London local education authorities

HAMMERSMITH
London Oratory School

KENSINGTON
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School

LAMBETH
St. Bernadette Roman Catholic Junior Mixed School
La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls (G.M.) School

LEWISHAM
Turnham Primary with Nursery G.M. School

SOUTHWARK
London Nautical School

TOWER HAMLETS
Raines Foundation School

WANDSWORTH
Graveney School
Salesian College
Ethelburga Primary School (Grant-Maintained)
Burntwood School
Elliott School (Grant-Maintained)

Other London local education authorities

BARNET
Mill Hill County High School
Hendon School
Queen Elizabeth's G.M. School for Boys

BEXLEY
Barnehurst Infant Grant-Maintained School
Barnehurst Junior Grant-Maintained School

BRENT
Claremont High School (Grant-Maintained)
Copland Community School and Technology Centre

BROMLEY
Newstead Wood School for Girls (Grant-Maintained)
Coopers School
Crofton Junior School
Bullers Wood School for Girls
Langley Park School for Boys
Kelsey Park School
Beaverwood School for Girls
Charles Darwin School
St. John Rigby School
Hayes School
Ravens Wood School for Boys
Holy Innocents Roman Catholic Primary School
St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School

CROYDON
Riddlesdown Grant-Maintained School

EALING
Drayton Manor high School
Northolt High School
Brentside High School
Wood End Middle School
Wood End First School
The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls
Greenford High School

HILLINGDON
Oak Farm Junior Mixed School (Grant-Maintained)
Oak Farm Infant School (Grant-Maintained)
Northwood School
Bishopshalt School
Mellow Lane School
Vyners School
Uxbridge High School
The Hayes Manor School
The Douay Martyrs School
Haydon School
Queensmead School

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES
Tiffin School

NEWHAM
Stratford School

SUTTON
Nonsuch High School for Girls
Wilsons School
The John Fisher School
Cheam High School
Sutton Grammar School for Boys

WALTHAM FOREST
Highams Park School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GRANT-MAINTAINED STATUS BUT NOT YET OPEN

Inner London LEAs

LAMBETH
Bishop Thomas Grant Secondary School

SOUTHWARK
St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School

Outer London LEAs

CROYDON
Edenham School

HAVERING
The Frances Bardsley School

SUTTON
Wallington High School for Girls
St. Philomena's School, Carshalton

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES AND PUBLISHED PROPOSALS

Inner London LEAs

LAMBETH
Archbishop Tenison's School
Dunraven School

WANDSWORTH
Hillbrook Primary School
John Paul II RC School
Southfields School

Outer London LEAs

BEXLEY
St. Mary & St. Joseph's School
St. Columba's RC Boys School

BRENT
Queens Park Community School
Chamberlayne Wood Primary School
Kingsbury High School
Convent of Jesus and Mary High School

CROYDON
St. Joseph's College
Thomas More Grant Maintained School

ENFIELD
The Latymer School

HAVERING
The Coopers' Company and Coborn School
Abbs Cross School

HILLINGDON
Abbotsfield School
Swakeleys School
Grange Park Junior School
Grange Park Infant School

HOUNSLOW
Gunnersbury Catholic School
Gumley House Convent School for Girls

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES
Holy Cross Convent School
Beverley School
Richard Challoner School

REDBRIDGE
Chadwell Heath High School

SUTTON
Wallington High School for Boys

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS

Inner London LEAs

CAMDEN
Jewish Free School

HACKNEY
St. Thomas's CE Primary School

SOUTHWARK
St. Thomas the Apostle School
St. Michael's School
Notre Dame High School

Outer London LEAs

BARNET
St. Mary's CE High School

BEXLEY
St. Catherine's RC School for Girls

BRENT
Oakington Manor School
Alperton High School
Cardinal Hinsley High School

ENFIELD
St. Ignatius College

HARROW
Salvatorian College

HAVERING
Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School

HILLINGDON
Hillside Infant School

SUTTON
All Saints CE Primary School

APPLICATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN REJECTED

Inner London LEAs

HAMMERSMITH
Harwood School

WANDSWORTH
Huntingfield Primary School
Walsingham School

Outer London LEAs

BRENT
William Gladstone School

BROMLEY
Ramsden School for Girls

EALING
Walford High School

HILLINGDON
Barnhill School
Townmead School

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list all schools which have opted to adopt grant-maintained status in the counties of *(a)* Essex, *(b)* Hertfordshire, *(c)* East Sussex, *(d)* West Sussex, *(e)* Berkshire, *(f)* Surrey, *(g)* Bedfordshire, *(h)* Kent, *(i)* Buckinghamshire and *(j)* Hampshire.

Mr. Forth: The information, correct on 5 February, is listed in the table:

Essex

Schools operating as GM
Thurstable School
Torells Grant-Maintained School
The Deanes School
The Rickstones School
The Appleton School
Northlands Grant-Maintained Junior School
The Hedley Walter High School (GM)
Saffron Walden County High School
Chelmsford County High School for Girls
The Boswells School
West Hatch High School
King Edward VI Grammar School (G.M.)
Westborough County Primary School
Chalvedon School
North Crescent Primary School
Newlands Spring Grant Maintained School
The Cornelius Vermuyden School
The King Edmund School
The Fitzwimarc School, Rayleigh
The King John School
The Elmwood Primary School
The Philip Morant School
King Harold School, Grant-Maintained School
Bromfords School, Wickford
Castle View School
Katherines Primary School
Eastwood County High School and 6th Form Centre
The Plume School
Beauchamps Grant-Maintained School
Furtherwick Park School
Westcliff High School for Boys
Westcliff High School for Girls
Great Totham Primary School, Essex
The Park School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPEN
Belfairs School/6th Form Centre
Chelmer Valley High School
Davenant Foundation School
Jotmans Hall County Primary School
Northwick Park County Infant School
Northwick Park County Junior School
Rainsford School
Rolph CE VA Primary School
Southend Girls High School

St. Andrews's CE Primary School
St. Martin's School
The Thorpe Bay School
William De Ferrers School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS FOR GM STATUS
Takeley Grant-Maintained Primary School
Ingatestone Anglo-European School
Holland Park County Primary School
St. Osyth EC Aided Primary School
Holland Haven Primary School
St. Clere's School
Southend High School for Boys
Woodville County Primary School
Grays Secondary School
Gable Hall School
William Edwards School
Newport Free Grammar School
The Greensward School
The Gilberd School
Coppins Green Primary School
Colchester Royal Grammar School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Colbayns High School
St. Thomas More High School for Boys
Clacton County High School
Hassenbrook School
All Saints Church of England Primary School
St. Clare's RC Primary School
Sir Charles Lucas School
Cecil Jones High School
The Bramston School
The Alderman Blaxill School

SCHOOLS WHOSE APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN REJECTED
Elmbridge School

Hertfordshire

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GRANT-MAINTAINED
The Bishop's Stortford High School
Watford Grammar School for Boys
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Parmiters School
Parkside First School
Hertingfordbury Cowper Junior Mixed Infants School
Christ Church Church of England School
Rickmansworth School
Francis Bacon School
Watford Grammar School for Girls
Watford Grammar School for Boys

SCHOOLS MINDED TO APPROVE FOR GRANT-MAINTAINED STATUS
Dame Alice Owens School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS FOR GRANT-MAINTAINED STATUS
Nicholas Breakspear Roman Catholic School
The Leventhorpe School
The John Henry Newman Roman Catholic School
Bushey Hall School
Mount Grace School
Bushey Meads School
Queen's School
Ashlyns School

SCHOOL WHICH HAS VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Goffs School

SCHOOLS WHOSE PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN REJECTED
Sir James Altham School

East and West Sussex

There are no schools in East or West Sussex which have opted for grant-maintained status.

Berkshire

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
Cippenham Middle School (Grant Maintained)
Denefield School
Desborough Comprehensive School
Herschel Grammar School
Holy Family RC School
Langley Grammar School
Priory School
Reading School
Southlands School
St. Bartholomew's School
The Downs School
Upton Grammar School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS FOR GM STATUS
Westgate School
Whitelocke Infant School

Surrey

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
St. John the Baptist School
de Stafford School
Guildford County School
Glyn School
Epsom and Ewell High School
Gordon's Grant Maintained School
Collingwood Grant-Maintained School
Hawkedale First School
Heathside Secondary School
The Manor County First School
The Beacon School
Thamesmead School
Stoneleigh First School (Grant-Maintained)
Rosebery School
Send C of E First School (Grant-Maintained)

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPEN
St. Paul's Catholic School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS FOR GM STATUS
Alfold County First School
Dunsfold C of E First School
Park Mead County First School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES, BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Pewley Down County First School

SCHOOLS WHOSE APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN REJECTED
South Holmwood CE First School
Blindley Heath CE First School

Bedfordshire

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
Thomas Whitehead CE School
Sharnbrook Upper School
Manshead School Grant Maintained
Queensbury School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPERATING
Ashcroft High School
Crawley Green Infant School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Lincroft Middle School
Lea Manor High School and Community College
Wootton Upper School
Icknield High School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Stopsley High School and Community College
Holywell (VC) Middle School

Kent

SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
Oakwood Park Grammar School
The Bradbourne School
Chatham Grammar School for Girls
The Cornwallis School
Sandown Court Community College
Oldborough Manor Community College
Dartford Grammar School for Girls

Homewood School
The Robert Napier Grant-Maintained School
The Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells
Angley School
Sir Roger Manwood's School
Snodland CE Primary School
Southlands Comprehensive School
Dartford Grammar School
The Canterbury High School
The Hugh Christie School
Thamesview School
Fulston Manor School
Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys
Wrotham School
Senacre Technology School
Meopham School Grant-Maintained School
Minster College
St. George's Church of England School
Holy Trinity CE Primary School
St. Simon Stock School
Cranbrook School
The Maplesden Noakes School
Borough Green Primary School
The Grammar School for Girls, Wilmington
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys
The Malling School
Rainham Mark Grammar School
Aylesford School
The Archbishop's CE Grant Maintained School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPERATING
The Wildernesse School
Westlands High School

SCHOOLS WHICH ARE "MINDED TO" APPROVED
St. John Fisher School, Chatham
St. Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School
The Folkestone School for Girls

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School
St. Francis RC Primary School
St. Edmund's RC Comprehensive School
Hillview School for Girls
Southfields School
Herne Bay High School
Chaucer Technology School
Roseacre Junior School
Rochester Grammar School for Girls
Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls
The Thomas Aveling School
The Holy Family RC Primary School
The Charles Dickens High School
Mascalls School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
St. George's CE High School
St. Botolph's CE Primary School
St. Anselm's RC School
Cheyne Middle School
Herne Bay County Junior School
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

APPLICATIONS REJECTED
Swanscombe High School
Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School, Kent
Cliffe Woods Primary School Rochester
Cliffe Woods Middle School
Edenbridge Middle School
Rede Secondary School, Strood
Castlemount School
Appledore CE Primary School

Buckinghamshire
SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
Bridgewater Hall School
Beaconsfield High School
The Chalfonts Community College (G.M.)
Brookmead School
Brindley Hall School
Overstone Grant Maintained Combined School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPEN
Hamilton Combined School
Wycombe Royal Grammar School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
The Radcliffe School
Beechview Middle School
The Lord Grey School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Wing School
Brushwood Middle School

Hampshire
SCHOOLS OPERATING AS GM
The Priory County Primary School
Crofton School, Fareham
Abbotswood Middle School
Ringwood School (GM Comprehensive)
Burgate School
Testwood School
The City of Portsmouth Boys' School
The Arnewood School
Hardley School (Grant-Maintained)
Front Lawn Middle School

SCHOOLS APPROVED FOR GM STATUS BUT NOT YET OPEN
Bay House School
Bohunt School
Calmore Grant-Maintained Middle School
St. Joseph's RC VA Primary School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
Testbourne Community School
Boundary First School
Mill Rythe First School, Havant
Mengham Middle School
Blackfield Middle School
Mengham First School
Hordle CE VC Primary School
All Hallows RC School

SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE VOTED YES BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED PROPOSALS
St. George's RC School
Ashley County Junior School

Recovery Programmes

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those local education authorities that have instigated reading recovery programmes other than those that have been awarded Government funding to do so.

Mr. Forth: We are aware of five such authorities: Cheshire, Croydon, Northamptonshire, Surrey and Westminster.

National Curriculum

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish his new proposals for the national curriculum; when these will be introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend intends to ask the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, once it is set up, to offer him a plan for the regular review of national curriculum subjects over time. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales published proposals for a revised technology order in December. Proposals for a revised statutory order for English are

expected to be published in the spring. The revised curriculum for both subjects should come into force from autumn 1994 for key stages 1 to 3 and autumn 1995 for key stage 4.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children under five years in Northumberland received nursery education in 1979 and the latest available year.

Mr. Forth: In 1979 approximately 12 per cent. of the local three and four-year-old population attended maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in Northumberland. In 1991 —the latest year for which information on participation rates is available—the figure was 31 per cent.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Boswell: Regulations relating to education can be found in "The Law of Education" which is published by Butterworths and which is available in the Library. This is regularly updated with the text of regulations as amended.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Atkins: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consideration of definition.

Casement Park Murders

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons convicted of offences arising from the Casement park murder trials were members of Provisional Sinn Fein or of the Provisional IRA.

Mr. Mates: It would not be appropriate to provide the information requested.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many letters he has received concerning the Casement park murder trial convictions.

Mr. Mates: My right hon. Friend has received 18 letters, from 16 people or organisations, about convictions for murder arising from the deaths of two Army corporals near Casement park in March 1988.

Farm Workers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many regular full-time hired farm workers are employed on farm holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

	Number
1978	514
1979	[1]—
1980	528
1981	486
1982	[1]—
1983	[1]—
1984	490
1985	464
1986	421
1987	430
1988	397
1989	423
1990	408
1991	414
1992	366

[1] Not available.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978, how many farmers within the areas of LFA designated severely disadvantaged receive a level of farm income at or below the level at which a family of two adults and two children of school ages 13 and 17 could expect to be entitled to family credit at the current rate.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the level of indebtedness among mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers respectively in the severely disadvantaged areas for each year since 1978.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is given in the table for beef cattle and sheep farms in the severely disadvantaged areas for the period 1984-85 to 1991-92. No data are available for earlier years or for mostly sheep farms.

	Total external liabilities (£'000 per farm)	*Indebtedness (external liabilities expressed as a percentage of total assets*
1984-85	6·6	3·9
1985-86	7·2	4·2
1986-87	8·8	4·7
1987-88	10·5	5·2
1988-89	9·3	4·5
1989-90	10·5	4·9
1990-91	14·5	6·8
1991-92	11·4	5·4

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes there have been in the proportion of

mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in relation to the number of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in total for Northern Ireland since 1978; and if he will chart the change.

Mr. Hanley: The proportion of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farms in the severely disadvantaged areas in relation to the number of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farms in all areas was as follows:

Year	
1978	[1]
1979	[1]
1980	66·7
1981	65·6
1982	64·6
1983	69·5
1984	64·0
1985	63·7
1986	62·3
1987	61·2
1988	60·9
1989	58·7
1990	57·8
1991	57·9
1992	58·1

[1] Not available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many farmers were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. Hanley: The number of farmers who were paid hill livestock compensatory allowances was as follows:

Year	*Number of Farmers*
1978	12,882
1979	12,596
1980	12,410
1981	12,090
1982	11,977
1983	11,959
1984	11,861
1985	12,255
1986	12,268
1987	12,160
1988	12,100
1989	12,205
1990	12,309
1991	12,333
1992	12,273

Nursing Vacancies

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will establish a database for nursing vacancies.

Mr. Hanley: The establishment of a database for nursing vacancies is a matter for health and social services boards and provider units as they are in the best position to assess current and future nursing manpower requirements based on service need.

HEALTH

Mrs. Tracey Evans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, if she will release to Mr. Robert Evans copies of the reports which she has received from the local agencies, and of the admission reports at Brighton general hospital, concerning the case of Mrs. Tracey Evans.

Mr. Yeo: Mr. Evans has been sent a copy of the summary and conclusions of the report by the area child protection committee.

The hospital admission reports are confidential to both the patient and the national health service. It would therefore be inappropriate to release these documents. Indeed, the confidentiality of all local agency reports is governed by common law or by statutes, restricting their access to any individuals other than Mrs. Evans herself.

Patient Statistics

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in 1990-91 and 1991-92 by each individual trust/shadow trust and directly managed unit individually and by region.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Geriatric Patients

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of geriatric patients treated per regional health authority in the last 10 years; and what are the predicted numbers for the next 10 years.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of geriatric patients treated by RHA, 1982 to 1991-92
In-patient and day cases

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*[1]
England	297,694	325,005	350,280	382,859	397,192	400,941	413,961	449,235	471,130	513,433
Northern RHA	19,324	20,538	20,507	22,148	22,166	21,624	25,843	26,887	28,180	30,859
Yorkshire RHA	34,131	36,976	39,109	44,369	45,159	47,653	47,355	51,188	51,172	53,250
Trent RHA	32,132	34,502	36,459	40,116	42,627	36,108	38,153	43,208	47,547	53,965
East Anglian RHA	14,324	15,185	16,679	18,689	18,754	19,879	20,659	21,876	23,803	26,006
North West Thames RHA	16,301	17,990	19,947	21,155	22,394	24,068	23,224	26,915	28,626	33,287
North East Thames RHA	17,496	19,278	22,152	24,946	26,916	27,253	30,096	34,343	35,407	37,865
South East Thames RHA	24,141	25,573	27,798	29,803	30,256	29,874	30,225	33,035	36,455	37,805
South West Thames RHA	16,922	18,872	21,267	21,515	22,768	23,796	22,103	23,133	25,179	30,049
Wessex RHA	14,810	15,721	16,864	18,404	20,604	21,398	23,205	26,268	29,914	34,257
Oxford RHA	14,138	15,039	15,610	15,175	14,696	14,109	13,709	14,044	13,870	14,975
South Western RHA	18,908	22,387	23,697	25,769	26,332	26,700	30,124	32,097	33,171	33,883
West Midlands RHA	28,266	29,775	34,049	37,675	38,836	38,622	38,186	37,079	36,860	40,283

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92[1]
Mersey RHA	15,466	17,441	17,944	20,046	21,307	22,371	23,316	27,649	27,019	30,727
North Western RHA	30,895	35,044	37,470	42,423	43,847	46,908	47,323	50,798	52,760	55,448
Special Health Authorities	440	684	728	626	530	580	540	733	647	774

Notes:
From 1982 to 1987-88 the figures are for discharges and deaths.
From 1988-89 to 1991-92 the figures are for finished consultant episodes.
[1] Provisional.

The information covers patients treated in the specialty of geriatric medicine and does not include the large numbers of elderly people treated in general acute wards, who are not separately identified.

Health authorities are responsible for assessing the health needs of their resident populations and planning their purchasing strategies accordingly. We do not routinely make long-term forecasts of patients numbers in view of the uncertainty attaching to assumptions about future trends. Various studies have been undertaken in this area including work carried out by the Department's economics and operational research division, published in "The Health of Elderly People: an epidemiological overview: Companion Papers", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Private Medicine

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances the new helpline service may provide information advising callers to use private medicine; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The regional health information service, which was launched on 26 January 1993, has proved very popular with the public.

The service deals with each request for information on an individual basis and it was set up to provide information rather than advice.

When a member of the public calls the service and makes a specific request for information related to private medicine, he will be directed to the appropriate source of further information.

Nursing Care

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances a local authority may make arrangements for continuing nursing care of a person in hospital, without seeking the consent of the person involved; and how the position will change from 1 April.

Mr. Sackville: Local authorities currently have no power to make arrangements for continuing nursing care. From 1 April they will be able to make arrangements for nursing home care, but except in certain very exceptional cases, local authorities have no power to provide care for people without their consent.

Project 2000

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals the Government have for increasing the number of students in receipt of Project 2000 bursaries.

Mr. Sackville: The number of students receiving bursaries will increase as more schemes are approved and funded to operate Project 2000. Sixty-four schemes have been established, with 17 remaining to be approved. An announcement will be made shortly concerning funding for new schemes in 1993-94.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of the national health service towards the use of Project 2000 student nurses on clinical placements in the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Project 2000 students are counted as part of the rostered work force for 20 per cent.—1,000 hours—of their training. This occurs towards the end of their course during the specialist branch programme. During the remainder of the course students are supernumerary, but gain experience in clinical placements under the supervision of qualified nurses.

Project 2000 students gain experience during clinical placements and contribute to patient care under supervision, but only to the extent that this provides opportunities for learning.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will extend the terms of reference of the review body for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors to cover the remuneration of Project 2000 students;

(2) what consideration is being given to the annual adjustment of bursaries paid to Project 2000 students so that they are comparable with average net basic salaries paid to existing student nurses;

(3) whether the same considerations relating to the adjustment to bursaries for Project 2000 students are being taking into account in 1993 as were taken into account in 1991.

Mr. Sackville: Project 2000 students are not salaried employees: they receive bursaries. There is, therefore, no question of extending the pay review body's remit to Project 2000 students.

Nor do we consider it appropriate to link the level of Project 2000 student bursaries to the current earning power of other student nurses because Project 2000 students are not employees.

Student bursary levels will continue, as in 1991, to be kept under review in the light of recruitment and retention trends.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the wastage rate for *(a)* Project 2000 nurses training and *(b)* other nurse training courses.

Mr. Sackville: The average wastage rates for pre-registration nurse training are as follows.

	1990 Per cent.	1991 Per cent.	1992 Per cent.
Traditional courses	5·4	5·3	4·7
Project 2000 courses	1·3	5·2	5·5

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what independent evaluation has taken place on the contribution of *(a)* Project 2000 student nurses and *(b)* other nurses in training in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The National Foundation for Educational Research has been commissioned by the Department of Health to undertake a longitudinal study of the implementation of Project 2000. The National Foundation for Educational Research is due to report later this year. The study does not include other nurses in training in the national health service.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there is a health economist on the secretariat serving the advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The secretariat of the advisory committee on national health service drugs can if necessary obtain professional and other advice, including economic advice, from within the Department.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *479*, if she will investigate the cost to the national health service of prescribed but unused drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. It is for individual general practitioners to ensure that the drugs they prescribe are the minimum necessary and that patients comply with instructions for their use. Advice on the appropriate level of prescribing is available from professional medical and pharmaceutical advisers employed by family health services authorities and via publications such as the "British National Formulary" which are issued free of charge to all general practitioners.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many economists will serve on the expanded advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The advisory committee on national health service drugs is, and will continue to be, a committee of health care professionals—doctors, dentists and pharmacists. There are no plans to include an economist.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require all hospital waste to be treated as clinical waste.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Residential Homes

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requirement is laid down for the provision of tap and running water in registering residential homes for children and the elderly; and what guidance is issued in the event of disconnection.

Mr. Yeo: Registered children's homes and residential care homes for the elderly are required by law to provide adequate washing, showering and bathing facilities, with hot and cold water supply, for their residents. There is no departmental guidance on the action to be taken in the event of the disconnection of the water supply.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table showing those district health authorities that are over their capitation target indicating *(a)* the percentage that they are over capitation and *(b)* the cash amount that this represents of current budgets.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not currently held centrally in a comparable and meaningful format. We recognise the value of comparable data, however, and the national health service management executive is currently collecting comparable figures for 1993-94. When available, a copy of these figures will be placed in the Library.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines are issued by her Department about the monitoring of decisions affecting extra-contractual referrals;

(2) what guidelines are issued by her Department about the rights of patients to appeal against extra-contractual referral decisions;

(3) what guidelines are issued by her Department about whether decisions on extra-contractual referrals are notified *(a)* to district health authority members and *(b)* community health councils.

Dr. Mawhinney: District health authorities are responsible for approving and monitoring extra-contractual referrals and, therefore, will have access to decisions made about them. No specific guidelines exist about whether to notify community health councils about decisions on extra-contractual referrals.

From 1 April 1992, the patients charter has given patients the right to have any complaint about national health service services—whoever provides them—investigated and to receive a full and prompt written reply from the chief executive or general manager.

Nurse Regradings

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of appeals against nurse regrading remain outstanding at regional and national level at the most recent convenient date; what is the average period that has elapsed since the appeals were lodged; what steps she is taking to expedite the processing of appeals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: At 31 December 1992, there were 16,304 appeals outstanding at English regional health authority level and 1,625 at national level. The average period of time that has elapsed since those outstanding appeals were lodged is 23 months at regional level and 11 months at national level. It is the responsibility of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council to discuss how to bring the process to the earliest possible conclusion.

Population Structure

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the basis for Office of Population Censuses and Surveys calculations of future population structure.

Mr. Sackville: Projections of the population of the United Kingdom and its component countries are made by

the Government Actuary's department in consultation with the registrars general. These are based on the most recent population estimates and on the assumptions about future births, deaths, and migration which seem most appropriate given the statistical evidence available at the time.

Subnational population projections for England are prepared by the OPCS. These project the population of local and health authority areas. The assumptions made reflect recent demographic evidence for each area and are consistent with the national projections. Local and health authorities are consulted about these projections before they are finalised.

Further details are given in the OPCS publications national population projections: 1989-based—series PP2 No. 17—and subnational population projections: 1989-based—series PP3 No. 8—copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is planning to make to its calculations of future population structure in the light of its over-estimate of the number of persons aged over 85 years in the London area as revealed by the 1991 census; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The methods used in making these population estimates have been published by the OPCS in its occasional paper 37. The information which is available about migration, especially its age and sex composition, is the least satisfactory component of the estimation procedure. Because of this a review of migration data sources has been carried out—OPCS occasional paper 39. The review identified some exploratory work on possible enhancements. This is now being undertaken. In the light of overestimation of persons aged 85 and over in the London area, the OPCS is looking again at its methodology; but it is not yet known whether it will prove practicable to make improvements to it.

Teaching Allocations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing *(a)* the service increment for teaching allocations between regions for each year from 1990-91 to 1993-94 and *(b)* the distribution of service increment for teaching allocations between hospitals and trusts within the northern region for the same years.

Mr. Sackville: The service increment for teaching—SIFT—was expanded in 1990-91 to provide for the excess service costs of research, becoming the service increment for teaching and research—SIFTR. The regional allocations of SIFTR for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 are set out in the table.

The allocation of SIFTR at a sub-regional level is the responsibility of the regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Carr CBE, the chairman of Northern regional health authority, for details.

Service increment for teaching and research (SIFTR): 1990-91 to 1993-94

Region	SIFTR allocations: £000s			
	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Northern	17,593	18,010	19,006	20,166
Yorkshire	17,032	19,758	19,879	20,906
Trent	43,440	46,921	49,845	52,223
East Anglia	9,605	10,181	10,685	10,888
North West Thames	27,151	29,705	32,842	33,546
North East Thames	61,283	64,947	67,365	70,315
South East Thames	40,076	42,945	46,736	49,443
South West Thames	16,960	17,312	17,353	17,880
Wessex	11,942	12,659	13,890	14,989
Oxford	9,605	10,181	10,685	10,888
South West	13,448	14,627	16,097	18,316
West Midlands	18,202	19,653	20,516	21,647
Mersey	19,201	20,049	20,861	21,628
North West	29,477	30,461	32,394	33,673
ENGLAND	335,015	357,409	378,154	396,508

Disabled People (Insurance)

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy on the insuring of wheelchairs and other aids for disabled people; what advice is given to health authorities on this; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Guidance of national health service insurance was contained in the management executive's letter EL(90)195 of 2 October 1990. This advised health authorities that the public sector generally should carry its own risks unless greater value for money can be obtained by commercial insurance. National health service trusts are free to make the insurance arrangements which they consider to be most cost effective.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fund-holding practices there are in each region; what percentage this represents of the regional total of general practitioner practices; and what percentage of the regional population they serve.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is given in the table.

Region	Number of GP practices fundholding in 1992-93	Percentage of GP practices fundholding in 1992-93	Percentage of population covered by GP fundholders in 1992-93
Northern	40	7·7	16·0
Yorkshire	66	9·8	21·0
Trent	60	7·1	14·0
East Anglian	13	4·4	8·0
North West Thames	49	6·1	14·0
North East Thames	21	2·3	7·0
South East Thames	30	3·8	9·0
South West Thames	39	7·3	15·0
Wessex	36	8·2	15·0
Oxford	48	12·2	23·0
South Western	41	7·1	14·0
West Midlands	59	5·6	13·0
Mersey	51	11·4	19·0
North Western	32	3·6	9·0

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the allocations made for general practitioner fund-holding practices in each region.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is contained in the table.

GP fund holder budget allocations 1992-93

Region	Budget £ million
Northern	66·3
Yorkshire	100·6
Trent	81·7
East Anglia	22·3
North West Thames	60·8
North East Thames	26·6
South East Thames	38·9
South West Thames	50·3
Wessex	51·5
Oxford	64·7
South Western	53·8
West Midland	83·1
Mersey	59·3
North Western	41·3

Nurses

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what central information her Department collects on the number of newly qualified nurses seeking employment.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those regional health authorities that have deployed strategies to ensure that student nurses are not employed when they qualify.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will establish a national database of nursing vacancies;

(2) if she will list those regional health authorities which have sent information to the NHS management executive on the number of student nurses due to qualify in 1993.

Mr. Sackville: With around 390,000 nursing posts in the national health service in England, the matching of newly qualified nurses to vacancies is best handled at local level. The Department does not therefore routinely collect information about nursing vacancies or newly qualified nurses seeking employment.

Regional health authorities are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient trained nurses to meet local requirements. All regions have reported to the NHS management executive about their plans to manage the supply of trained nurses to posts in 1993.

Nurses

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified nursing staff were employed in each region in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

NHS qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by RHA at September (WTE)

	1989	1990	1991
Northern	17,260	16,950	16,880
Yorkshire	18,670	18,540	18,480
Trent	22,720	23,090	23,290
East Anglia	9,720	9,760	9,810
North West Thames	15,850	15,590	16,280
North East Thames	19,570	19,800	20,050
South East Thames	19,070	18,740	16,620
South West Thames	14,150	13,760	14,120
Wessex	13,660	13,970	14,130
Oxford	10,680	11,030	11,320
South Western	15,870	16,320	16,130
West Midlands	25,140	25,460	25,210
Mersey	13,260	12,930	12,620
North Western	23,160	22,920	23,230
Special Health Authorities	3,390	3,390	5,050
England	242,190	242,340	243,250

Source: Non Medical Manpower Census, HAP(STATS)B, NHSME. England Total includes figures for Family Health Service Authorities and Other Statutory Authorities.
Figures are whole time equivalents and rounded to the nearest ten.

Paediatric Nurses

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by regional health authority area, the number of qualified paediatric nurses in employment in the NHS for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally.

Child Emigration

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *698*, in what circumstances her permission is required for the emigration of a child who is in care; and in how many cases such permission has been granted in each year since 1967.

Mr. Yeo: The permission of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not been required since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 on 14 October 1991. Figures relating to the number of applications made to the Secretary of State before the Children's Act's implementation could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

The courts now decide such matters. Their approval is given only: if emigration is in the child's best interests; if suitable arrangements are made for the child's reception and welfare in the country where the child will live; if the child has consented to living in that country; and if every person who has parental responsibility for the child has similarly consented.

Birmingham Hospitals

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the new Birmingham children's hospital is to be built;

(2) what capital resources are to be made available in each of the next three years for the implementation of the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan; and if she will make a statement on its likely progress during the above time scale;

(3) when there is to be a replacement for M block at Selly Oak hospital;

(4) when the new Birmingham accident and trauma unit is to be built.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the West Midlands regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to

contact Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, who may be able to assist with the information requested.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department made during its consideration of proposed hospital closures in South Birmingham district health authority of the possible risks of cross-infection entailed by locating a burns unit on the same site as orthopaedic and surgical units at the South Birmingham general hospital.

Mr. Sackville: All matters, including that referred to by the hon. Member, were considered before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took her decision in favour of the proposals put forward by South Birmingham district health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she took to discuss the proposed closure of the Accident and Royal Orthopaedic hospital with local hon. Members prior to making her decision on 1 February; and what steps she took to communicate her decision to local hon. Members at the same time as she communicated it to West Midlands and South Birmingham health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: I met the hon. Member on 27 October 1992, in relation to the proposals put forward by South Birmingham district health authority. The hon. Member was also given the opportunity on two subsequent occasions to meet me to discuss the matter.

I wrote to the hon. Member and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 1 February 1993, informing them of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision in favour of South Birmingham DHA's proposals and to all other local hon. Members on 2 February.

Oral Contraceptives

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women are currently prescribed oral contraceptives.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is the current cost of supplying oral contraceptives, and how much of a saving would accrue, if the categories listed in her press release of 12 November 1992 were removed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The net ingredient cost of supplying oral contraceptives dispensed by community pharmacists, dispensing doctors and prescribing doctors during 1992 was £37·65 million. Decisions on which individual products will no longer be available on national health service prescription will be made only on the recommendation of the advisory committee on NHS drugs and cannot be predicted in advance.

Autistic People

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the United Kingdom are officially classed as being autistic.

Mr. Yeo: These data are not available centrally. It is estimated that the prevalence of autism is between four to five per 10,000 population.

Student Nurses

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many student nurses were recruited in each quarter of each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: Information about numbers recruited to employment is not available centrally.

Traditional nurse training is being replaced by Project 2000 training. In 1991-92 in England, 9,280 students entered Project 2000 training. Students are supernumerary and are not included in manpower numbers.

Source: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how her Department publicises the availability of free prescription certificates.

Dr. Mawhinney: The FP10 prescription form advises patients that free prescriptions and prescription prepayment certificates are available, and directs those who need more detailed information to obtain leaflet P11 "National Health Service—Prescriptions—How to get them free". This leaflet and leaflet AB11 "Help with NHS costs" are widely available from a variety of sources including Benefits Agency offices and family doctors. Information about help with NHS charges is published in a range of ethnic languages and posters advertising free prescriptions are supplied to family doctors, pharmacies and NHS hospitals. The leaflets and posters are also freely available to organisations such as citizens advice bureaux, welfare rights groups and charities which can obtain them from the health publications unit.

Drug Tariff List

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of the people who decide what items are on the NHS drug tariff list; what are the qualifications of each of those people; what criteria were used to make the decisions to include items on the list; how often the drug tariff list is reviewed; what is the legal status of the drug tariff; and what discretion is open to consultants to waive the restrictions of the drug tariff and prescribe non-listed items on the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The drug tariff, which is published monthly, sets out inter alia the list of appliances and dressings that general practitioners may prescribe under the national health service.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required to promulgate this list under regulation 18 of the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1992 which are made under section 41 of the National Health Service Act 1977, as amended. It follows that general practitioners cannot prescribe under the national health service items that are not on this list; consultants are not restricted by this legalisation but prescribe within locally agreed priorities and available resources. We decide what new categories of appliances should be added to the drug tariff, taking into account the availability of resources. The assessment of whether particular products within these categories should be listed is undertaken by officials, with relevant professional qualifications and expertise. The criteria used are the quality, safety and efficacy of the product, the value it offers for public money and the effect on overall costs.

NHS Staff

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many NHS staff were employed on local pay and conditions agreements on 31 December 1992; and of those how many were recruited *(a)* after 1 April 1992, *(b)* after 1 April 1991 and *(c)* after 1 April 1990;

(2) how many NHS staff were employed on Whitley Council pay and conditions at 31 December 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the cost of compliance of hospitals within the national health service with the requirements of EC directive 5761/92 concerning the disposal of clinical waste by incineration; and whether this cost will be met by extra allocations from her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The draft directive 5761/92 has been issued for discussion. We have not yet undertaken an assessment of the cost of implementing it in the national health service.

Anophthalmia

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will commission research into the cause of anophthalmia;

(2) what assessment she has made of the effects of *(a)* benomyl and *(b)* other pesticides on unborn children.

Mr. Sackville: Before a pesticide is approved for use in the United Kingdom a careful assessment is made of its safety in use which includes data related to any possibility of risks to unborn children. We must seek advice from the independent expert statutory Advisory Committee on Pesticides before approving any pesticide.

Benomyl was last reviewed by the ACP in March 1992 and it advised that applied in accordance with the approved conditions of use both consumers of produce and operators should not be at risk. The ACP has been asked to consider at its next meeting in March the most recent study conducted by the university of California. This study, which adds little to present knowledge of the effects of benomyl in laboratory animals, was undertaken to investigate the eye defects and dosed rats at a level that was known to cause these defects and was 1,000 times higher than the likely human exposure level.

Anophthalmia and the related condition microphthalmia are known in some cases to be of genetic origin and some may be the consequence of infection with rubella or toxoplasmosis. Few studies have been done into the causes of anophthalmia and microphthalmia, and their comparative rarity makes it difficult to show any environmental association; nevertheless, that same rarity argues against commonly used pesticides or other chemicals alone being a cause. Clinicians at the Moorfields hospital are at present investigating a number of children born without eyes or with very small eyes. The Government will consider the results from this study with great care and take any action necessary.

Health Authority Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the criteria by which nominations to *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* trust boards are judged.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 8 December 1992, at column *638*.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she issues to regional health authorities about the methods by which nominations are sought for *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* trust boards.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are asked to nominate people from a variety of backgrounds, with the experience and skills which will enable them to contribute to the management and strategic direction of the authority or trust. Individuals may nominate themselves or be nominated by others.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the full list of names she has received as nominees to *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* self-governing trust boards.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The process of nomination and selection for appointments is confidential.

Mental Health Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table to show expenditure on *(a)* mental illness, *(b)* mental handicap or learning disability and *(c)* social services as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Gross expenditure on mental illness, mentally handicapped or learning disabilities and social services as a percentage of gross domestic product[1 2 3]
England

Year	Mental illness Per cent.	Mentally handicapped or learning disabilities Per cent.	Total personal social services Per cent.
1979-80	0·43	0·27	1·11
1980-81	0·49	0·30	1·18
1981-82	0·51	0·32	1·22
1982-83	0·50	0·32	1·24
1983-84	0·48	0·31	1·22
1984-85	0·48	0·32	1·22
1985-86	0·45	0·30	1·16
1986-87	0·44	0·29	1·16
1987-88	0·46	0·29	1·17
1988-89	0·48	0·31	1·15
1989-90	0·47	0·31	1·16
1990-91	N/a	N/a	1·20

[1] Gross domestic product (GDP) figures for England relate to calendar years; all other expenditure figures relate to financial years. Percentage figures are therefore approximate.
[2] Figures for spending on services for mentally ill and people with learning disability combine relevant (current) expenditure in the Hospital and Community Health Services and Personal Social Services. Figures do not include spending by Family Health Services. From 1988-89 onwards spending on Community Mental Health Nurses and Community Psychiatric Nurses is identifiable and included in the figures.
[3] Changes in data definition and collection may mean that figures are not directly comparable.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many courses of dental treatment for children were undertaken in each family health services authority area in each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, with the percentage change for 1991-92 over 1989-90 for each authority.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The information requested is given in the table. Following the introduction of the new dental contract on 1 October 1990, most payments to dentists for treating children are by way of capitation fees. Under capitation, it is not possible separately to identify courses of treatment. Thus the number of child courses of treatment in 1989-90 and 1991-92 cannot be directly compared, and such comparisons are seriously misleading. In 1989-90, dentists in England were paid £163·9 million for treating children. In 1991-92, this had risen to £244·0 million.

General Dental Service: England
Courses of Dental Treatment for Children by FHSA

FHSA	April 1989 to March 1990	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Percentage Change 1991-92 over 1989-90
Kingston and Richmond	58,944	48,979	22,342	−62·10
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	84,074	71,050	33,590	−60·05
Dorset	146,983	117,040	37,158	−74·72
Hampshire	362,618	274,159	83,816	−76·89
Wiltshire	120,136	92,853	30,133	−74·92
Isle of Wight	27,287	20,877	5,410	−80·17
Berkshire	169,052	126,665	45,759	−72·93
Buckinghamshire	155,722	118,016	37,000	−76·24
Northamptonshire	127,993	97,252	31,717	−75·22
Oxfordshire	138,516	102,239	32,031	−76·88
Avon	249,164	192,215	63,441	−74·54
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	101,631	82,423	26,810	−73·62
Devon	253,798	192,449	63,506	−74·98
Gloucestershire	128,220	94,368	31,500	−75·43
Somerset	123,215	91,892	31,371	−74·54

FHSA	April 1989 to March 1990	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Percentage Change 1991-92 over 1989-90
Hereford and Worcester	168,645	129,030	45,081	−73·27
Shropshire	97,840	79,906	28,656	−70·71
Staffordshire	217,977	174,106	68,789	−68·44
Warwickshire	100,858	75,393	24,484	−75·72
Birmingham	189,398	146,709	63,780	−66·32
Coventry	47,815	37,552	18,151	−62·04
Dudley	56,539	43,984	17,165	−69·64
Sandwell	41,205	34,411	13,748	−66·64
Solihull	36,913	28,351	11,775	−68·10
Walsall	44,354	35,669	16,409	−63·00
Wolverhampton	36,205	27,526	10,504	−70·99
Cheshire	236,942	186,433	72,366	−69·46
Liverpool	93,956	79,490	44,389	−52·76
St. Helens and Knowsley	68,882	57,342	25,899	−62·40
Sefton	62,957	49,281	19,688	−68·73
Wirral	76,935	60,381	24,651	−67·96
Lancashire	298,105	246,516	103,440	−65·30
Bolton	62,197	48,180	18,262	−70·64
Bury	43,169	33,749	12,913	−70·09
Manchester	87,526	71,859	34,076	−61·07
Oldham	52,324	42,720	18,206	−65·21
Rochdale	44,004	33,960	14,046	−68·08
Salford	27,702	26,001	18,273	−34·04
Stockport	89,735	66,861	22,109	−75·36
Tameside	52,450	43,405	19,443	−62·93
Trafford	59,368	48,541	17,783	−70·05
Wigan	71,467	59,813	25,906	−63·75
Cleveland	135,839	119,525	56,430	−58·46
Cumbria	111,863	94,488	34,855	−68·84
Durham	116,447	97,147	42,430	−63·56
Northumberland	62,222	55,228	19,878	−68·05
Gateshead	36,820	29,165	10,972	−70·20
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	49,937	43,608	19,886	−60·18
North Tyneside	37,658	31,455	11,517	−69·42
South Tyneside	23,337	19,535	8,701	−62·72
Sunderland	46,370	39,751	18,732	−59·60
Humberside	172,610	146,383	63,663	−63·12
North Yorkshire	166,604	135,453	43,407	−73·95
Bradford	92,399	78,185	31,091	−66·35
Calderdale	41,508	34,200	12,472	−69·95
Kirklees	77,317	66,288	23,308	−69·85
Leeds	177,756	146,640	56,463	−68·24
Wakefield	66,276	56,388	25,468	−61·57
Derbyshire	196,725	162,060	60,145	−69·43
Leicestershire	195,947	163,240	62,972	−67·86
Lincolnshire	121,191	97,861	33,023	−72·75
Nottinghamshire	230,305	193,065	78,538	−65·90
Barnsley	46,139	38,457	15,138	−67·19
Doncaster	76,296	64,964	24,439	−67·97
Rotherham	54,586	46,474	20,893	−61·72
Sheffield	120,504	97,140	35,552	−70·50
Cambridgeshire	150,875	119,031	40,708	−73·02
Norfolk	74,558	65,917	43,045	−42·27
Suffolk	160,005	121,478	41,152	−74·28
Bedfordshire	81,742	64,186	23,906	−70·75
Hertfordshire	248,770	200,346	72,325	−70·93
Barnet	58,244	47,475	23,253	−60·08
Brent and Harrow	80,304	68,370	36,696	−54·30
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	72,810	64,876	32,413	−55·48
Hillingdon	37,648	30,295	12,349	−67·20
Kensington Westminster and Chelsea	31,776	25,311	9,951	−68·68
Essex	320,456	249,245	94,600	−70·48
Barking and Havering	60,456	51,374	21,165	−64·99
Camden and Islington	34,356	28,005	10,899	−68·28
City and East London	58,026	53,297	33,884	−41·61
Enfield and Haringey	67,374	58,317	26,448	−60·74
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	69,549	58,145	27,526	−60·42
East Sussex	138,265	114,710	38,553	−72·12
Kent	327,130	257,189	96,144	−70·61
Greenwich and Bexley	81,144	67,979	31,186	−61·57
Bromley	47,203	41,375	21,852	−53·71
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	74,224	63,575	27,720	−62·65
Surrey	251,297	190,508	63,117	−74·88

FHSA	April 1989 to March 1990	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Percentage Change 1991-92 over 1989-90
West Sussex	181,450	142,036	49,230	−72·87
Croydon	61,594	51,730	25,144	−59·18

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Car Park Permits

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many parking permits have been issued for the underground car park in each year since 1990, and at the latest available date to *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* hon. Members' secretaries with over 15 years' service, *(c)* late-night staff and staff with over 15 years' service, *(d)* named members of the Press Gallery, *(e)* officers of the House, *(f)* Government Whips and office staff, *(g)* parliamentary Labour party staff, *(h)* Opposition Whips' office staff and *(i)* Liberal Democrat Whips' office staff.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: It is not possible separately to identify the number of parking permits issued in 1990, 1991 and 1992. However, on 31 January 1993 the following categories and numbers of permits were on issue:

Permit holders	Category	Current permits
(a) Members	1	638
(b) Members' secretaries with over 15 years' service	5	20
(c) Late night staff	4	297
Staff of the House with over 15 years' service	3	63
(d) Named members of the Press Gallery	4	18
(e) Officers of the House	2	118
(f) Government Whips office staff	4	9
(g) Parliamentary Labour party staff	2	1
(h) Opposition Whips' office staff	4	1
(i) Liberal Democrat Whips' office staff	4	—

WALES

Further Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total funding per full student equivalent at colleges of further education in each local education authority in Wales during each of the last three years; and what are the estimated totals for the next three years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The annual total funding per full student equivalent by each local education authority in Wales is not held centrally. From 1 April 1993 the Further Education Funding Council for Wales will assume responsibility for funding the further education sector. The funding council has yet to announce its allocation to colleges for 1993-94.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount of access fund money allocated to *(a)* further education within each local education authority in Wales during the last two years, *(b)* teacher training colleges, *(c)* other public sector higher education and *(d)* university colleges; and what was the proportion actually spent and the number of access fund applications in each instance.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Universities Funding Council has been responsible for distributing access funds to the colleges of the university of Wales. In 1991-92 the Welsh Office made £620,000 in access funds available to the other further and higher education institutions in Wales. This was divided between the three groups eligible for assistance from the funds as follows:

Further education students—£209,634
Higher education students—£368,251
Postgraduates—£42,115

The allocations to institutions were made on the basis of student numbers. It is for institutions to decide on the distribution of the funds among eligible students. In 1991-92 a total of £651,221·11 was disbursed by institutions which included access funds carried over from the previous year.

A total of 3,932 students applied for assistance from the access funds in 1991-92. This represented less than 17 per cent. of students eligible to apply. Information on the use made by colleges of the £630,000 allocated in 1992-93 will be available later this year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will issue guidelines to the institutes of higher education to provide continuity of accommodation for further education students who have commenced courses housed in higher education campuses; if he will place a copy of his guidance in the Library; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has for transitional protection for further education students who have commenced courses traditionally located in institutes of higher education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: From 1 April 1993 responsibility for ensuring that further education facilities are available will transfer from the local education authorities to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. The FEFCW is currently addressing the issue of transferring further education courses from certain higher education institutions to the further education sector.

Community Councils

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average length of time taken by his Department to respond to general inquiries by community councils in Wales in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Detailed information on community council correspondence for the last three years is not available. Every effort is made to reply to all correspondence within 15 working days of its receipt.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline the procedures established by his Department in responding to correspondence from community councils in Wales; and if he has any plans to review the effectiveness of these procedures.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's procedures for dealing with correspondence from community councils in Wales are the same as those established for handling all external correspondence. Every effort is made to reply to all correspondence within 15 working days of its receipt.

Hospitals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *769*, what was the total number of hospitals in Wales in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 broken down into (i) the national health service, (ii) joint user and contractuals and *(c)* independent acute.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There were 173 NHS hospitals open in Wales as at 31 December 1979 and 145 as at 31 December 1991 and 1992.

In addition to these there were six independent acute hospitals open as at 31 March 1991 and 1992. It is not known centrally how many independent acute hospitals there were in Wales in 1979. Some of these hospitals would have treated NHS patients under contractual arrangements.

There are no joint user hospitals in Wales, nor were there any in 1979.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Marine Mammals (Transuranic Radioactivity)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies are made by his Department of transuranic radioactivity in marine mammals off the Welsh coast and in Welsh estuaries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food directorate of fisheries regularly undertakes monitoring of transuranic radioactivity in fish and shellfish off the Welsh coast. Details of this monitoring can be found in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report No. 29—Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters off the British Isles 1990", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

No routine transuranic radioactivity monitoring is undertaken in respect of sea mammals because they are not normally consumed by the general public.

Coastal Protection Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what surveys he has conducted as to the readiness of Welsh coastal protection services to cope with a major oil pollution incident.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responsibility for dealing with any major oil pollution on the Welsh coastline rests with coastal local authorities, in conjunction with the marine pollution control unit of the Department of Transport. They maintain contingency plans which are tested in exercises and in response to specific incidents.

The Welsh Office's role is to offer support and it maintains its own oil pollution incident plan for this purpose. The Welsh Office will also seek to ensure that any lessons, relevant to Wales, to be learnt from the MV Braer incident are acted upon.

Farming

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of part-time (1) farm workers and (ii) farmers in *(a)* less-favoured areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas in each year since 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: Readily available information requested is shown in the following tables. The figures exclude the numbers of farmers or farm workers on minor holdings of less than 6 hectares, in which there is no regular full-time farmer or worker, in which the labour input is less than 100 standard man days per year and in which glasshouse area is less than 100 sq m.

Number of part-time farmers, partners and directors in less favoured areas of Wales

	Less favoured areas	*of which: severely disadvantaged*	*Disadvantaged*
1985[1]	3,639	—	—
1986	6,072	4,472	1,600
1987	5,446	3,947	1,499
1988	5,989	4,245	1,744
1989	6,383	4,477	1,906
1990	6,147	4,217	1,930
1991	6,251	4,246	2,005
1992	6,996	4,693	2,303

Number of part-time family and hired workers in less favoured areas of Wales

	Less favoured areas	*of which: severely disadvantaged*	*Disadvantaged*
1985[1]	1,512	—	—
1986	2,627	1,859	768
1987	2,649	1,891	758
1988	2,591	1,832	759
1989	2,439	1,718	721
1990	2,597	1,837	760
1991	2,620	1,832	788
1992	2,702	1,979	723

[1] Data for 1985 are based on classification prior to the 1984 extension of the less favoured areas and are not comparable with other years.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many (i) farm workers and (ii) farmers in *(a)*

less-favoured areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas who *(x)* also did other jobs or *(y)* claimed income support in each year since 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: The following table shows, for 1985, 1987 and 1990 the number of farmers—occupiers—and other family workers on main holdings in less-favoured areas who had other paid work. Data are available only for these years as the source is the EC farm structure survey which is held every two or three years. Separate figures for severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas are not available for 1985. There is no information on farmers or farm workers claiming income support.

Number[1] of persons with other paid work on main holdings within the less favoured areas of Wales

	Occupiers[2] *(thousands)*	*Other family workers[3]* *(thousands)*
1985		
Total LFA	3·19	3·72
1987		
DA	1·15	1·72
SDA	3·03	4·16
Total LFA	4·18	5·88
1990		
DA	1·37	1·71
SDA	3·34	3·70
Total LFA	4·71	5·41

[1] Sample data only. Figures are subject to sampling error.
[2] Only occupiers who are also manager of the holding.
[3] Other family workers include the occupier's spouse and other workers related to the occupier. Data are not available for non-family hired workers.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many regular full-time hired farm workers are employed on farm holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Number of regular full-time hired farm workers in the severely disadvantaged areas of Wales

Year	
1978	1,237
1979	1,162
1980	1,134
1981	1,214
1982	1,202
1983	1,221
1984	1,105
1985	1,090
1986	1,291
1987	1,198
1988	1,194
1989	1,133
1990	1,040
1991	1,018
1992	977

Source: June Agricultural Census.
Note: Between 1985 and 1986 the method of classification of holdings used in the June Agricultural Census was changed. Consequently, the information for 1978 to 1985 is not comparable with later years.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the level of indebtedness amongst mostly sheep farmers and sheep and beef farmers, respectively, in the severely disadvantaged areas for each year since 1978.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Wales

		Severely disadvantaged areas	
		Sheep farms	*Cattle and sheep farms*
1978-79		[1]—	[1]—
1979-80			
External liabilities		[2]—	£8,607
Total assets		[2]—	£122,511
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	7·0
1980-81			
External liabilities		[2]—	£11,450
Total assets		[2]—	£132,604
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	8·6
1981-82			
External liabilities		[2]—	£13,604
Total assets		[2]—	£166,968
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	8·1
1982-83			
External liabilities		[2]—	£15,411
Total assets		[2]—	£209,427
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	7·4
1983-84			
External liabilities		[2]—	£13,692
Total assets		[2]—	£234,804
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	5·8
1984-85			
External liabilities		[2]—	£17,679
Total assets		[2]—	£209,667
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	8·4
1985-86			
External liabilities		[2]—	£30,372
Total assets		[2]—	£209,667
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	11·7
1986-87			
External liabilities		[2]—	£30,401
Total assets		[2]—	£261,417
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	[2]—	11·6
1987-88			
External liabilities		£37,252	£38,115
Total assets		£335,061	£319,436
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	11·1	11·9
1988-89			
External liabilities		£29,037	£22,183
Total assets		£314,533	£322,743
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	9·2	6·9
1989-90			
External liabilities		£31,020	£30,708
Total assets		£359,618	£359,414
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	8·6	8·5

		Severely disadvantaged areas	
		Sheep farms	*Cattle and sheep farms*
1990-91			
External liabilities		£35,438	£41,964
Total assets		£400,111	£374,002
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	8·9	11·2
1991-92			
External liabilities		£37,022	£35,599
Total assets		£365,304	£369,665
External liabilities/ total assets	Per cent.	10·1	9·6

[1]— Information not available.
[2]— Sample of farms too small to provide reliable information.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978, how many farmers within less-favoured areas designated severely disadvantaged receive a level of farm income at or below the level at which a family of two adults and two children of school ages 13 and 17 could expect to be entitled to family credit at the current rates.

Mr. David Hunt: Farm income is not directly comparable with the measure of income used for determining eligibility for family credit. The average farm income does not represent disposable income, it is declared before payment of interest but assumes rent is paid on the holding irrespective of its tenure. It includes an allowance for changes in the value of trading stocks but is net of depreciation. Payments of family credit also take account of family savings and information on the savings of farmers relative to their incomes is not available. It is therefore not possible to provide the information requested.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes there have been in the proportion of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in relation to the number of mostly sheep farmers and sheep and beef farmers in total for Wales since 1978; and if he will chart the change.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Holdings of the type mostly sheep[1] and sheep and beef[2] in the severely disadvantaged areas as a percentage of all holdings of these types in Wales

	per cent.
1978	75
1979	73
1980	72
1981	74
1982	73
1983	72
1984	69
1985	68
1986	73
1987	72
1988	70
1989	70
1990	71
1991	69
1992	70

[1]EC type 441.
[2]EC type 442.
Source: June Agricultural Census.
Note: Between 1985 and 1986 the method of classification of holdings. in the June Agricultural Census was changed. Consequently, the information for 1978 to 1985 is not comparable with later years.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	Number
1978	10,907
1979	10,855
1980	10,888
1981	10,880
1982	10,848
1983	10,773
1984	10,742
1985	10,749
1986	10,745
1987	10,745
1988	10,747
1989	10,760
1990	10,860
1991	10,742
1992	[1]10,621

[1] Provisional.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by name the environmentally sensitive areas currently designated in Wales, and in respect of each state the area covered, the payment per hectare and the total annual payments which have been made each year since their introduction.

Mr. David Hunt: The environmentally sensitive areas in Wales are listed as follows with details of the areas covered by each designation and the total annual payments since the schemes were introduced. In each area there is a range of payments per hectare reflecting the different levels of environmental management which participants in the scheme agree to undertake. Details are set out in the relevant statutory instruments and in the published scheme literature.

ESA	*Total area (ha)*	*Annual Payments (£)*				
		1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Cambrian mountains (original)	72,800	21,864	310,292	366,339	476,882	613,130
Cambrian mountains (extension)	80,200	—	—	111,488	120,723	493,422
Lleyn peninsula	39,700	—	64,066	227,661	284,102	351,867

Unemployment, Gwent

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many men aged 16 to 64 years were registered as unemployed on 1 May 1992, 1 May 1991 and 1 May 1990 in *(a)* the county of Gwent and *(b)* each of the district councils in Gwent; how many of them had been registered as unemployed for more than six months, more than 12 months, more than two years and more than five years; how many of them have never had a job; and if he will present the figures as a percentage of all economically active males and provide comparable figures and percentages for females.

Mr. David Hunt: The unemployment data requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on line by House of Commons Library staff.

No local area information is collected centrally on those who have never had a job and unemployment rates for specific age groups are not available.

Tourist Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it would be possible for the chairman of the Wales tourist board also to hold the post at the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. David Hunt: It would be possible for the chairman of the WTB to hold the post of chairman of the British Tourist Authority also.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he intends to make regarding the role of the chairman of the Wales tourist board and the next chairman of the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. David Hunt: The appointment of the British Tourist Authority chairman is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, in consultation with myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The chairman of the Wales tourist board will continue as a member of that authority.

Health Service Pay and Conditions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many NHS staff in each of the health authority areas in Wales were employed on local pay and conditions agreements at 31 December 1992; and of those how many were recruited on or after 1 April 1992;

(2) how many NHS staff in each of the health authority areas in Wales were employed on Whitley Council pay and conditions at 31 December 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information relating to numbers of staff employed by health authorities and the Pembrokeshire national health service trust is given in the table.

DHA Area	*Staff employed at 31 December 1992*	
	On Whitley Council pay and conditions[1]	*On locally determined pay and conditions*
Clwyd	2,032	nil
East Dyfed	1,355	nil
Gwent	2,239	nil
Gwynedd	1,423	1
Mid Glamorgan	2,632	20
Pembrokeshire	802	480
Powys	535	nil
South Glamorgan	3,867	178
West Glamorgan	2,136	nil

[1] Excludes staff groups covered by the Pay Review Bodies ie doctors and dentists, nurses, midwives, health-visitors and professions allied to medicine.

Note:

Information on the number of staff on locally determined pay and conditions recruited since 1 April 1992 is not held centrally.

Nurses

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a national database for nursing vacancies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no plans to do so. Needs and requirements for nursing staff throughout the NHS in Wales are considered as part of the annual work force planning process.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many suckler cow premium application forms were processed during each month of 1992 and what was *(a)* the shortest period and *(b)* the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	Number
January	1,431
February	733
March	299
April	156
May	94
June	121
July	35
August	24
September	16
October	466
November	3,750
December	1,894

It is not possible to provide the information requested on *(a)* the shortest period and *(b)* the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many late applications for suckler cow premium in respect of 1992 he has received to date.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 127 late applications were received after 15 December 1992.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many late applications were received for suckler cow premium in respect of 1990 and 1991; and how many of these were *(a)* paid in full, *(b)* paid in part and *(c)* refused.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	1990	*1991*
Number received	85	46
Paid in full	None	None
Part paid	75	43
Refused	10	3

Information and Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sum he proposes to spend on information and publicity in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office plans to spend about £2·5 million on publicity in 1993-94. The main areas to which resources will be committed are:

Industry, with continued campaigns in support of Enterprise Wales and export promotion;
Roads, including road safety publicity;
Health, including aids and alcohol and drugs misuse activity;
Education, including teacher recruitment and citizens charter material;
Agriculture, including the production of Welsh-language publications.

Executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Welsh Office and the Department's executive agency CADW have separate provision for publicity expenditure. In previous years, expenditure by CADW has been treated as part of the Welsh Office total.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the principal elements of the increase the estimate for the present year's publicity expenditure given in his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *435*, and the figure given in his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West of 29 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *886*.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures given for my Department's estimated publicity expenditure for 1992-93 are the best estimate of the cost of the programme at that time. The difference is accounted for by adjustments and changes in costs across the programme in general and not by particular additions.

Telephone Boxes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of GVIR, K6-type, Giles Gilbert Scott-designed telephone boxes still in service in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I am informed by BT that 1,435 telephone boxes of this type are still in service in Wales.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish the study he commissioned from Touche Ross management consultants on the transitional costs of local government reorganisation.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed copies of the Touche Ross report in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will request from the Secretary General of the United Nations a copy of the report listing the names of military and dual-use equipment suppliers to Iraq, given to the United Nations special investigation commission on Iraq by the Iraqi Government on 26 January.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to comment in detail on the information we request or receive from the United Nations special commission on Iraq.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the types and models of *(a)* aircraft and *(b)* missiles attacked by allied aircraft in Iraq in January; and what assessment has been made of the technical threat posed to United Kingdom and allied aircraft by such weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Allied forces attacked SAM-3 strategic surface-to-air missile sites and shot down a MiG-29 fighter aircraft that had entered the southern no-fly zone. These types of assets pose a significant potential threat to United Kingdom and allied aircraft.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he has made in his Department to implement the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992.

Mr. Aitken: Appropriate arrangements are in hand.

Northern Ireland Duties

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect changes in United Nations obligations in the last three years have on the ability to provide soldiers with a two-year break from duties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only additional United Nations commitment to impact on intervals between unaccompanied operational tours, whether in Northern Ireland or elsewhere, is the recent deployment of an infantry battle group to former Yugoslavia. If sustained this would have the effect of reducing tour intervals from 17 months to 15 months during the current year. The announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 3 February, *Official Report*, columns 319-21, means that this interval will revert to 17 months and provides greater assurance that the target of two years between such unaccompanied tours will be achieved once restructuring is complete. Tour intervals for other units of other arms have not been significantly affected by recent changes in United Nations obligations.

Tay House, Glasgow

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the timetable for the purchase of Tay house in Charing Cross, Glasgow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decision has been made to purchase Tay house or any building in Glasgow or elsewhere to meet the requirement for the new Army

personnel centre. A number of buildings which might meet this requirement remain under consideration and a final decision will be made only in the light of the outcome of the consultation period currently under way. Once that final decision is made, I expect that the purchase of the chosen building will be completed quickly.

Contaminated Land, Woolwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what volumes of waste and contaminated soil have been removed from his Department's site at Repository road, Woolwich Common, since 1990; where this material has been disposed of; what operations are currently under way with respect to the excavation, handling, movement and disposal of contaminated soil and radioactive wastes from this site; what authorisation or administrative equivalent, as defined by the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, applies requiring prior approval of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution with regard to any excavation and or disturbance of the contaminated soil; and what procedure is used to check that this requirement has been fully complied with.

Mr. Aitken: Since 1990, approximately 40 cu.m. of slightly contaminated building rubble have been disposed to a specialised contractor for disposal at his own disposal site. Currently a further 9 cu.m. of waste are awaiting disposal to the Drigg land burial site in Cumbria. No operations are currently under way to dispose of contamination. However, an area measuring about 3,000 sq. m. has been radiologically surveyed and shown to have some sub-surface radioactivity, which is not uniformly distributed. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has visited the site, authorised disposals under RSA60 and been kept aware of developments. The contamination poses no danger to any member of the public.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has formulated with regard to its intention for the best management or disposal of the contaminated land at his Department's site at Repository road, Woolwich Common; what arrangements his Department has made to provide full details of the volumes and inventory of the wastes there, and any other radioactive wastes deposited at present or past military establishments in the general area of Woolwich, for inclusion in the 1992 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory currently in joint preparation by UK Nirex and the Department of the Environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Invitations to specialised contractors to tender for a contract for the removal and disposal of the contaminated soil will be issued in the next few weeks. The work is expected to take about a year to complete.

Since past wastes have been, and future wastes are likely to be, disposed of either by specialised contractors who have their own facilities for disposal or directly to the Drigg disposal site in Cumbria, it is not necessary to include details of wastes arising at the Woolwich garrison in the United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent, in terms of land area, overall volume and average specific radioactivity of contaminated land and wastes deposited at his Department's establishment site located at Repository road, Woolwich Common; what is the nature of the wastes in terms of radionuclide and chemical content; when the wastes were deposited at this site; what were the original sources of the wastes; and what assessment he has made of the compliance of the disposal of these wastes to legislation, controls and good practice at the time, and of the subsequent care and management of the site to good practice and regulatory requirements of radioactive waste management.

Mr. Aitken: The contaminated land measures about 3,000 sq. m. in area. The radioactivity is unevenly distributed at a depth greater than about one metre; the top metre is clean hardcore. The main radionuclide is radium-226 and the highest measured specific activity is 23 Bq/gm. The contamination has arisen from the burning of various materials arising from luminising operations involving radium-based paints carried out in an adjacent workshop building during the 1950s and 1960s. Such practices were common at that time. Current activities associated with radioactive waste management are being undertaken in accordance with all statutory requirements.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what controls have been implemented to ensure that there has not been, and will not be, any spread of contamination from his Department's site at Repository road, Woolwich Common; what has been the extent of radioactive monitoring and surveying of the general vicinity of the contaminated site; and what current monitoring is undertaken.

Mr. Aitken: The contamination is sub-surface. The area has a gravel/hardcore surface to a depth of about one metre which minimises the likelihood of airborne dispersal. Radiation measurements have been carried out at the nearest public access points by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the contamination shown to pose no danger to members of the public. The garden of a local resident has been monitored by the defence radiological protection service, and the results indicate no enhanced levels of radium-226 contamination in the garden. No monitoring is currently being undertaken, but it will be resumed when the contamination is being removed.

Warrior Vehicle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps the Defence Export Services Organisation has taken to ensure the use of a British-made turret in exports of the Warrior armoured fighting vehicle.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation aims to maximise the United Kingdom content of all defence equipment sold overseas. In the case of the potential sale of Warrior to Kuwait, however, the customer has specified a United States-designed turret.

Tornado

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the purchase of spare parts for Tornado aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Spare parts for the Tornado aircraft are purchased through the tri-national NAMMA organisation using standard procedures based on contracting, as far as possible on a competitive basis, for anticipated requirements.

RAF Expenditure

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of expenditure on *(a)* repair contracts and *(b)* spare parts for the Royal Air Force in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested could not be provided without disproportionate effort and expense. I will write to the hon. Member.

Spare Parts

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the combined total amount of expenditure on spare parts for Harrier and Chinook aircraft in each year since 1979.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested could not be provided without disproportionate effort and expense. I will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of official information on expenditure for spare parts for defence equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Official information on expenditure for spare parts for defence equipment may be released subject to the constraints of commercial confidentiality and security. The Department's total expenditure in recent years on equipment, including spare parts, is published annually in "Defence Statistics". Expenditure plans for the forthcoming financial year, including those for spare parts, are contained in the annual supply estimates.

United Nations Military Planning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the United Nations military staff committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO support for United Nations peacekeeping was discussed by alliance Defence Ministers at the Defence Planning Committee meeting in Brussels in December 1992; liaison continues between staffs at the NATO and United Nations headquarters. The Government fully support the idea of strengthening the military component of the United Nations Secretariat in order to help improve the planning and conduct of United Nations operations with a military element. This is being pursued as part of the follow-up to the United Nations Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace" in which the United Kingdom is playing an active part.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the establishment of a military planning group at the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government fully support the idea of strengthening the military component of the United Nations Secretariat in order to help improve the planning and conduct of United Nations operations with a military element. This is being pursued as part of the follow up to the United Nations Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda for Peace" in which the United Kingdom is playing an active part.

Nuclear Submarines

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will make a decision about the final disposal method for nuclear submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The policy for final disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines remains under consideration. We shall come to a decision as soon as possible.

Naval Bases

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 29 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *802*, if he will give details of all the measures that potentially affect naval bases which have been examined; which Departments have been consulted as part of this work; when work started; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Many proposals which could have implications for the naval bases are examined as part of the departmental planning process. Some are taken forward, some are not. It is not possible for a variety of reasons, not least because of the uncertainty that may be caused in the areas concerned, to publish the details of such work. Other Government Departments are consulted as appropriate. The trade unions and other interested parties are consulted about these proposals which are taken forward. All relevant factors are considered before final decisions are announced.

Naval Dockyards

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the requirement for naval dockyards in the event of British maritime forces becoming involved in a major conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: All the Royal Navy's requirements are taken into account in determining our support and repair arrangements.

"Options for Change"

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in his policy over the last three years have resulted from his "Options for Change" study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Plans for restructuring Britain's armed forces were set out in detail in both the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates, "Britain's Defence for the 90s" (Cm. 1559-I), and "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm. 1595). These were updated in the 1992 statement (Cm. 1981), and have since been supplemented by a number of public announcements, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence's statement on 3 February 1992, *Official Report*, columns 319-28, about Army manpower.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be in a position to publish figures on pensioners' income based on data from the 1989 family expenditure survey.

Miss Widdecombe: It is expected that pensioners' income figures from the 1989 family expenditure survey will be published shortly.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Miss Widdecombe: Lists of all statutory instruments for which the Department is responsible are published in "The Law Relating to Social Security" and in "War Pensions" which are available in the Library. A list of statutory instruments relating to the child support arrangements which come into effect in April 1993 will be published in "The Law Relating to Child Support", which will be placed in the Library shortly.

A provisional list of all Departments' regulations which have an impact on business has recently been put together by the central deregulation unit in the Department of Trade and Industry, and consideration will be given to placing that list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Housing Benefit (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* tenants of Lambeth council and *(b)* tenants of other landlords were upon average in receipt of housing benefit for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The average number of local authority tenants in receipt of housing benefit in 1992 in the London borough of Lambeth was 22,800. The average number of tenants for other landlords, in the same year, was 12,900.

Notes:
The information covers benefit units, and not individuals; couples are counted as one unit.
The source of the data is the Housing Benefit Management Information System quarterly caseload returns for February, May, August and November 1992.
All figures are rounded to the nearest one hundred.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much refund of housing benefit was paid to Lambeth council in each of the 12 months of 1992.

Mr. Burt: Monthly payments on account of housing benefit subsidy made to Lambeth council in 1992 are shown in the following table:

1992

Month	*Rent allowance*[1] £	*Rent rebates (non-HRA)*[1] £	*Rent rebates (HRA)*[2] £	*Total* £
January	1,450,750	268,599	3,688,722	5,408,071
February	2,006,221	268,599	No payment	2,274,820
March	2,006,221	268,599	No payment	2,274,820
April	2,516,687	330,750	No payment	2,847,437
May	2,516,687	330,740	4,227,595	7,125,032
June	2,516,687	[3] −786,190	4,277,595	6,008,092
July	2,516,687	[3] −1,177,119	4,277,595	5,617,163
August	2,516,687	163,209	4,277,595	6,957,491
September	2,516,687	330,750	4,277,595	7,125,032
October	2,516,687	210,714	4,730,835	7,458,236
November	2,516,687	313,602	1,316,421	4,146,710
December	2,516,687	313,602	4,353,135	7,183,424
TOTAL	28,113,375	835,865	35,477,088	64,426,328

Notes:
[1] Paid by the Department of Social Security.
[2] Paid by the Department of the Environment.
[3] Negative amounts, due to recovery from 1991-92.

In addition, the Department paid £110,361 to Lambeth council in 1992 in respect of the direct administration subsidy for housing benefit. The monthly profile of this subsidy was as follows:

Month	£
January	36,787
February	36,787
March	36,787
April	79,179
May	79,179
June	79,179
July	79,179
August	79,179
September	79,179
October	79,179
November	79,179
December	79,179
Total	110,361

Note:
The table shows administration subsidy payments on account made by DSS.
Administration subsidy for housing benefit is paid in two parts: 50 per cent. direct grant from DSS and 50 per cent. through the revenue support grant.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made the following public appointments and re-appointments since 1 November 1992.

Name of Body	*Name of Appointee*
Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	Mr. W. Dunn MBE JP Mrs. P. L. Newnes OBE Brigadier H. L. B. Salmon
Social Security Advisory Committee	Mrs. J Anelay Rev. H. Good Hon. Mrs. R. H. Price
Industrial Injuries Advisory Council	Dr. J. Asherson Professor M. Cinnaamond Professor A. Newman Taylor OBE
Occupational Pensions Board	Sir Jeremy Rowe CBE

The above appointees were chosen on the basis of their expertise or experience of the type of work involved in the appointment. Their political affliation was not a relevant factor.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the present level of invalid care allowance as a percentage of national average earnings.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 25 January 1993 at column *585*.

Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answer of 1 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *26*, concerning the value of the basic retirement pension and state earnings-related pension scheme, if he will *(a)* publish similar figures for 1993-94 and *(b)* for all years given in his answer, including 1993-94, show what the monetary equivalents would be if the proportions were applied to estimated average earnings in 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table.

	1993-94	*1993-94* £	*2015-16* £	*2025-26* £	*2035-36* £	*2045-46* £
Basic pension	16·9	56·10	40·45	34·85	30·00	25·85
Average additional pension (Women)	10·6	34·95	45·80	42·20	42·00	39·15
Average additional pension (Men)	17·0	56·45	67·35	55·95	47·65	42·75

Note:
The additional pension percentages are based on the amount of SERPS payable in each respective year to an individual who had average earnings in each year of his or her working life. They are not based on average AP awards to new pensioners as these cannot be estimated.
Assumes real earning growth of 1·5 per cent. per annum.

Oral Contraceptives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will adjust the level of benefits paid to women of child-bearing age who are prescribed oral contraceptives, to meet the additional cost of paying for a brand which has been placed on the selected list.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of Health to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on 18 January 1993, at column *97*. Since the real clinical needs of patients will continue to be met from items available on prescription under the NHS, we have no plans to adjust benefit levels.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answer of 1 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *24*, concerning the level of the upper and lower earnings limits for national insurance contributions, if he will publish figures showing what the monetary equivalents would be if the proportions were applied to estimated average earnings in 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table.

Earnings limit	*2015-16* £	*2025-26* £	*2035-36* £	*2045-46* £
Lower	40·40	34·80	30·00	25·85
Upper	303·05	260·65	225·10	193·85

Note:
Assumes real earnings growth of 1·5 per cent. per annum.

European Standing Committee Papers

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department took to make available to hon. Members papers relevant to the proceedings of European Standing Committee B held on Wednesday 3 February; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: On 7 January 1993 this Department sent a set of relevant papers to each hon. member of European Standing Committee B in advance of the Committee's meeting due to take place on 13 January. At the same time copies were placed in the Libraries of each House and 150 copies were supplied to the Vote Office.

Following the adjournment of the debate on 13 January, additional papers requested by the Committee were sent on 27 January to each hon. member of the Committee and to the Vote Office.

Reduced Rate Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men and women, respectively, would be receiving unemployment and sickness benefits at each of the reduced rates if those rates had not been abolished by the Social Security Act 1986; and how many more people would be receiving invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Grants and Loans (Refusal Rate)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the refusal rate for *(a)* community care grants and *(b)* social fund loans at the Northfield and Moseley Road Benefits Agency offices in Birmingham for April 1992 to date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 5 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the refusal rate for community care grants and social fund loans at Northfield and Moseley Road offices in Birmingham.

Information is held for the Benefits Agency's Birmingham South West District, which comprises the Northfield and Moseley Road offices. The refusal rate for community care grants and social fund loans for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 December 1992 (latest available data) is 74·9 per cent and 31·6 per cent. respectively. I should emphasise that the vast majority of community care grants refusals are because the application fails to meet the basic criteria.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Offical Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effects of the proposed abolition of wages councils on *(a)* black and Afro-Caribbean workers, *(b)* workers of Indian sub-continent origin and *(c)* white workers respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Black, Indian, white and other workers will benefit from the abolition of the councils, which will free up the labour market and increase job opportunities.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the future of the TECs.

Mr. McLoughlin: I see TECs as continuing their important role as business-led strategic bodies in the areas of training, education and enterprise support with clear responsibilities in such areas as the youth training guarantee.

Training Schemes (Accidents)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people on *(a)* youth training schemes and *(b)* employment training schemes met with accidents in each year since 1989; and how many were fatal.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table gives the youth training and employment training figures for the years 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Youth training				
Fatal	4	2	4	2
Major	585	492	378	293
Minor	2,690	2,127	1,561	1,389
Employment training				
Fatal	1	3	0	1
Major	203	193	121	79
Minor	969	908	562	419

Notes:

(a) Employment Department figures for trainees have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive for employed persons. However, the Employment Department's figures include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents, which would not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

(b) Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. These regulations, which came into force on 1 April 1986, reclassified fractured wrists and ankles as major injuries. These were not classed as major injuries in the previous regulations, the Notifications of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR).

Industry Training Organisations

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made by the joint Employment Department/National Council of Industry Training Organisations group considering the recommendations of the review of industry training organisations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The work of the Industry Training Organisations network review implementation group has been completed. A copy of its report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Trade Union Commissioner

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many appeals have been lodged with the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members since the post was created; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since her office was created in 1988, the independent Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members has received 178 formal applications for assistance and has granted 39 of them.

Ministerial Group on Women's Issues

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when is the next meeting of the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues; and what is on the agenda for that meeting;

(2) when was the last meeting of the ministerial group on women's issues; and what was discussed at that meeting.

Mr. McLoughlin: The last meeting of the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues (MGWI) was on 5 March 1992. The Ministerial Group on Women's Issues was superseded by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women's Issues in April 1992. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, the Government do not give details of the topics discussed by individual Cabinet committees, the timing of meetings, or their proceedings, although it will continue to make the committee's decisions known to Parliament and the public.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Severely Disadvantaged Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. Gummer: Precise annual figures covering this period are not available but the number of claimants paid each year under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme to farmers with holdings located either wholly or partially within the severely disadvantaged area, or the corresponding area prior to the extension of the less-favoured areas in 1985, has declined marginally from about 52,300 in 1980 to 51,500 in 1991.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many regular full-time hired farm workers are employed on farm holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mr. Gummer: The number of regular full-time hired farm workers employed on farm holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas in England for each year since 1978 is shown in the table.

Regular full-time hired workers on holdings[1] in the severely disadvantaged area[2] in England at June each year

Year	*Number of regular full-time hired workers*
1978	3,062
1979	3,142
1980	2,982
1981	2,997
1982	2,933
1983	2,763
1984	2,628
1985	2,514
	[3]
1986	3,301
1987	3,098
1988	3,016
1989	2,888
1990	2,794
1991	2,646
1992	2,533

[1] Minor holdings are excluded.
[2] Workers on holdings with either all or part of their land in the severely disadvantaged areas have been included.
[3] Between 1985 and 1986 the method of classification of holdings used in the June census was changed. Subsequently, the figures below the line are not comparable with those above it.
Source: June Census of Agriculture and Horticulture each year.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes there have been in the proportion of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in relation to the number of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in total for England since 1978; and if he will chart the change.

Mr. Gummer: The number of mostly sheep[1] and sheep and beef holdings[2] located either wholly or partially within the English severely disadvantaged areas, or the corresponding areas before the extension of the less-favoured areas in 1985, as a percentage of such holdings in England is shown in the table:

Year	*per cent.*
1978	42
1979	40
1980	41
1981	41
1982	39
1983	38
1984	37
1985	36
1986	37
1987	36
1988	34
1989	33
1990	35
1991	33
1992	32

[1] EC Farm type 441
[2] EC Farm type 442

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978, how many farmers within less-favoured areas designated severely disadvantaged receive a level of farm income at or below the level at which a family of two adults and two children of school ages 13 and 17 could expect to be entitled to family credit at the current rates.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the level of indebtedness among mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers, respectively, in the severely disadvantaged areas for each year since 1978.

Mr. Gummer: The following table shows the average level of total external liabilities from a sample of mainly sheep and cattle and sheep farms in the severely disadvantaged areas of England, together with the proportion that these represent of total assets.

Average indebtedness of livestock farms wholly or partly in the severely disadvantaged area in England[1]

	Mainly sheep farms		*Cattle and sheep farms*	
	Total external liabilities	*External liabilities as a percentage of total assets*	*Total external liabilities*	*External liabilities as a percentage of total assets*
Accounting year[2]	*£ thousands per farm*	*Per cent.*	*£ thousands per farm*	*Per cent.*
1979-80	[3]—	[3]—	15·4	9
1980-81	[3]—	[3]—	17·1	9
1981-82	[3]—	[3]—	20·2	10
1982-83	[3]—	[3]—	22·1	12
1983-84	22·5	13	28·8	10
1984-85	13·6	8	31·4	11
1985-86	22·8	11	32·2	12
1986-87	31·8	14	36·3	14
1987-88	38·4	17	36·8	14
1988-89	40·1	17	42·0	14
1989-90	45·6	18	46·9	14
1990-91	37·3	15	50·0	14
1991-92	39·2	16	49·9	16

[1] All data based on closing valuations.
[2] Ending on average mid-February.
[3] Sample too small to give reliable results.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by name the environmentally sensitive areas currently designated in England, and in respect of each state the area covered, the payment per hectare and the total annual payments which have been made each year since their introduction.

Mr. Curry: The environmentally sensitive areas in England are listed in the table with details of the areas covered by each designation. In each area there is a range of payments per hectare reflecting the different levels of environmental management which participants in the scheme agree to undertake. Details are set out in the relevant statutory instruments and in the published scheme literature. Total annual payments since the schemes were introduced were given in reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on 14 December 1992, *Hansard* column *66*.

	Designated area (hectare)
Pennine Dales	46,371
Broads	35,820
Somerset Levels and Moors	27,717
South Downs	69,377
West Penwith	7,180
Breckland	94,032
Suffolk River Valleys	32,149
Shropshire Borders	21,000
North Peak	50,250
Test Valley	2,690
North Kent Marshes	14,700
Avon Valley	5,200
South Wessex Downs	45,900
Exmoor	81,000
South West Peak	33,900
Lake District	245,200

Whisky and English Wine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide financial assistance for the establishment of a sales point at Calais docks for English wine and Scotch whisky.

Mr. Curry: No.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward proposals to ensure that all irradiated food will be explicitly labelled to identify all food which has undergone irradiation.

Mr. Soames: Rules for the labelling of all foods and listed ingredients which have been irradiated have already been agreed by the EC and implemented in the United Kingdom. Further proposals on food irradiation currently before the Council of Ministers include more detailed rules on the labelling of irradiated ingredients. The Government are seeking to ensure that the further requirements on ingredient declarations are as comprehensive as practicable.

EC Intervention Stocks

Mr. Dover: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how large current intervention stocks of cereal and butter are within the European Community; and what were the levels in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Curry: Tables showing current levels of all produce held in intervention within the European Community are deposited in the Library of the House at monthly intervals, most recently on 29 January. The information currently held in the House Library goes back to January 1985; it is not possible to provide earlier figures within the time available.

Agriculture Returns

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *134*, whether the requirement of the Commission for agricultural returns to be in hectares applies to both *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* between the United Kingdom and European Commission; and if he will set out the text which gives effect to this requirement.

Mr. Curry: Council directive on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to units of measurement No. 80/181 EC as amended by Council directive No. 89/617 EC states:

"Whereas the laws which regulate the use of units of measurement in the Member States differ from one Member State to another and as a result hinder trade; whereas, in these circumstances, it is necessary to harmonise laws, regulations and administrative provisions in order to overcome such obstacles;"

It goes on, in chapter 1, section 4 of the annex, to specify the units to be used in determining the area of farm land in the following terms:

Units and names of units permitted in specialised fields only

Quantity	*Name*	*Unit Symbol*	*Value*
Vergency of optical	dioptre*		1 dioptre = $1 m^{-1}$
Mass of precious stones	metric carat		1 metric carat = 2×10^{-4} kg
Area of farmland and building land	are	a	1 a = 10^2 m^2
Mass per unit length of textile yarns and threads	tex	tex	1 tex = 10^{-4}kg m^{-1}

Note: The prefixes listed in 1·3 may be used in conjunction with the above units. The multiple 10^2 a is, however, called a 'hectare'.
This directive is directly applicable in all Member States and therefore affects all returns completed with the United Kingdom and returns provided by the United Kingdom for the European Commission.

Fishing Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *623*, what steps he is taking to ascertain the needs of United Kingdom areas which are dependent on fishing; what sort of appropriate assistance he is proposing to the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Studies have been carried out by consultants engaged by the European Commission to help define fisheries-dependent areas and their economic needs. We are presently examining these studies and our officials will be seeking the views of the fishing industry. As far as any new measures are concerned, we shall be seeking to ensure that they properly recognise the needs of fisheries-dependent areas in the United Kingdom, as well as representing good value for money and providing for needs that could not be met through the mechanisms that are already available.

Flooding (Evacuations)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to organise with all interested bodies and people affected a full-scale exercise of evacuation procedures in the event of river and sea flooding in the eastern counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is responsible for ensuring that adequate warning procedures exist and are able to operate smoothly in the event of potential river or sea flooding. The National Rivers Authority holds regular reviews of emergency procedures and mounts exercises with the police and local authorities to test contingency plans and operational procedures. If the police and local authorities wished to test their emergency evacuation procedures in the event of flooding in a particular area this could be done in conjunction with an NRA exercise. However, a full-scale evacuation exercise involving members of the public in all the areas potentially at risk in the eastern counties would be extremely expensive and would not necessarily provide information that would be helpful in an actual emergency.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the hill livestock compensatory allowance rates for each of the last five years in each EC country; and what information he has about plans for future changes to such rates.

Mr. Curry: Directly equivalent schemes to the hill livestock compensatory allowances do not exist elsewhere in the European Community. When member states change the rates of the schemes that they operate under the same EC provisions, they are required to notify the Commission but not other member states. The information requested is not therefore available in a readily accessible form. To compile a list of, and the rates applicable under, the various schemes for each of the past five years could be done only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Mr. Muir Russell

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the departmental responsibilities in which Mr. Muir Russell has been involved over the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Russell's departmental responsibilities over the last five years have been:

Present position—Under Secretary Housing, The Scottish Office Environment Department.
April 1990-August 1992—Under Secretary, Secretariat, Cabinet Office.
February 1989-April 1990—Assistant Secretary, The Scottish Office Finance Division I (which deals in particular with the Public Expenditure Survey and The Scottish Office Administration Vote).
February 1986-February 1989—Assistant Secretary, The Scottish Office Local Government Finance Division.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how often Mr. Muir Russell of his Department has met representatives of Stagecoach plc in connection with his official duties in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Before the first discussion of his possible appointment as a non-executive director, which was held on 1 December 1992, Mr. Russell had no meetings with representatives of Stagecoach Holdings plc.

Road Accidents

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by road user group the number of people *(a)* slightly injured and *(b)* killed or seriously injured on (i) built-up roads and (ii) non-built-up roads in each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for the latest available three years is as follows:

Casualties by road user group, severity, for built up and non built up areas: Years 1989 to 1991

Road user	Year	Built up			Non built up		
		Fatal and serious	Slight	Total	Fatal and serious	Slight	Total
Pedestrians	1989	2,044	3,627	5,671	187	154	341
	1990	2,058	3,861	5,919	168	131	299
	1991	1,773	3,425	5,198	159	132	291
Pedal cyclists	1989	314	1,030	1,344	77	129	206
	1990	256	975	1,231	76	117	193
	1991	255	892	1,147	53	134	187
Motor cyclists	1989	461	815	1,276	315	309	624
	1990	335	783	1,118	275	288	563
	1991	238	685	923	248	234	482
Car users	1989	1,008	5,221	6,229	2,490	5,673	8,163
	1990	959	5,497	6,456	2,140	5,842	7,982
	1991	896	5,513	6,409	2,000	5,621	7,621
Taxi	1989	30	310	340	13	45	58
	1990	34	204	238	6	35	41
	1991	22	193	215	1	13	14
Minibus	1989	25	94	119	46	142	188
	1990	10	89	99	39	166	205
	1991	7	35	42	33	136	169
Bus or coach	1989	153	1,158	1,311	25	124	149
	1990	108	1,105	1,213	18	139	157
	1991	116	1,048	1,164	21	120	141
LGV	1989	68	340	408	158	406	564
	1990	65	323	388	122	465	587
	1991	59	320	379	133	387	520
HGV	1989	33	111	144	69	212	281
	1990	20	68	88	72	206	278
	1991	28	83	111	58	170	228
Other vehicle	1989	15	41	56	19	51	70
	1990	7	60	67	32	70	102
	1991	9	36	45	22	45	67
Total: all road user casualties	1989	4,151	12,747	16,898	3,399	7,245	10,644
	1990	3,852	12,965	16,817	2,948	7,459	10,407
	1991	3,403	12,230	15,633	2,728	6,992	9,720

Legal Aid

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much gross expenditure on civil legal aid increased between 1987-88 and 1991-92.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gross expenditure on civil legal aid in 1987-88 was £15·697 million. The figure for 1991-92 was £16·581 million. Projected expenditure in 1992-93 is £23·5 million.

Stagecoach Group

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what forms of support the Stagecoach group of companies has received from the Scottish Development Agency and its successor bodies.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Development Agency invested £500,000 in Stagecoach in preference shares and convertible preference shares in 1989, in order to fill a funding gap to facilitate expansion of the company.

Sheriff Courts (Cost)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of a sheriff court day *(a)* in criminal trials, giving details of (i) direct costs to Scottish courts administration, (ii) legal aid, (iii) Crown Office costs, (iv) the prison service and (v) the police and *(b)* in civil proofs, giving details of (i) direct costs to Scottish courts administration and (ii) legal aid costs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The costs in 1992 of a sheriff court sitting day, averaged over summary criminal and civil business, was £784. This includes all direct costs borne by Scottish courts administration—staff salary costs, accommodation costs, central management costs and related adminstrative expenditure—but excludes judicial salaries which are borne on the Consolidated Fund. In addition, in criminal trials involving juries, there were additional costs for shorthand writers of £150 per day and payments to jurors of £631 per day.

The average cost to the Crown Office of a procurator fiscal depute's time is £250 per day. The average cost of the time spent by a procurator fiscal depute in court is £150 per day. To this figure falls to be added the cost of witness expenses, administrative costs of witness citations and the overheads associated with case preparation.

Information about legal aid costs is not available in the form requested. In 1991-92 the average cost per case for providing legal aid in a sheriff court solemn trial was £2,049; in a sheriff court summary trial £798 and in a sheriff court civil case £699. These costs include fees paid to solicitors and counsel and outlays, including witness expenses.

Information in regard to the costs borne by the prison and police service for the provision of services in respect of daily sheriff court sittings is not available in the form requested. The Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland has assessed the annual cost of police officers attending all the Scottish courts on, exclusively, witness duty as £7·8 million.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by name the environmentally sensitive areas currently designated in Scotland, and in respect of each, state the area covered, the payment per hectare and the total annual payments which have been made each year since their introduction.

Sir Hector Monro: The environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland are listed in the table, together with details of the areas covered by each designation and the annual payments made since the schemes were introduced. In each area there is a range of hectarage payments reflecting the different levels of environmental management which participants in the scheme agree to undertake. Details are set out in the relevant statutory instruments and in the published scheme literature.

ESA	*Total Area Hectares*	*Annual Payments*					
		1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Breadalbane	181,000	16,270	126,150	203,600	221,350	264,670	271,110
Loch Lomond	50,000	—	24,350	48,750	58,920	92,240	89,270
Stewartry	42,000	—	17,800	200,640	422,410	507,620	511,910
Whitlaw and Eildon	8,000	—	900	26,350	39,000	47,460	59,460
Machair of the Uists, Benbecula, Barra and Vatersay	7,000	—	17,570	105,390	155,630	182,480	234,250

Severely Disadvantaged Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Year	*Number of HLCA recipients in Severely Disadvantaged Areas of Scotland*
1978	19,802
1979	19,164
1980	19,198
1981	19,072
1982	18,760
1983	18,610
1984	18,343
1985	18,203
1986	17,857
1987	17,788
1988	17,783
1989	17,596
1990	17,506
1991	17,403
1992	17,260

Geese

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences have been granted under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the shooting in the winter of 1992-93 of *(a)* barnacle geese and *(b)* Greenland white-fronted geese; what assessement he has made of the implications of such licences for the management scheme for Islay geese; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Six licences to shoot barnacle geese and three to shoot Greenland white-fronted geese were issued in November 1992 prior to commencement of the Islay goose management scheme. Four barnacle licences and two white-front licences were subsequently revoked upon the decision of the licence holders to participate in the management scheme.

I am encouraged by the rate of voluntary participation in the scheme. I am also content that those not participating should continue to be able to seek licences to protect their crops.

Nurses

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish a national database for nursing vacancies.

Mr. Stewart: No. The changes in funding arrangements for nurse education and training in Scotland which will take place on 1 April 1993 mean that health boards will have the responsibility for assessing the demand for pre-registration nursing, midwifery and health visiting education and training of all employers within their areas. The matching of newly qualified nurses to vacancies is best handled at local level. In addition the Employment Service, through its jobcentres, can advertise vacancies for any occupational group in any locality on its national computer network provided that they are notified by employers.

Legal Aid

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the savings in the financial year 1993-94 which will result from the changes he has announced in financial elegibility for civil legal aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The purpose of the proposed changes announced on 16 November is to ensure

the continuation of reasonable access to legal aid for the most needy, while at the same time taking action to control the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure. The proposed changes are expected to reduce forecast expenditure on civil legal aid by between £2 million and £3 million in 1993-94. Expenditure on civil legal aid is, however, expected to continue to increase.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the number of people who were granted civil legal aid in 1992-93 who would not have been granted legal aid if the changes in financial eligibility being introduced from 1 April 1993 had been in force in 1992-93

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed changes would not have affected the number of those eligible for civil legal aid. However, some people who did not pay a contribution would have been required to do so and those who did would have had to pay an increased contribution.

Oral Contraceptives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will retain all the oral contraceptive brands currently listed for prescription.

Mr. Stewart: Changes to the range of oral contraceptive available on national health service prescription will be made only on the recommendation of the advisory committee on NHS drugs. The committee will ensure that all the real clinical needs of patients continue to be met.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the joint geological investigation relating to the Skye bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has made arrangements to have a copy of the factual report from the joint geological investigation lodged in the Library. The designers will collate the various volumes of the factual report as quickly as possible.

Heritable Property

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the disposal of heritable property which he regards as no longer required as for civil defence purposes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Government's policy towards the disposal of such properties is set out in chapter 32, paragraph 1 of "Government Accounting", which requires Departments to ensure that they obtain the best possible price so as to protect the taxpayers' interests.

Civil Defence Facility (Anstruther)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what factors influenced his decision to offer for sale the civil defence facility at Anstruther.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* In view of the continuing reduction in the threat of attack on the United Kingdom the Government have concluded that it is no longer necessary to retain a number of sites containing special protected administrative centres known as regional government headquarters or zone headquarters. Anstruther is one such site.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been spent on the civil defence facility at Anstruther in each of the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Scottish Office Home and Health Department have spent the following sums on the running costs and maintenance of the civil defence facility at Anstruther.

	£
1992-93	70,000
1991-92	90,000
1990-91	100,000
1989-90	75,000
1988-89	70,000

Note: Information for previous years is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what value has been placed by the district valuer on the civil defence facility at Anstruther currently being offered for sale.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The district valuer advised that the minimum open market value for sale purposes could be fairly stated at £25,000, but that given the right conditions at the date of sale a sum in excess of that figure might be realised.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the quasi autonomous non-governmental organisations which he consulted before offering for sale the civil defence facility at Anstruther.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* No such organisations were consulted before the civil defence facility at Anstruther was offered for sale.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he made of the historical significance of the civil defence facility at Anstruther before offering it for sale.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Scottish Office notified the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, which made a photographic record of the property.

Population

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in Scotland, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures expressed in numbers and as a percentage of relevant population.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The latest estimates are those for mid-1991 set out in the answer that I gave to the hon. Member on 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *527-30*. The Registrar General's mid-1992 population estimates will not be available until July 1993. Electoral registration figures for 1993 will be available in April 1993.

Motorways

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned either (i) as completely new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* In Scotland there are 154 miles of trunk road motorway and a further 15 miles of non-trunk motorway, responsibility for which lies with local authorities.

Twenty-one miles of new motorway is currently under construction with a further 63 miles of new motorway planned.

Much of the motorway network constructed in the 1960s and 1970s is reaching the end of its structural life and requires major maintenance or reconstruction. Some of this work may involve widening.

Council House Sales

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what calculations underlay his estimate of the amount to be gathered from council house sales receipts in 1993-94 in Edinburgh district.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer of 5 February 1993]:* The provisional estimate of capital receipts on Edinburgh district council's housing revenue account block in 1993-94 is £17·860 million, including £15·061 million from the sale of council houses under the right to buy.

The estimate of RTB receipts has been compiled by multiplying the expected number of RTB sales—1,141—by the expected average RTB selling price of £13,200. The number of RTB sales has been derived by applying a take-up percentage—68 per cent.—to the number of RTB applications—1,678—expected to be made to the district council during the period from 1 October 1992 and 30 September 1993. The expected number of RTB applications to be made during this period is based on the of such applications—859—made between 1 April 1992 and 30 September 1992 which has been grossed up to an annual basis taking account of seasonal variations. The expected average RTB selling price and the take-up percentage are projections of the trends in such factors for the district council in recent years.

The provisional estimates for 1993-94 will be reviewed before the end of March in the light of representations received from local authorities and in the light of the latest available information on RTB trends.

ENVIRONMENT

Education and Personal Social Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing standard spending assessments for education and personal social services for each relevant authority for 1993-94 relative to 1992-93, disregarding in the case of personal social services the effect of community care changes, and showing in the case of education the effect of change in pupil numbers.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have today placed in the Library two tables containing the following information:

(i) The standard spending assessment (SSA) for 1992-93, that for 1993-94 and the difference between the two in £ million and as a percentage change;

(ii) The SSA element for education in 1992-93 adjusted for those functions which will no longer be the responsibility of local authorities in 1993-94, particularly further education, the education SSA for 1993-94 and the difference between the two in £ million and as a percentage.

For 1993-94 expenditure on community care will be funded by means of a special transitional grant. It is not possible to show the effects of changes in pupil numbers because of the changes in function between 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources he proposes to make available to local authorities to enable them to implement the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Any additional costs to local authorities arising from the provision of public information under the Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1993 will be de minimis. Local authorities are already required to maintain emergency planning procedures and adequate resources for this purpose are provided in the local authority finance settlement.

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each regional water company the number of tests carried out by the drinking water inspectorate, for the last year for which figures are available, and the pass rate for each test for each company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Water companies are required by the Water Quality Regulations to take samples of the water they supply and to analyse them. The drinking water inspectorate checks the manner in which companies carry out this function but it does not carry out tests itself. Information on the quality of drinking water supplied by each company in England and Wales during 1990 and 1991, including that sought by my hon. Friend, is contained in the annual reports of the chief inspector, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his letter to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 26 January, about correspondence

from his Department on urban programme funding, how many circular letters to all eligible authorities were sent between 15 October and 13 November.

Mr. Robin Squire: I wrote to each local authority on 13 November 1992 explaining the new arrangements for the urban programme in 1993-94.

Housing

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of the extent of overcrowding in *(a)* owner-occupied property and *(b)* low-cost home ownership schemes.

Mr. Baldry: Current information is available from surveys relating measures of space to household size and composition, but this has no statutory force.

The most recent figures available come from the 1991 labour force survey housing trailer which uses a criterion, widely used in surveys, of one bedroom for:

- each married couple;
- any other person aged 21 or over;
- each adolescent aged 10 to 20 or pair of adolescents if of the same sex; and
- each pair of children under 10

The LFS housing trailer shows that in 1991 an estimated 3 per cent. of owner-occupier households in England had fewer bedrooms than indicated by this criterion.

No reliable information is available separately on overcrowding of households in low-cost home ownership schemes.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes there have been in the proposed allocation of moneys held back from the scheme to allow housing associations to purchase homes since his statement announcing the scheme.

Mr. Baldry: About £427 million of the £577 million allocated to the Housing Corporation in the autumn statement to enable housing associations in England to purchase new, empty, repossessed and second-hand homes was allocated in November to 27 selected "zoned" housing associations.

The remainder was held back in order to make further allocations reflecting the success of these housing associations in meeting the objectives of the package and to allow other associations to come forward with proposals offering exceptional value for money. Further allocations were made on 13 January; 28 "non-zoned" associations received allocations worth some £28 million.

About half the initial allocation was targeted on London and the south-east. In the second tranche this proportion was increased to three quarters, in recognition of the particular difficulties of the property market in this region.

Council House Sales

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 3 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *296-300*, what was the number and value of council house sales by region for the latest available quarters *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1981 prices.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information, which is for the period July to September 1992, is given in the table. The table also gives updates of the figures for the April to June quarter given previously. These figures exclude some 12,300 dwellings, valued at about £120 million, transferred from Bromley borough council to Broomleigh Housing Association in April 1992.

Number of council house sales and value by region (£000)

	April to June 1992 (provisional)		
	Number of sales	*Undiscounted value of sales*	*Value 1981 prices*
DOE Regions			
North (Exc. Cumbria)	1,080	30,538	16,240
Yorkshire and Humberside	988	33,072	17,588
East Midlands	681	24,284	12,914
Eastern	1,179	57,089	30,360
London Boroughs	2,208	131,222	69,784
South East	1,045	53,133	28,256
South West	715	30,308	16,118
West Midlands	1,066	40,314	21,439
North West (Inc. Cumbria)	1,304	39,448	20,978
ENGLAND	10,266	439,408	233,677

	July to September 1992 (provisional)		
	Number of sales	*Undiscounted value of sales*	*Value 1981 prices*
North (Exc. Cumbria)	1,249	33,753	17,866
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,078	36,817	19,488
East Midlands	823	28,063	14,855
Eastern	1,607	78,781	41,701
London Boroughs	2,802	180,882	95,746
South East	1,479	76,212	40,341
South West	913	38,770	20,522
West Midlands	1,085	40,798	21,596
North West (Inc. Cumbria)	1,641	38,836	20,557
ENGLAND	12,677	552,912	292,673

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publicise the effects of the changes being made to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill currently before Parliament amends the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations to bring them into line with the EC acquired rights directive, by removing the distinction between commercial and non-commercial undertakings. It is not the case that the amendment has the effect of extending the regulations to the public sector. My Department's view remains that the regulations will not normally apply where local authority services are contracted out, that is, where a private company contracts to provide a service in consideration of a fee. Such a transaction does not normally, in our opinion, involve the transfer of an undertaking within the meaning of the regulations.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recruitment of a chief executive designate for the proposed urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Redwood: The main aim of the urban regeneration agency will be to secure the reclamation and reuse of vacant, derelict and underused land and buildings in urban areas. It will also promote land reclamation nationally and encourage the provision of industrial and commercial premises in areas of need. We want the agency to begin this important work as soon as is practicable after the enactment of the Housing and Urban Development Bill which provides for its establishment. To this end, we intend shortly to advertise the post of chief executive. Subject to the enactment of the Bill, the successful candidate will be appointed as chief executive by the agency when established. Lord Walker of Worcester, who will be the agency's first chairman, will play a leading role in the selection process. Pending enactment of the Bill expenditure on the recruitment exercise, estimated at £60,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. Repayment to the fund will be made from the Department of the Environment administration vote (class VIII vote 8).

Earth Summit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made in Britain in the past eight months in implementing the agreements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is working towards ratification of the climate change convention and to establish the basis for ratification of the convention on biological diversity by the end of 1993. We intend to publish national action plans on biodiversity, the climate change convention and for the implementation of the forest principles and submit a report on sustainable development to the new UN Commission on Sustainable Development on the same time scale.

Local Authorities, Suffolk and Norfolk

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the timetable for the Local Government Commission's review of Suffolk and Norfolk local authority areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: We intend that the Local Government Commission should review Suffolk and Norfolk in separate reviews in the fourth tranche of its work programme. It is too early to give a firm estimate for the starting dates of the later reviews, but it is likely that those of Suffolk and Norfolk will be started in 1995.

Farm Houses (Council Tax)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to alter the council tax banding status of farmhouses from residential to business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

Waste Incinerator, Stockton

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the reasons for refusal of permission for Northumbrian Water to construct a waste incinerator at Portrack in Stockton-on-Tees, and the submission made to the inquiry inspector by Cleveland county council in respect of the same.

Mr Maclean: Yes. I am arranging for a copy of the decision letter issued on 2 November 1992 to be placed in the Library. While Cleveland county council made no submissions to the site-specific inquiry for the Portrack incinerator appeal, the council did submit evidence to the plenary session of the linked inquiries of which the Portrack inquiry was part. I will arrange for a copy of the council's submissions to the plenary session to be placed in the Library.

City Challenge

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he will apply to the 1991 census data in choosing candidates for the third round of city challenge; what are the current criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have yet to receive the results of research based on 1991 census data which will help to inform future decisions on urban policy, including setting the criteria for the choice of candidates for a possible third round of city challenge. The current city challenge areas are included in the list of urban priority areas which was drawn up following the 1981 census and amended in the light of subsequent information about urban needs.

Coventry

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what concrete financial assistance he plans to offer the residents of areas in Coventry which experienced disturbances in 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The financial assistance available from my Department is not distrubuted on the basis of the location of disturbances. However, Coventry will continue to benefit from a range of housing and inner city programmes. Additionally, we are currently considering a bid from Coventry under the urban partnership fund.

New Earnings Survey

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) of 27 January, *Official Report*, column 765, what were the sample sizes used in the new earnings survey for each county council and the Scilly Isles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* I have place in the Library a table showing, for each local authority, the total sample size in the New Earning Survey for those occupational groups used in the calculation of the area cost adjustment. The occupational groups included are those thought to be most relevant to the labour markets in which local authorities operate. Because

of the need to standardise the results to avoid any distortions which might otherwise arise from differences in the mix of occupations between different local authorities, average wages are calculated for each of 16 occupational groups. The effective sample sizes used in the detailed calculations are, therefore, much smaller than those shown in the table. These samples are too small to allow reliable estimates to be made for individual counties.

Council Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision exists for registered disabled people living in adapted accommodation to receive a reduction in their valuation band in cases where the property is already in band A.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) on 5 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *370*.

Council Tax

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage collection rate for the council tax the Government are assuming for the operation of transitional relief.

Mr. Robin Squire: The scheme assumes a collection rate of 98 per cent.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 9th February 1993

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vacant homes are being acquired in each district council area under the Government's housing initiative announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement by *(a)* the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, *(b)* the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association and *(c)* the other housing associations.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: At 3 February 1993 the number of proposals to acquire property with vacant possession in each district council area is as follows:

Council	*(a) Northern Ireland Housing Executive*	*(b) Northern Ireland Co-ownership Association*	*(c) Other Housing Associations*
Antrim Borough	—	12	—
Ards Borough	6	14	—
Armagh District	4	9	11
Ballymena Borough	3	9	6
Ballymoney Borough	3	6	—
Banbridge District	2	4	—
Belfast City	50	3	89
Carrickfergus Borough	8	25	—
Castlereagh Borough	5	5	—
Coleraine Borough	2	26	4
Cookstown District	—	9	1
Craigavon Borough	7	21	28
Derry City	7	15	19
Down District	7	19	—
Dungannon District	1	5	2
Fermanagh District	3	8	6
Larne Borough	4	5	21
Limavady Borough	5	12	—
Lisburn Borough	9	7	—
Magherafelt District	2	11	—
Moyle District	1	3	—
Newry and Mourne District	8	24	—
Newtownabbey Borough	4	1	—
North Down Borough	2	6	—
Omagh District	4	5	—
Strabane District	3	—	—
Totals	150	264	187

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Draft letters are not submitted to Ministers, but for information purposes they receive a copy of the chief executive's reply once it has issued and prior to the parliamentary question being answered.

Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the ruling of the president of the Fair Employment Tribunal, on the disclosure of documents to the Fair Employment Commission in the cases of McKernan *v.* DoE and McConnell *v.* Police Authority for Northern Ireland, will be appealed; and on what date the Commission will be given the relevant documents in the McConnell case.

Mr. Mates: There was no appeal in the case of McKernan *v.* DoE. In the case of McConnell *v.* Police Authority for Northern Ireland, a requisition to state a case to the Court of Appeal was lodged with the Fair Employment Tribunal on 14 January 1993.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Visas

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which member nations of the European Community have statutory appeal procedures comparable with those currently in force in the United Kingdom concerning appeals from persons refused visitor's visas to the respective states.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None of the other member states of the European Community has an independent, specialised immigration appeals system.

Prison Construction

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in favour of construction of more prison space to accommodate offenders for whom custodial sentences are appropriate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No formal representations have been made, but, from time to time, we are approached by companies interested in the construction of new prisons.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many warrants he has signed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 for each year since 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the annexes to the reports of the Interception of Communications Commissioner for 1990 and 1991—Cm. 1489 and Cm. 1942.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those who, other than himself, are empowered to sign warrants to intercept communications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: By virtue of section 4 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985, warrants may be issued only under the hand of the Secretary of State or, in an urgent case where the Secretary of State has expressly authorised its issue, under the hand of an official of his department of or above the rank of Assistant Under-Secretary of State. In practice, warrants are usually

issued by the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Alcohol (Licensing)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were made in the last year for (i) new licences, (ii) the renewal of licences and (iii) for the transfer of licences to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises; and what proportion of these were *(a)* approved, *(b)* approved subject to conditions and *(c)* rejected.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Provisional figures show that in the year ending 30 June 1992 in England and Wales, there were 2,136 new applications for licences to sell intoxicating liquor for consumption off the premises, of which 1,712 —80 per cent.—were granted. Information about the number of applications for the renewal or transfer of off-licences is not collected centrally. Licensing justices have no power to attach conditions to the grant of an off-licence.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost to the public administration, including the cost of licensing justices and policing of operating the system of licensing for premises selling alcohol for consumption off the premises and of the compliance costs for businesses involved with the operation of this system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As to compliance costs, a fee of £12·50 is payable on the initial grant and subsequent triennial renewal of an off-licence. The other information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of all the appointments for which the Home Department has been responsible since 1 November 1992 could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. Information about the appointments for which the Home Department was responsible last year up to 30 September 1992 is given in "Public Bodies", a copy of which is in the Library. Information on the political affiliations of those appointed is not sought by my Department.

Naturalisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *861*, if he will place in the Library a comparative description of the processes and qualifications used in each member state of the European Community in respect of applications to them for naturalisation from citizens of non-member nations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Yes. I will place in the Library the information available to me about naturalisation procedures in the member states.

Ram-raiding

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to take to reduce the incidence of ram-raiding.

Mr. Jack: Encouraging owners and car manufacturers to make cars more secure—thus reducing the opportunities for vehicle related crime, including ram-raiding —is a central feature of the Government's car crime prevention strategy. At a local level, police crime prevention officers are always ready to provide retailers with specialist advice, drawn from their own experiences and that of the Home Office crime prevention centre at Stafford, on what measures they can take to protect their premises against this type of offence.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Chief executives of agencies within my responsibility reply direct on matters delegated to them, although it is, of course, open to them to seek my advice before replying.

I have the opportunity to see the replies when they are published in *Hansard*.

Prisoners

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for what purpose category subsections A: high risk and A: exceptional risk were introduced; and how many prisoners there have been in each category to date;

(2) how many categories of security there are within category A; and for how long there has been no more than one subsection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are three levels of escape risk classification for category A prisoners: standard, high and exceptional. This arrangement was introduced in its present form in 1988 in order to assist operational management. On 31 December 1992, there were 558 category A prisoners in custody. Of these, 457 were classified as standard escape risk, 79 as high escape risk and 22 as exceptional escape risk. Information on the numbers of prisoners held in each escape risk classification since 1988 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time prisoners spend in each of the A categories.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the capacity of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority to cope with fire, emergency and other demands on their time in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The standard of service provided by the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority was examined in the course of an inspection of the service by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services between 25 and 29 January 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend will want to examine carefully the report of that inspection, which will be published later this year. It is for the authority, in the light of its standard spending assessment and the intended criteria for designation for council tax capping, to set a budget for 1993-94 which will allow it to comply with its duties under the Fire Services Act 1974, and with the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover.

Betting Shops

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what means were used to gather comments from interested parties in response to his Department's consultation document of October 1991 on evening opening of betting shops; who responded; and how many submissions were received in responding to each of the issues highlighted in paragraph 28(i)—(vi) and paragraph 29(i)—(ii) *(a)—(c)*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A press release was issued on 14 October 1991 announcing the issuing of the consultation document. Copies of the document were made available to the press. Some 58 copies of the document were sent direct to various interest groups such as the police, local authority associations and bodies representing the horseracing, greyhound and bookmaking industries. In addition, copies were made available to inquirers on request. In those cases where organisations had not responded by the closing date, they were contacted and invited to consider responding.

The details of the representations received were as follows:

Period 14 October 1991 to 18 January 1993

Paragraph reference in consultation document	*Subject*	*Number of responses*
28(i)	Views on effects on excessive gambling	17
28(ii)	Views of local authorities on effect of planning controls	8
28(iii)	Views of police and licensing authorities as to whether evening opening would cause them any practical difficulties	9
28(iv)	Views of the horseracing industry	6
28(v)	Views of bookmakers	202 (plus 1 petition with 204 signatures and 1 survey with 439 respondents)
28(vi)	Views of the greyhound racing industry	369 (plus 3 petitions with over 2,000 signatures)
Others	Include employees, members of the public and letters where correspondents' interest not identified	381
29(i)	Whether opening hours should be entirely left to the discretion of each business	48
29(ii)(a)	Whether the latest permitted closing time should be specified	32
29(ii)(b)	Whether evening opening should be allowed on Monday to Friday only, or only on certain days	18
	Whether evening opening should be allowed all year or only for certain months	15

Fire Regulations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to implement new fire regulations as required under the EC framework and workplace minimum requirements; and what plans he has to amend the regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to issue revised proposals for Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations and associated guidance for consultation in the summer. This will enable him to consider any comments which he has received and to make the regulations to take effect on or after 1 April 1994.

We have already decided to exclude from the regulations all premises which are occupied only by the self-employed because they are not subject to the directives, and we are considering what other changes should be made.

Police Restructuring

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had or proposes to have with the Merseyside police authority with regard to proposals to restructure police forces and police authorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has not held discussions with individual police authorities. He is considering what reforms in police organisation and structure may be needed and will announce his proposals as soon as possible. The interested parties will be consulted before final decisions are reached.

Safer Cities Project, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the future of the safer cities project in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have received written representations on the future funding of the Bradford safer cities project from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), from the chairman of the steering committee of the project and the chair of the community safety strategy group of Bradford city council.

As I explained in my statement of 7 January, Home Office grant funding to 16 of the existing 20 projects, including Bradford, will be reduced from £250,000 to £100,000 in 1993-94 and will end in March 1994. This will release funds for the new phase of safer cities. Some additional funding will be available in 1993-94 from a central budget of £500,000 to assist work aimed at leaving in place satisfactory continuing arrangements for the maintenance and development of local multi-agency crime prevention work.

Although safer cities funding is to come to an end after March 1994, there are other sources of Government funding for crime prevention. Bradford is one of the city challenge pacemaker authorities, and has formulated extensive community safety proposals in its action plan. I understand that more than £390,000 is being spent on a wide range of activity, which is beginning to have a real impact on crime prevention in the challenge area.

There is also a local drugs prevention team in Bradford, which has a budget of £75,000 per year for grant aid to local drugs prevention projects.

Drug Problems, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with organisations in the Liverpool area in respect of ways of combating drug problems; what proposals he has put forward for central Government assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: A drugs prevention team was set up in Liverpool in December 1990 under the Home Office drugs prevention initiative and continues to work with the local community in finding effective ways of preventing the spread of drug misuse.

In May 1992 I visited the team to launch the educational video which they have produced in conjunction with the "Brookside" television company. During European Drug Prevention Week in November I visited again, to talk to local business people about drugs prevention in the workplace, to open the drugs prevention fayre at the Everyman theatre, and to speak to local drugs prevention workers.

The Home Office provides £75,000 a year to the team to spend on grant aid to local agencies and groups engaged in drugs prevention work and £10,500 to spend on prevention publicity. These budgets have been supplemented considerably by private donations and sponsorship and some 60 projects have been undertaken to date. We also provided an extra £15,000 for specific drugs projects in the Liverpool area during European Drug Prevention Week.

A steering committee of representatives from organisations in the local community, including statutory and voluntary drugs services, the local authority, police and the chamber of commerce, supervise the work of the team. I announced recently that the life of the team, like the other teams set up under the drug prevention initiative, would be extended to March 1995.

Prison Populations

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total prison population in each EC country, including the United Kingdom, and the United States of America in 1979 and 1992 respectively; what proportion that number formed of the total population; and how many of that number were young offenders.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* Information for EC countries has been collated by the Council of Europe only since 1983; and the latest available information published by them relates to 1 September 1989. The data requested for these two years can be found in "Prison Information Bulletin" No. 2, table 1; and No. 14, table 2. A copy of both documents are in the Library.

Data on the total prison population in 1979 are given in an article in issue No. 15 of the above publication; and more recent information has been collected independently from some EC countries and from the USA. These data are given in the table.

An article on "International comparisons of prison populations" by Collier and Tarling—Home Office research bulletin No. 23, pages 48 to 54—showed that the figures for different countries are unlikely to be strictly comparable because the definitions of prisons and prisoners vary from one country to another, reflecting different legal and administrative systems. Examples of differences in the definitions are the inclusion or exclusion in a country's figures of juvenile offenders and mentally disordered offenders.

	[1]1979 Total prison population	Total prison population	[2]1991 Prison population per 100,000 inhabitants	Total population of young offenders
Belgium	6,137	—	—	—
Denmark	2,291	3,506	68	—
France	34,640	48,675	84	[6]5,072
Germany[3]	50,395	49,658	79	—
Greece	3,221	—	—	—
Ireland	1,140	—	—	—
Italy	26,424	—	—	—
Luxembourg	223	—	—	—
Netherlands	—	7,233	48	[7]1,185
Portugal	5,054	8,092	82	[6]625
Spain	10,463	—	—	—
United Kingdom, of which:	—	52,874	92	[6]10,046
England and Wales	42,220	46,310	91	[6]8,850
United States of America	[4]500,000	[5]1,118,000	[5]450	—

[1]Figures at 1 January, except Greece—1 December; Ireland and United Kingdom—annual averages.
[2]Figures at 1 September.
[3]Former Federal Republic territory only.
[4]Approximate estimate based on the available data, which relates to the local jail population in 1978 and the State and Federal prison population in 1980.
[5]1990.
[6]Age under 21.
[7]Age under 23.

WALES

Certificate of Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated entrance number of pupils for the current certificate of education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: So far, 9,436 candidates have been entered for the certificate of education in 1993. Candidates may still be entered up to the date of the examination.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money will be allocated for extension and rebuilding work at each college of further and higher education in Wales during the next three years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: From 1 April 1993 the Further and Higher Education Funding Councils for Wales will assume responsibility for providing funds for extension and rebuilding work for institutions of further and higher education. The funding councils have yet to announce their allocations to institutions for 1993-94.

Wages

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average wage of employed persons in Wales for each of the last 14 years; and if he will express these figures as a percentage of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European average.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table. Comparable figures for Europe as a whole or the European Community are not available.

Average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Wales whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey pay period.

Year	£ per week	Percentage of United Kingdom
[1]1979	87·6	98·0
[1]1980	106·4	96·7
[1]1981	119·4	95·8
[1]1982	130·2	95·5
[1]1983	140·0	94·7
[2]1983	139·4	94·8
[2]1984	149·2	93·8
[2]1985	160·3	94·0
[2]1986	170·3	92·5
[2]1987	183·4	92·4
[2]1988	196·5	90·3
[2]1989	215·9	90·4
[2]1990	232·1	88·5
[2]1991	252·2	88·9
[2]1992	270·9	89·2

Source: New Earnings Surveys, Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
[1]From 1979 to 1983, men aged 21 and over and women aged 18 and over.
[2]From 1983 onwards, men and women on adult rates of pay irrespective of age.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of unfit dwellings in *(a)* local authority and *(b)* private ownership for each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The data requested are not available. Information about levels of unfitness is being obtained through the current Welsh house condition survey. The results will be published after the survey is complete at the end of the year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the number of workers in Wales holding more than one paid occupation;

and if he will make a statement on how these are counted in his calculation of the number of employed people in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The summer 1992 labour force survey shows an estimated 45,000 people in Wales with a second job, either as an employee or self-employed.

The Employment Department's employer-based surveys count jobs, not people. The labour force surveys provide estimates of the numbers of people employed in Wales.

Nitrogen Dioxide (Monitoring)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites for monitoring nitrogen dioxide there are in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is one site at Cardiff at which nitrogen dioxide is measured continuously. In addition, current Government surveys involve regular measurements at more than 100 sites throughout Wales.

"2002 Horizon"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for Wales of the European Commission plan, "2002 Horizon", outline programme for a trans-European road network; and what discussions on the plan he has held with officials of national parks in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proposals for a trans-European road network are indicative only, and are being considered by member states. Plans for developing the road network in Wales are set out in the 1992 supplement to "Roads in Wales". My right hon. Friend and I have made it clear that our plans will not include upgrading the A5 through Snowdonia to motorway or dual-carriageway standard, and we have not discussed these proposals with national park officials.

Smoke and Sulphur Dioxide Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implementation in Wales of EC directives on smoke and sulphur dioxide discharges.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: EC directive 80/779/EEC, setting air quality standards for smoke and sulphur dioxide, is implemented in Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom by means of the Air Quality Standards Regulations—SI 1989 No. 317; copies are held in the Library of the House.

Government monitoring indicates that the limits set under the directive are not being exceeded in Wales.

Derelict Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much industrially derelict land has been reclaimed in Wales since 1990; and what methods have been used.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1990 a total of 3,127 acres of industrially derelict land have been reclaimed in Wales through schemes funded by the Welsh Development Agency. Reclamation methods vary from site to site depending upon the nature of the dereliction and the site's proposed end use.

Construction

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of construction in Wales in each quarter of 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh index of construction is available for the first three quarters of 1992. Taking the average quarterly output in 1985 to be 100, the levels were 143·1, 141·3 and 136·1 in the first three quarters of 1992 respectively.

John Bennett and Keith Wilson

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *454*, on what date the fraud squad arrested John Bennett and Keith Wilson.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the police.

Drug and Alcohol Misuse Centres

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on residential drug and alcohol misuse centres since April 1992; and how many such representations have expressed concern about future funding arrangements.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received 25 such representations, all of which have expressed concern about future funding arrangements.

Opportunity 2000

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effects upon female employment in Wales of the Opportunity 2000 scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Opportunity 2000 is a Business in the Community initiative, which receives support from the Welsh Office. It was launched in Wales in May 1992. At the end of the first six months 13 Welsh employing organisations had taken up membership, but it is too early to assess the impact the initiative is having on female employment.

Voluntary Sector Organisations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings or communications he has had with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action in regard to the level of grant provision by his Department to voluntary sector organisations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. However my officials maintain close links with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action on many issues relevant to the voluntary sector, including funding, and will continue to do so.

Women (Business Incentive Schemes)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what incentive schemes his Department sponsors in Wales to assist women to establish their own businesses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Support for women who wish to establish their own business is provided by the training and enterprise councils and our strategic guidance to them stresses the importance of advancing equal opportunities

to help people realise their potential. TECs tailor their provision to meet local needs. Local enterprise agencies also offer help to people setting up in business.

The department also supports initiatives such as the Chwarae Teg/Fair Play consortium and Opportunity 2000, both of which aim to expand the role of women in the work force.

Job Creation

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), *Official Report*, 1 February, column 3, if he will provide a breakdown by company of the 12,690 jobs created.

Mr. David Hunt: Regional selective assistance is intended to aid companies carry out industrial projects which will create or safeguard jobs. Details of individual projects are however, a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the allocation of revenue support grant for the coming financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from 13 local authorities on settlement related issues. The Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 and The Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94, which set out my settlement proposals for the coming year, were approved by the House on 8 February.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to make changes to minerals planning policy guidance note 3 in relation to Wales, in the light of current reviews of opencast mining proposals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, announced on 15 July 1992 the Government's proposal to bring forward for public consultation draft revised planning guidelines on coal extraction generally. The intention is to proceed to public consultation as soon as practicable once the results of the coal review have been announced.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to publish his White Paper on local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I propose to publish my White Paper shortly, but not until after a further meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government on 17 February.

Railway System

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the future of the railway system in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend regularly meets Sir Bob Reid to discuss a wide range of Welsh rail issues. The most recent of these meetings was held on 7 September.

NHS Staff (Redundancies)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of redundancies among NHS staff for each year since 1989-90, dividing the figures by region.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available centrally.

Capital Programme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer on 1 February, *Official Report*, columns 2-3, what proposals he has to use a global settlement framework for the construction of the Pen-y-Clip tunnels on the A55; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are no such proposals.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns 2-3, to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), if he will give the corresponding figure for the total value of capital expenditure projects starts in 1991-92, 1992-93 and his estimate for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: Information for all project starts is not available. Details of the planned major project starts for the central Government roads, transport grant, hospitals and arts programmes and for the Welsh Development Agency, in 1991-92 and 1992-93 are set out in the long-term projects tables appended to votes 2, 5 and 8 of the relevant supply estimates booklets for Wales—HC 236-XVI and HC 373-XVI—and in "Roads in Wales", 1992 supplement.

Equivalent information for 1993-94 will be available from the 1993-94 supply estimates and the 1993 supplement to "Roads in Wales."

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns 2-3, if he will provide equivalent budget details derived prior to April 1992, for the capital programme for 1992-93 for *(a)* local authority gross capital expenditure, *(b)* his Department's roads and transport, *(c)* his Department's health and hospitals including NHS trusts, *(d)* Housing for Wales, *(e)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(f)* the European regional development fund.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Gross capital expenditure plans for 1992-93 within the responsibility of and allocated by the Welsh Office, for:

	£ million
(a) Local authority gross capital	[1]631
(b) Central Government roads and transport	178
(c) Health	137
(d) Housing for Wales	127
(e) Welsh Development Agency	122
(f) European Regional Development Fund	3

[1] The 1992-93 forecast for gross capital expenditure by local authorities (£631 million) is not comparable with that for 1993-94 (£620 million) because the 1993-94 figure excludes:

(i) the provision for further education (which has been transferred to the central Government programme) and
(ii) the separate provision made for ERDF grants.

PCB Contamination, Pontypool

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the results of the study by the university of East Anglia into polychlorinated biphenyl levels in the Panteg area of Pontypool.

Mr. David Hunt: In line with the contract with my Department, I expect the university of East Anglia to report to me shortly. I shall publish the university's findings as quickly as possible thereafter, as soon as I have had an opportunity to consider its conclusions and the advice of my special adviser for this project, Professor Lewis Roberts.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the *(a)* number of properties, *(b)* their square footage and *(c)* the rental income in the ownership of the Welsh Development Agency in each of the last five years in (i) the Bridgend constituency, (ii) the Ogwr district, (iii) Mid Glamorgan and (iv) all other counties.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the Welsh Development Agency. I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Operation Wizard

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *771*, if he will give the total sum in consultancy fees paid by the Welsh Development Agency under Operation Wizard to each of *(a)* Barclays de Zoete Wedd, *(b)* Outram Cullinan and Co. and *(c)* Touche Ross;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *771*, if he will place in the Library copies of the terms of reference agreed for the consultancy work done for Operation Wizard by *(a)* Barclays de Zoete Wedd, *(b)* Outram Cullinan and Co. and *(c)* Touche Ross.

Mr. David Hunt: I have asked the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Dorrell: A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Cigarette Duty

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusion the October 1992 ECOFIN meeting reached on the cigarette duty structure; and how this is reflected in the Council and Commission minute statement on the target rates set out in the amended proposal for a Council directive (9776/89 fisc 167).

Sir John Cope: ECOFIN agreed that from 1 January 1993 the minimum excise duty incidence on cigarettes would be 57 per cent. of the retail selling price, inclusive of all taxes, of the price category most in demand. This agreement is reflected in the Council's adoption of directive 92/79/EEC.

The Commission's original proposal for cigarette taxation had envisaged a target rate towards which member states' rates would converge over time. In Council discussion of the proposal, it was agreed that the target rates would be retained for reference purposes only. In the joint statement for the Council minutes it was agreed that member states would take account of them each time they amend national rates of duty, but there is no obligation to move towards them.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he proposes to take to follow up the concerns expressed in the minutes of the October 1992 ECOFIN meeting that the agreed formula for cigarette tax harmonisation would perpetuate the wide tax differentials in the EC.

Sir John Cope: In the run-up to the first review of the structure and minimum rates of tobacco duties, which is due not later than 31 December 1994, we shall monitor any evidence of distortions of trade within the EC and will fully consult the tobacco industry. We have made it clear that we would prefer an EC cigarette duty structure incorporating a minimum cash duty and a greater reliance on the specific duty share.

We are also taking every opportunity to encourage low-tax member states to increase their tobacco taxes on health grounds. For example, during the United Kingdom presidency of the Community we held a seminar in London for health and tax officials which produced useful conclusions on the support that tax can give to health policy.

Football Pools

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer by the Secretary of State for National Heritage of 2 February *Official Report*, column *109*, if he will make it his policy to reduce the regime for tax on football pools to the level of tax to be imposed on the national lottery, subject to agreement that the funds given back are dedicated to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

Sir John Cope: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's decision on the taxation of the national lottery.

Alcohol and Tobacco (Taxation)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has for the financial year 1993-94 of the losses to the revenue arising from the disparities in taxation on alcohol and tobacco in the other countries of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: We have no reason to change the estimate given in the 1992 "Financial Statement and

Budget Report" that in 1993-94, there will be a total revenue loss to the United Kingdom Exchequer of around £250 million from increased cross-border shopping. This arises from the abolition of duty-paid allowances within the EC from 1 January 1993.

Offshore Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the loss of capital gains tax revenue by the use of offshore trusts; and what steps he is taking to investigate the extent of this loss and to correct it.

Mr. Dorrell: I remind the hon. Member that in 1991 the Government introduced a comprehensive system for the taxation of those setting up, and receiving benefits from, offshore trusts. In introducing these measures in his Budget Statement, the Chancellor indicated that this was designed to prevent a revenue loss of up to £100 million in a full year. These measures were welcomed by the Opposition. The Government will keep these provisions under review to ensure that the objective of a fair and comprehensive system of taxation in this complex area continues to be met.

Pensioners (Income Tax)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pensioners pay income tax; how many pay at 40 per cent; and how much is raised in direct taxation from pensioners' incomes.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that, in 1992-93, 2·9 million individuals aged 65 or over will be liable to income tax. Of these 0·1 million will be liable at the higher rate. The total income tax liability of people aged 65 or over is estimated to be just over £5 billion.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his reponsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Portillo: Chief executives of the executives agencies for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is responsible are authorised to reply directly on matters delegated to them.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to allow companies exporting to the EC 30 working days to submit their statistical declarations to the VAT offices.

Sir John Cope: The maximum time limit of 10 working days for submission of statistical declarations is set by EC regulation. The United Kingdom was successful in negotiating an improvement from the Commission's original proposal of five working days.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many cases serious misdeclaration penalties were levied in respect of claims of VAT relief on bad debts before the 12-month holding period was up; and what was the total size of those penalties in the last four financial years.

Sir John Cope: I regret that this type of information on the reasons alleged by traders for incurring serious misdeclaration penalty is not recorded.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Chief executives reply direct on matters of operational responsibility delegated to them. Their replies are, therefore, primarily a communication between the chief executive and the Member of Parliament who asks the question. Unless a chief executive chooses to ask me for advice on an operational matter, I never clear or check the detailed replies given by chief executives in answer to parliamentary questions.

The Lord Chancellor and I receive copies of chief executives' letters once the letters have been sent to Members of Parliament and we have the opportunity to see them when they are published in *Hansard*, unless their personal or confidential nature precludes their publication in this way.

Debt Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *225*, what improvements to court procedures for debt recovery are to be made; how they will be implemented; and by what date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Both the Lord Chancellor and I are committed to a programme of reforms aimed at simplifying and streamlining debt recovery procedures. In my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central on 25 January, I described many of the initiatives that have been introduced to date. These include the establishment of a computerised summons production centre in 1990 and of the county court bulk centre in March 1992. A package of more general measures was implemented in July 1991. This package included changes to the rules where cases may be commenced, provision for replies to summonses to be sent directly to plaintiffs and the devolution of some formerly judicial functions to experienced administrative staff. These and other reforms introduced in July 1991 are currently being evaluated and any improvements to procedures as a result of the evaluation will be implemented later this year. Most recently, in October 1992, reforms were made to the small claims procedure.

Further changes are planned. For example, it is recognised that the small claims limit, doubled to £1,000 in July 1991, is still relatively low. The limit will, therefore, remain under review with the intention to propose an increase as soon as practicable. Changes to the way in which administration orders are dealt with will be implemented in April 1993 and improvements to oral examination procedures are planned for later in the year. In addition to a forthcoming series of leaflets which explain the various methods of enforcement, it is intended to introduce a guidance leaflet which focuses specifically on the recovery of business debts through county courts.

Before the implementation of any significant changes to court procedures, there is always wide consultation. Courts, court user organisations, the judiciary, the legal profession and others are all given the opportunity to comment and their responses are carefully considered before any changes are introduced. Court staff are provided with training about the changes before they are introduced, and publicity material explaining the changes is produced for court staff and court users.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the constituent of the hon. Member for Woolwich who has not been permitted to leave India and about whom the hon. Member for Woolwich wrote to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 21 January.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I replied on 8 February to the hon. Member's letter of 21 January about his constituent. Mrs. Kaur has been invited to call at the high commission in New Delhi to collect her entry clearance.

Israel

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States of America on the appropriateness of using sanctions against Israel to ensure compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution No. 799 regarding the Palestinian deportees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has discussed the deportations with the new United States Secretary of State. We do not believe that sanctions would be helpful at this stage. They would not help our main objective which is to secure the resumption of the peace negotiations.

Human Rights

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what applications by British citizens have been made to the European Commission on Human Rights regarding the imposition of customs fines and subsequent imprisonment for non-payment on those imprisoned in France.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No such applications have been communicated to the Government by the European Commission on Human Rights.

Council of Ministers (Filming)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to recommend that cameras be permitted access to all future Council of Ministers meetings and to ad hoc council meetings including those of the Trevi group.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government will support proposals by the presidency for further open sessions of the Foreign Affairs Council or of other specialist Councils. For example, the ECOFIN Council on 15 February will begin with an open session. But all Council members must agree before any such arrangements apply. These arrangements only apply to European Community institutions. Intergovernmental co-operation—such as Trevi—is a different matter.

Customs Fines, France

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many cases have been brought to his attention of British citizens being held in French prisons and refused parole due to imposition of customs fines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Two since 1991. But there are 213 British citizens detained in France of whom 93 are serving sentences for drugs offences. Some three quarters of these are known to have customs fines. The exact number of those serving time in prison for non-payment of customs fines is not known, but we believe there are at least 13.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is given to British citizens who are detained in French prisons and to their families in regard to the imposition of customs fines and imprisonment for non-payment.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information on the French system of customs fines is included in the leaflet "Detainees in France" sent in advance of the first consular visit to each detainee. If a person is convicted and a customs fine imposed he or she is told of the possibility of negotiating a reduction of the fine and that the organisation Prisoners Abroad may be able to help in gathering together the necessary documents.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the French authorities about the imposition of customs fines on British citizens imprisoned in France.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. The imposition of customs fines is a matter for the French authorities alone. The fines are applicable to all nationalities including French.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has employed Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and Capita Management Consultancy in support of its market testing programme. The total cost so far has been £27,000. The Overseas Development Administration and the Natural Resources Institute have employed Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and KPMG management consultants at a cost so far of £23,000.

Immigration Section, Islamabad

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the new immigration section at the British post in Islamabad is due to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The new immigration section in Islamabad is due to be completed in September this year.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Croatia in respect of the attacks launched by Croatian forces in the Krajina in contravention of the cease fire agreement; and what response he has received.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our ambassador in Zagreb delivered a démarche to the Croation Government on 25 January and the Croation ambassador was called to the Foreign Office on 26 January. We have also supported a condemnatory statement by the UN Security Council and the EC presidency message to President Tudjman. In response, the Government of Croatia claimed that the attacks were a limited action to secure specific strategic locations. President Tudjman has since made it clear that Croatia will withdraw her troops from the newly recaptured territory only if the Krajina Serbs return their heavy weapons to UNPROFOR control and disband their militias.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the precise measures required of the Serbian Government in order to end sanctions against them.

Mr. Garel-Jones: United Nations Security Council resolution 752 of 1992 calls on all parties to the conflict to meet various requirements. These include a number which Serbia has clearly not yet met, or exercised enough pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to meet—for example, disbanding of irregular forces in Bosnia; an end to forcible expulsions of populations; and ensuring that deliveries of humanitarian aid are not hindered. UN Security Council resolution 757 of 1992 requests the UN Secretary-General to keep the sanctions under continuous review, with a view to suspending or terminating them when Serbia and Montenegro had complied with UNSCR 752. The Edinburgh European Council made it clear that if there were a radical change of policy and genuine co-operation in the peace process, Serbia would be gradually readmitted to the international community.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 1 and 2 February.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council from 1 to 2 February.

The council began with a debate on the Danish presidency's work programme. For the first time a substantive item of Council business was taken in open session, with television cameras present. It thus put in practice an important part of the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council on openness. In the debate I stressed the importance of making progress on enlargement and on strengthening the Community's relations with central and eastern Europe. I also reiterated the need for a peaceful solution in former Yugoslavia and for a rapid conclusion to the Uruguay round.

In the margins of the Council, EC and Austrian, Swedish and Finnish Foreign Ministers launched new accession negotiations. These, too, were held in open session. Much of the preparatory work was carried out during the United Kingdom presidency.

The rest of the Council was held in closed session. The Danish Foreign Minister briefed the Council on Denmark's plans to hold a conference in Copenhagen in April to discuss developments in central and eastern Europe, Albania and the Baltic states. The Council agreed a mandate for the Commission to negotiate amendments to the European Economic Area agreement following Switzerland's decision not to participate.

The presidency reported on its meeting with the Presidents of the European Parliament and of the Commission which marked the start of negotiations on inter-institutional agreements on subsidiarity and budget discipline. The Council discussed the appointment of Commission Vice-Presidents and remitted this for further examination by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. It continued its discussion of a Commission proposal to change the decision-making procedures for Community anti-dumping and other Commercial Defence measures. It also reviewed the Commission's mandate for the negotiation of a new international cocoa agreement. The Commission reported to the Council on the prospects of concluding the Uruguay round rapidly with the new US Administration and other GATT parties. The Council discussed the US decision to impose new duties on steel imports and invited the Commission to undertake consultations in Geneva on possible GATT action.

Ministers discussed latest developments in the former Yugoslavia and issued statements supporting the peace proposals put forward by Lord Owen and Mr. Vance and welcoming the report by Dame Anne Warburton on the treatment of Muslim women. Ministers deplored the recent outbreak of violence in Zaire and the death of the French ambassador in Kinshasa.

A Co-operation Council with Israel was held in the margins of the Council. Ministers reiterated their support for the peace process and their condemnation of Israel's deportation of more than 400 Palestinians. An EC association agreement with Romania was signed in the margins of the Council.

ENVIRONMENT

Light Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he is planning to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with respect to minimising light pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Light pollution ia a rather vague term for the indiscriminate use of lighting. The Government's general approach is to encourage economy in the use of light energy and to discourage the nuisance that can be caused to neighbours by over intensive lighting systems.

This issue is one of several included in a recent consultation paper "Temporary uses of Land, External

Lighting and Miscellaneous Amendments to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988", responses to which are currently being considered.

Refrigeration Technology

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is taking to encourage British companies to develop ozone-friendly refrigeration technology following the German prototypes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government welcome any development of safe ozone-friendly refrigeration and is seeking to encourage chlorofluorocarbon users to switch to suitable alternatives as quickly as possible.

Council Tax

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the total cost of collecting and administering the council tax as a percentage of the expected yield.

Mr. Redwood: Although local authorities have yet to set their budgets, I would expect collection costs for the council tax to be under 5 per cent. of budgeted yield.

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of people likely to be employed in collecting, administering and valuing property, respectively, in order to implement the council tax.

Mr. Redwood: The administration and collection of the council tax will be carried out by local authorities and their agents. This Department does not have records of the numbers of staff employed on these tasks.

The banding of property has been carried out by the Valuation Office agency—VOA—and contracted private sector companies. The total cost of the banding exercise will be some £70 million. Some 512 private sector firms were contracted to carry out banding work under the supervision of the VOA but the Department holds no record of the number of private sector staff involved. To date, some 565 man years have been spent on the banding exercise by the VOA.

Opencast Mining

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now take steps to suspend the planning permission granted for the Bleak House opencast site in Staffordshire until his review of the coal industry is completed.

Mr. Baldry: Once the Secretary of State has given his decision on an appeal, he has no further jurisdiction in the matter. The coal review is, of course, being conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Coalite Chemicals Plant

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the survey of dioxins in soils in the area around the Coalite chemicals plant near Bolsover in Derbyshire will be released.

Mr. Maclean: The report is nearing completion and will be released as soon as reasonably practicable.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the impact on the future standard spending assessments of local authorities of projections of future population structures.

Mr. Robin Squire: Standard spending assessments are calculated using the latest information available compiled on a consistent basis for all relevant authorities. For 1993-94 the assessments are based in part on estimates of population size and age structure relating to 30 June 1991 prepared by the Registrar General. Projections of population size and age structure for each local authority relating to a more recent period are not available on an equivalent basis and it is not possible, therefore, to assess their impact on future assessments. However, trends in population size and structure at the national level are taken into account with many other factors in determining the level of spending which the Government consider is appropriate for all authorities to incur in any one year.

Housing Repossessions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council homes sold under the right-to-buy legislation have been repossessed in each region in each year since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not hold the information requested.

National Sustainability Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to include sectoral targets for environmental quality within the national sustainability plan.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom has promised to report on a sustainable development plan by the end of 1993 to the new United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. The Department is currently consulting on the report and decisions on scope and content will be taken later.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Howard: Chief executives of agencies within my responsibility reply direct to parliamentary questions on matters for which they have delegated operational responsibility. Normally such replies are not seen in draft by me or my ministerial colleagues, but we see copies after they have been sent by the chief executives.

Housing and Urban Development Bill

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria will apply to authorities wishing to be included in the 1993-94 programme for housing disposals, as proposed in the Housing and Urban Development Bill; what will be the size of the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department is today writing to all housing authorities, other than those which have already disposed of their housing, inviting them to apply if they wish to be considered for a place in the 1993-94 disposals programme. Applications should be received by Friday 19 March.

The Department's expenditure estimates for the three years of the public expenditure survey make provision for the costs of housing disposals. A sum has been provisionally allocated within the overall totals for these years which would allow for the transfer of about 25,000 houses in the first year's programme under the new provisions, assuming that the average exchequer costs of disposals remain broadly similar to those which have taken place in recent years. Larger programmes may be possible in later years.

I set out below the policy guidelines we propose to adopt for the first programme. The benchmark size for disposal applications will be between 3,000 and 4,000 properties, with preference being given to transfers at and below the lower end of this range. In particular circumstances, for example when an authority with large stocks is making a split disposal, transfers exceeding this benchmark will be considered, subject to an overriding limit of 5,000 properties in any one disposal to a single landlord or linked associates. It will be for transferring authorities to determine the ways in which they split their stock.

For the first year, disposals will be accepted for the programme only if they are to be made to registered housing associations. In assessing whether the disposal contributes to diversity of ownership in an area, consideration will be given to whether the recipient organisations are existing registered housing associations, or associations newly formed for the purposes of the disposal.

Proposals for transfers to associations associated within a group structure will be considered on their merits and in the light of the overall housing strategy for the area. There will be an overriding proviso that members associated in a group structure may not together acquire more than 5,000 properties from any one local authority.

Authorities accepted for inclusion in the 1993-94 programme will not be expected, while they remain in the programme, to continue to prepare their housing management function for compulsory competitive tendering—CCT—in respect of the properties to be transferred. Should a transfer not take place as planned during 1993-94, the authority will be expected to comply with the statutory requirements for housing management CCT and to make the necessary preparations.

For disposals accepted for the 1993-94 programme, it is intended that the existing discounted cash-flow method will continue to be used to determine the transfer price of the stock. Rent guarantees will be a matter for local discretion, but should not exceed five years. As with past transfers, purchasing associations will be expected to fund the transfer wholly from private sector sources.

In considering the acceptability of a proposed disposal for inclusion in the programme, the Secretary of State will take into account the estimated Exchequer costs of that disposal, and whether a majority of the tenants who would be affected by the disposal are in his opinion likely to oppose it. In reaching an opinion on the second of these issues, he will take account of any relevant systems an authority may have for consulting its tenants, and any planned exercises for further tenant involvement. He will also take into account the criteria set out in section 34(4A) or section 43(4A), as appropriate, of the Housing Act 1985.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be making an announcement in due course on the arrangements that will apply to disposals in Wales.

Landfill Costs

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report commissioned by his Department last year on landfill costs and pricing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have today published a report commissioned by my Department from Coopers and Lybrand on "Landfill Pricing: Correcting Possible Market Distortions".

We indicated in the 1992 environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance: the Second Year Report", Cm. 2068, that we would in future make a presumption in favour of using economic instruments rather than regulation to achieve environmental objectives. This report forms part of the Government's programme of work to explore the use of economic instruments in environmental policy. It also constitutes a preliminary response to a recommendation by the advisory committee on business and the environment that the price of landfill should be increased substantially.

The report examines current and projected waste disposal costs; assesses the impact of introducing a levy on waste going to landfill; and considers ways of implementing it. It predicts that landfill costs will rise substantially before the year 2000 even in the absence of a levy. It concludes that the introduction of a levy would be feasible. Its main effect, in the longer term, would be to increase the incentive to send waste to incinerators rather than landfill, but it would also make materials recycling more commercially attractive.

We are considering the findings of the report, along with those of a parallel study of "Economic Instruments and the Recovery of Resources from Waste", published by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry in December 1992. My Department is inviting comments on the landfill levy report by 26 March 1993.

I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Eastbourne

Q10. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to make another official visit to Eastbourne.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Railways (Capital Investment)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish an analysis of the economic and employment effects of £500 million extra capital investment in railways compared with the same sum spent on supporting deep coal mining.

The Prime Minister: The economic and employment effects of £500 million extra capital expenditure on the

railways would depend on the nature of the investment and on its economic return. The effect of spending the same amount on supporting deep coal mining would depend on the industry's ability to exploit the opportunity for subsidised sales in the market circumstances it faced. In either case, account would of course need to be taken where the money would be found as well as how it would be spent.

Public Inquiries

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to ensure co-operation between the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Transport in respect of public inquiries into harbour revision orders and on energy policy; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is normal practice for the Department of Transport to consult other Departments, where appropriate, in respect of proposals for the making of harbour revision orders.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Prime Minister what current discussions are taking place with the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the events of February 1970 involving the Government of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: None.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions are taking place with the Government of the Republic of Ireland on state-sponsored terrorism.

The Prime Minister: The Government are fully committed to close co-operation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland against all forms of terrorism which threaten our two countries. Both countries are in regular contact on matters of mutual concern.

Departmental Library

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will obtain for his Office's library a book, the title of which has been supplied to him by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

The Prime Minister: My office has a copy.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Badgers

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current estimate of the badger population in the United Kingdom; and what is the source of this estimate.

Mr. Soames: It is currently estimated that there are about 250,000 adult badgers in mainland Britain. The source of this information is "The History, Distribution, Status and Habitat Requirements of the Badger in Britain" by Cresswell, Harris and Jefferies (1990), commissioned by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will suspend the culling of badgers pending completion of his Department's review of controlling bovine tuberculosis.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do so.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliation of those appointed.

Mr. Curry: Since 1 November 1992, my right hon. Friend has made 56 appointments or re-appointments to the bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Appointments are generally made on the basis of suitability, merit and expertise; details of political affiliation are not held centrally.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what current scientific data his Department has on the transmission by badgers of bovine tuberculosis to cattle.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davis) on 19 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *209*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how his Department is currently reviewing existing policy on the control of bovine tuberculosis in Britain; when he expects that review to be completed; and if he will place a copy of the review in the Library.

Mr. Soames: There is at present no call for a fundamental review of control measures for bovine tuberculosis because these depend largely on community requirements and because they have been outstandingly successful in reducing disease to its current very low level. The Department is considering the possible role in our control strategy of a test to detect disease in live badgers. It is not possible to say when this process will be complete because it depends on continuing scientific studies.

Disadvantaged Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the *(a)* percentage of the less-favoured areas flock in the severely disadvantaged areas, *(b)* percentage of the less-favoured areas flock in the disadvantaged areas and *(c)* the total less-favoured areas flock in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) England and (iv) Northern Ireland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The information in respect of the number of sheep on which hill livestock compensatory allowances payments were made is as follows:

Year	Scotland			Wales			England			Northern Ireland		
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)
1979	36	—	2,943	34	—	2,805	26	—	2,158	4	—	358
1980	35	—	2,991	34	—	2,890	26	—	2,231	5	—	383
1981	35	—	2,993	34	—	2,946	27	—	2,292	5	—	407
1982	35	—	3,147	34	—	3,011	26	—	2,356	5	—	428
1983	35	—	3,205	34	—	3,058	27	—	2,425	5	—	427
1984	35	—	3,251	33	—	3,102	27	—	2,468	5	—	483
1985	32	(x)	3,335	30	4	3,560	24	3	2,863	5	1	640
1986	32	(x)	3,393	29	5	3,545	24	4	2,958	5	1	714
1987	31	(x)	3,460	29	5	3,755	24	4	3,130	5	2	762
1988	30	1	3,516	28	6	3,873	24	4	3,237	5	2	823
1989	30	1	3,621	28	6	3,986	23	4	3,251	6	2	885
1990	29	1	3,676	27	6	4,141	23	5	3,462	6	2	986
1991	30	1	3,750	27	6	4,137	23	5	3,425	6	2	993
1992[1]	29	1	3,684	28	7	4,219	23	5	3,418	6	2	1,018

Notes:
(a) Percentage of sheep receiving HLCAs at rates applicable in the severely disadvantaged areas (or the corresponding area before the extension of the less favoured area in 1985).
(b) Percentage of sheep receiving HLCAs at rates applicable in the disadvantaged areas.
(c) Total number of sheep ('000) receiving HLCAs.
(x) Less than 0·5 per cent.
Percentage figures may not always total 100 per cent. due to roundings.
[1] Provisional.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received, and what discussions he has had, about continuing CAP reform compensatory payments after CAP reform has been phased in; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The CAP reform agreement reached in May 1992 agreed levels of compensatory payments over a three-year period up to and including the 1995-96 marketing year. In the longer term, I believe that compensation for support price reductions should be phased out over a fixed period.

Live Exports

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what lairage facilities are available at each ferry port to cope with ferry delays caused by adverse weather;

(2) how many officials involved with the inspection of live exports he has at Dover; and what percentage of live animal transporters have been inspected along with the relevant animal health documents since 1 January;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that inspection procedures at each port are carried out by licensed veterinary inspectors according to consistent guidelines;

(4) what facilities his Department has for inspecting live animal exports that use night ferries; and how many staff are on duty.

Mr. Soames: The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 places a duty on the transporter to ensure that suitable arrangements for the care of animals are made in advance of any journey and that the arrangements include plans to deal with any disruptions. In respect of sailings from British ports to ports in other member states, facilities to rest, feed and water animals exist within a reasonable distance of each ferry port in Great Britain.

In the single market, Community law does not permit systematic checks on livestock at the Community's internal frontiers. However, it is entirely in accordance with EC law that checks take place to ensure that animals are healthy and being transported in conditions that protect their welfare. At Dover, state veterinary service (SVS) staff liaise closely with the Dover harbour board animal watch scheme staff who operate a continuous quayside cover. The SVS is also available on a 24-hour basis. For journeys to other member states local veterinary inspectors, appointed by the Government, are required to certify the health of the animals and their fitness to travel. These inspections take place either at the place of origin or where the journey commences.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many late applications for suckler cow premium in respect of 1992 he has received to date.

Mr. Curry: The number of late applications received to date under the 1992 suckler cow premium scheme is 1,181.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agiculture, Fisheries and Food how many late applications were received for suckler cow premium in respect of 1990 and 1991; and how many of these were *(a)* paid in full, *(b)* paid in part and *(c)* refused.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

	1990	*1991*
(a) Paid in full	0	3
(b) Paid in part	149	147
(c) Refused	16	22
Total	165	172

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many suckler cow premium application forms were processed during each month of 1992; and what was *(a)* the shortest period and *(b)* the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim.

Mr. Curry: The number of applications processed in 1992 is as follows:

	Number
January	4,354
February	3,195
March	1,850
April	233
May	92
June	109
July	299
August	440
September	547
October	401
November	1,442
December	4,057

The information on the shortest period and the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Farmers and Farm Workers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of (1) farm workers and (2) farmers in *(a)* less-favoured areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas who (i) also did other jobs or (ii) claimed income support in each year since 1985.

Mr. Curry: The table shows, for 1985, 1987 and 1990 the number of farmers (occupiers) and other family workers on main holdings in less-favoured areas in England who also had other paid work. Data are only available for these years as the source is the EC farm structure survey which is held every two or three years. Separate figures for severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas are not available for 1985. There is no information on farmers or workers claiming income support.

England
Number of persons with other paid work on main holdings within the LFA[1]

	Occupiers[2] *('000)*	*Other family workers*[3] *('000)*
1985		
Total LFA	4·13	5·67
1987		
DA	1·33	2·24
SDA	3·27	5·13
Total LFA	4·60	7·37
1990		
DA	1·56	1·96
SDA	3·77	4·46
Total LFA	5·33	6·42

[1] Sample data only. Figures are subject to sampling error.
[2] Only occupiers who are also manager of the holding.
[3] Other family workers include the occupier's spouse and other workers related to the occupier. Data are not available for non-family hired labour.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of part-time *(a)* farm workers and *(b)* farmers in (i) less-favoured areas, (ii) severely disadvantaged areas and (iii) disadvantaged areas in each year since 1985.

Mr. Curry: The number of part-time *(a)* farm workers and *(b)* farmers in (i) less-favoured areas (ii) severely disadvantaged areas and (iii) disadvantaged areas in England in each year since 1985 is shown in the table.

Numbers of part-time workers and part-time farmers on holdings[1]
in less-favoured areas, severely disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged areas
England

Thousands

	Part-time workers			*Part-time farmers*		
	Less-favoured areas	*Severely disadvantaged areas*	*Disadvantaged areas*	*Less-favoured areas*	*Severely disadvantaged areas*	*Disadvantaged areas*
1986	4·0	2·8	1·2	7·2	5·0	2·2
1987	4·0	2·8	1·2	7·3	5·1	2·2
1988	3·9	2·8	1·2	7·2	5·0	2·3
1989	3·9	2·7	1·2	7·4	5·0	2·4
1990	3·9	2·7	1·2	7·6	5·2	2·4
1991	4·0	2·7	1·3	8·0	5·4	2·6
1992	3·9	2·7	1·2	8·1	5·5	2·7

[1] Including minor holdings.

Source: June agricultural censuses.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Curry: The chief executives of agencies within the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food reply directly to questions on operational matters delegated to their agency in its framework document. Drafts of such letters are not shown to Ministers but Ministers do, of course, have the opportunity to see letters when they are published in *Hansard*.

Eggs

Mr. Spring: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further advice he has on salmonella in eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are today publishing the report of the advisory committee on the microbiological safety of food (ACMSF) on "Salmonella in Eggs". It provides a valuable assessment of the role of eggs as a

source of human salmonella infection, taking account of knowledge gained in the past few years. I am grateful to Professor Heather Dick and her committee for their work.

The committee considers that while eggs must be regarded as an important source of human salmonella infection, the contribution they make to current levels of human salmonellosis cannot be quantified precisely. Only a small percentage of eggs are considered to be contaminated with salmonella enteritidis and studies have shown that the number of organisms they contain when laid is very low. The Committee therefore makes a number of recommendations for the storage and handling of eggs which it believes will help limit the chances of salmonellas multiplying and so further reduce any risk of salmonella infection from eggs. To this end, it recommends that eggs should be consumed within three weeks of lay and that use-by dates should be provided on egg packs and the eggs themselves; that industry and retailers should draw up codes of practice for the shortage and handling of eggs; and that once purchased, eggs should be stored in a refrigerator. The report also advocates the use of pasteurised egg in dishes containing egg which are eaten raw or lightly cooked, and endorses previous advice by the Chief Medical Officer that people should avoid eating raw eggs and vulnerable groups should eat only eggs that have been cooked until the yolk and white are solid.

The Committee noted the decline that had taken place in the number of large commercial egg laying flocks in which salmonella enteritidis infection had been confirmed since control measures were introduced in 1989. It recommends that the Government should review the continuing need for the compulsory slaughter of laying flocks infected with salmonella enteritidis and in consultation with industry, update existing codes of practice for control of salmonella in laying flocks. It also recommends the formation of a liaison team to monitor the industry's progress in reducing the incidence of salmonella in poultry. Finally, it considers that periodic surveys should be undertaken to monitor trends in salmonella infection in eggs and identifies topics for future research.

The publication of the ACMSF report is timely in relation to the recent adoption by the Council of Ministers of the EC Zoonoses Directive (92/117/EEC) laying down harmonised rules for the control of salmonella in poultry. This was an important achievement during the United Kingdom presidency and the Government intend bringing its existing measures for the control of salmonella in poultry into line with those required under the directive as soon as possible. Breeding flocks of domestic fowl comprising 250 or more birds will be required to be tested every two weeks by the owner with official samples being taken every eight weeks. Flocks found to be infected with salmonella enteritidis or salmonella typhimurium would continue to be compulsorily slaughtered. The directive does not include harmonised measures for the control of salmonella in commercial egg laying flocks. Having considered the findings of the ACMSF report the Government consider there is no longer a need to monitor laying flocks and to require the compulsory slaughter of those found to be infected with salmonella enteritidis.

The Government accept the committee's other recommendations and will now consult with industry, consumers and enforcement bodies on their implementation. Detailed proposals for implementing the recommendations of the ACMSF report and for implementing Directive 92/117/EEC are set out in a consultation document which is today being sent to all interested organisations for their comments. A copy of this document together with the ACMSF report, and the Government's response is being placed in the Library of the House. Egg industry and other organisations are already being consulted about possible changes to the EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations which cover date marking and recommendations about storage facilities.

The Government are committed to firm but proportionate action against salmonella. Our approach is based on co-operation of Government, the poultry industry, food manufacturers and retailers and consumers, taking account of the latest expert advice and of developments in the European Community. I believe that this package of proposals provides continued protection for the consumer of egg and egg products while avoiding disproportionate burdens on producers.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Country Houses Association (Exhibition)

Mr. Lord: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Country Houses Association to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 8 to 12 March 1993.

Special Views of Newcastle (Exhibition)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Special Views of Newcastle" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 8 to 12 February 1993.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The chief executives of the agencies for which I am responsible normally reply direct on matters delegated to them. Copies of their replies are brought to Ministers' attention where appropriate.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to reply to Mr. Eric Christopher-Walsh of Modbury, Devon, who wrote to him on 16 November.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter unit replied to Mr. Christopher-Walsh's letter on 7 December 1992. I

have since replied to a follow-up letter from Mr. Christopher-Walsh, and written to my hon. Friend on the matters that it raised.

Charter Programme

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, (Mr. Banks) *Official Report*, 25 January 1993 column *704*, if he will provide a breakdown of the charter unit's spending in 1991-92.

Mr. Waldegrave: During 1991-92 the charter unit spent £1·6 million on the following:

	£
The launch of the Citizen's Charter, including producing, publicising and distributing the Citizen's Charter White Paper (Cm 1599) and the Guide to the Citizen's Charter	916,000
The launch of 1992 Charter Mark scheme	320,000
Staff, general administrative expenses and capital expenditure	364,000

Science and Technology

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Government expect to publish their White Paper on the future of science and technology in the United Kingdom; what will be the consultation period for that White Paper; and what will be its remit.

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper will set out the Government's policy on science, technology and engineering. I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) on 7 December at column *466*.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to extend the next steps programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: To date, 76 executive agencies have been launched. The 30 executive units of HM Customs and Excise and the 34 executive offices of the Inland Revenue are also operating fully on next steps lines. Over half the civil service is now working in organisations covered by the programme. A further 29 activities employing almost 70,000 civil servants have been identified as candidates for executive agency status. It is my aim that by the end of this year all the candidates for agency status will have been identified. These candidates will be announced to the House by the appropriate departmental Minister in due course. It is my expectation that by mid 1995 around 75 per cent. of the civil service will be working in organisations operating on next steps lines.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a charter setting the maximum period for Government Departments to reply to letters from *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* constituents.

Mr. Waldegrave: Each Department has set its own target for replying to hon. Members' correspondence. A table showing performance against targets for 1991 was published on 3 August 1992, *Official Report*, column *711*; a similar table showing ministerial correspondence in 1992 will be published shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Generation (Costs)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has received the study on the costs of nuclear generation commissioned from Ernst and Young as part of the coal review.

Mr. Eggar: A copy of this report was sent to the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee yesterday, and a copy of the accompanying letter together with copies of the report, but without its commercially confidential material, has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses today.

Civil Servants (Performance Payments)

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to make provision for civil servants to be eligible for bonus performance payments for their work in promoting successfully the programme of deregulation throughout Whitehall.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Civil servants promoting the programme of deregulation are eligible for payments under a departmental scheme which allows the award of special bonuses for exceptional performance.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek to ensure that in future a publicly announced compliance cost assessment will be obligatory when announcing new Government regulations.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since 1986 the Government have placed a general requirement on all departments to prepare and publish compliance cost assessments (CCAs) when developing proposals likely to affect business. Draft CCAs feature increasingly in consultation between Government and business. We are reinforcing our commitment to the CCA process. From now on, as agreed at the Prime Minister's seminar on 2 February 1993, there is a more stringent requirement that a CCA must be published alongside any Government legislative proposals having an impact on business.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement giving details of the progress being made in promoting deregulation throughout the Government.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by the Prime Minister on Thursday 4 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *470*, in which he outlined the conclusions of his seminar on 2 February. My Department is pressing ahead with the arrangements for the review of the 7,000 regulations which impact on business. We have issued guidance throughout Whitehall on compliance cost assessment, and are instituting arrangements to ensure

that these are published for all measures which impact on business. We are beginning to see evidence of success in decisions to review regulatory proposals to minimise the burden these impose on business.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the Government's deregulation programme to include the requirement of a publicly announced risk assessment when announcing new Government regulations.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: We are encouraging the wider use of risk assessment techniques in determining the need for regulation. This is to ensure that problems are correctly defined and the measures proposed to deal with them are correctly targeted and in proportion. We shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Coal Industry (Report)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask he President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the report on the coal industry prepared by European public policy advisers for the European Parliament and given to him on 14 January.

Mr. Eggar: I understand the report is a factual summary of the Community coal industry. The report is, however, a matter for the European Parliament.

Owners Abroad (Takeover)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed take over bid by Airtours for Owners Abroad.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading is currently investigating this proposed merger and he will advise the President of the Board of Trade in due course. A decision on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be taken once that advice is received.

Colliery Closures (Job Losses)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for Scotland, Wales and England the number of jobs lost through colliery closures since June 1987, the total number of registered unemployed in the constituencies concerned from June 1987 and December 1992 and the percentage changes.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given in the table:

	Registered unemployed in constituencies where collieries have closed		*Change*	*Jobs lost through colliery closures since*
	June 1987	*December 1992*	*Per cent.*	*June 1987*
England	158,405	136,791	−13·6	22,530
Wales	32,657	26,912	−17·6	5,072
Scotland	23,526	17,752	−25·4	2,180

Sources:
Employment data—Department of Employment NOMIS database.
Job losses due to colliery closures—British Coal.

Notes:
1. The constituencies listed are those where closures of coal mines have been identified. Colliery employees would not necessarily have resided in the same constituency.
2. The number of jobs lost through colliery closures may not reflect jobs lost in the run-down prior to closure.
3. The figures do not include reductions in employment at coal mines which remain open.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if staff can be transferred or seconded between central policy divisions and agencies without internal recharges.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

CONVER Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the CONVER programme of the EC has been approved; whether the United Kingdom Government have given it approval; and what total sum in pound sterling and ecu has been recommended for the programme by the European Commission.

Mr. Sainsbury: At the instigation of the European Parliament 130 million ecu (about £100m) was entered into the European Community budget for 1993 for a programme to be called CONVER to assist regions affected by the decline in the armaments industry and the closure of military bases. The Government will give careful consideration to the Commission's proposals for the implementation of this programme when they are received.

Electricity

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Office of Fair Trading will review the retail activities of the regional electricity companies; and when the Office of Fair Trading last reported to him on this matter.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Office of Fair Trading is currently reviewing the retail activities of the regional electricity companies in conjunction with the Office of Electricity Regulation (OFFER) in response to a complaint from a major competitor. The Director General of Fair Trading made a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) in 1982 about the direction and management by the London Electricity Board of its business of retailing domestic electrical goods, spare parts and ancillary goods. The MMC reported to the President of the Board of Trade in March 1983.

Coal

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount of coal won by opencast means that was used for blending with deep mine coal to provide coal of an overall quality acceptable to customers for each of the years since 1983; and if he will express this in absolute terms and as a percentage of total United Kingdom coal production.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry routinely publishes figures for total production of deep-mined and opencast coal in "Energy Trends", but the amounts used for blending are an operational matter for coal producers including British Coal.

Engineering Employers Federation

165. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for a meeting with the Engineering Employers Federation to discuss industrial policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North East (Mr. Leighton) on 8 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *451*.

Business Names Act

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those business names he has approved under the Business Names Act 1985 to include either of the words university or polytechnic.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The following business names including the words "University" or "Polytechnic" have been approved under the Business Names Act 1985:

University Holidays
Liverpool University China Business Consultancy
Somerset University
Eula Wesley University USA

ECGD

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the extra £700 million made available for the Export Credits Guarantee Department in 1992 has been allocated.

Mr. Needham: The additional £700 million announced in the autumn statement increased ECGD's capacity to give new commitments of cover. Of the £200 million allocated to the current financial year, nearly half has been used and ECGD anticipate that it will be fully utilised. As the cover relates to the provision of new commitments all of the £500 million allocated to 1993-94 remains available.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department's review of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for Lithuania will be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: ECGD keeps its position on Lithuania under constant review. However, it is not yet considered appropriate to introduce medium-term export credit cover.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Eggar: The practice in my Department is for agency chief executives to send substantive replies direct by letter to written parliamentary questions on matters which have been delegated to them. A copy of the chief executive's letter is generally submitted to Ministers when they consider the written answer.

Wood Products

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been for each year since 1979, *(a)* the total volume of and *(b)* the proportion of total export income represented by export of wood products.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the following table. Volume information is not available.

Value of exports of wood products as a proportion of value of total exports

	Per cent.
1979	0·63
1980	0·56
1981	0·48
1982	0·48
1983	0·47
1984	0·46
1985	0·48
1986	0·49
1987	0·51
1988	0·43
1989	0·42
1990	0·46
1991	0·47

Note: Wood products are defined as the principal products of class 46 *less* group 466 of the Standard Industrial Classification.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the advice received by the Nature Conservancy Council and its successor bodies in respect of oil exploitation adjacent to the Bristol Channel, Cardigan Bay, Lyme Bay, Portland Bill, Moray Firth and the Wash; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Lady to the response that I gave to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 28 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *822*.

Environmental Technology

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for how long his Department's environmental technology innovation scheme has been in existence; what is its budget for the current financial year; and what its budget will be in the next financial year.

Mr. Eggar: The environmental technology innovation scheme was launched by DTI and DoE in October 1990 for a three-year period.

Forecast expenditure on DTI's element of the scheme in the current financial year is £1·59 million. The budget allocation for the next financial year has not yet been finalised.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies and organisations which have applied for financial assistance from the environmental technology innovation scheme; how many applications were granted; what was the grant paid for each scheme; how many applications were rejected; and what was the reason for refusal of assistance, in each case.

Mr. Eggar: The environmental technology innovation scheme has attracted 503 initial first stage applications of which 101 have been rejected. To list the companies which have applied and the reasons for rejecting individual applicants would incur disproportionate costs and disclose information which is commercially confidential. However, all applications are considered carefully by my Department's technical consultants and appraised according to their ability to meet the scheme criteria.

One hundred and nineteen applicants have been invited by my Department to submit more detailed second stage proposals, and 141 by the Department of the Environment. Of those who have submitted proposals, the following have been awarded grant:

	Grant £
Companies awarded ETIS grant by DTI	
Pollution Control and Measurement Ltd.	58,025
Steel Castings Research and Trade Association	295,500
British Glass Manufacturers Confederation	100,500
Anaplast Ltd.	835,120
British Ceramic Research Ltd.	51,500
Keele University	148,900
British Ceramic Research Ltd.	43,142
M Squared Technology Ltd.	119,550
Fuel and Combustion Technology Ltd.	268,900
University of Southampton	323,050
Rover Group	576,090
Kalsep Ltd.	140,250
Total	2,960,527
Companies awarded ETIS grant by DoE	
Alpha Process Controls (International) Ltd.	24,186
University of Leeds	202,789
John Ashworth and Partners	140,890
Autotype International Ltd.	136,337
UKAEA Industrial Technology	264,450
BHR Group Ltd.	289,450
Coates Lorilleux International	211,375
Ciba-Geigy Dyestuffs and Chemicals	206,570
Manchester Airport plc	56,085
PERA International	80,000
Pilkington Insulation Ltd.	42,725
Marston Bentley Ltd.	23,000
ICI Paints	77,550
Shipowners Refrigerated Cargo Research Association Ltd.	14,880
Total	1,770,287

The remaining applicants have either withdrawn, transferred to other schemes or been asked to provide more information.

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for the last year for which figures are available, how many collieries produced coal which sold for, on average *(a)* below £35 per tonne, *(b)* between £35–£40, *(c)* £41-£45 and *(d)* £45-£50; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

Furniture (Safety)

Ms. Lynne: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the implications of the use of second-hand furniture by the Salvation Army and other charities following publication of his guidelines on fire safety.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* The fire resistance requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended in 1989) which will come into force for secondhand upholstered furniture on 1 March 1993, and apply only to transactions involving the "supply" of furniture which takes place "in the course of business" within the meaning of section 46 of that Act. In my Department's view, the simple distribution of secondhand furniture by a charity, in pursuance of its charitable objectives, either free of charge or at a nominal cost only would be unlikely to constitute a supply in the course of business. Shops selling furniture to raise funds for charitable purposes would constitute a business activity.

It is also my Department's view that the furniture regulations do not apply to furniture used, for example, in Salvation Army hostels. However, guidelines for the fire safety of multiple occupancy premises have been issued by the Department of the Environment. My Department has also published two guidance documents—one for suppliers of domestic upholstered furniture, and the other aimed at consumers—explaining the requirements of the furniture regulations and the level of fire protection they provide. These give useful information and the Department would expect that charities will be guided by the fire safety considerations in the interests of those whom they assist.

My Department strongly advises that any charity should discuss its particular position with its legal advisers in the light of all the circumstances of its operation.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account his Department has taken of the "Guide to Compliance Cost Assessment" published by the deregulation unit in relation to the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 concerning the letting of furnished accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* The compliance cost assessment for the draft amendment regulations was prepared in accordance with the guide to compliance cost assessment published by the deregulation unit and was made available for comment by consultees.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many responses he has had from the self-catering industry on the cost to individual businesses of implementing the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1992; and when he expects to complete his consultations on the regulations.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* Some 30 consultees from the self-catering industry made comments about the costs to individual businesses. The period for consultation on the draft amendment

regulations has been completed and the amendment regulations will be laid before Parliament in the near future.

Small Firms

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the measures taken since 1979 to support small firms.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 29 January 1993]:* The measures of support for small firms operated by my Department, together with the original dates of commencement, are as follows:

- the Enterprise Initiative Consultancy Scheme (commenced January 1988);
- the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme (commenced June 1981);
- the Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (commenced early 1988);
- Support for Products Under Research (commenced February 1991);
- Regional Enterprise Grants (commenced April 1988);
- the Export Marketing Research Scheme (commenced 1969);
- Your Business Success (commenced August 1987);
- Graduate Enterprise (commenced November 1985);

My Department also provides funding for development work which aims to benefit small firms and produces a wide range of publications aimed at small businesses.

In 1985 the Government launched the deregulation initiative which aims to reduce burdens on business, particularly small firms.

During 1993 my Department will start support for up to 15 pilot schemes which will provide businesses with a single point of access to information and advice.

From April 1993 my Department will take over responsibility from the Employment Department for funding training and enterprise councils (TECs) to provide a wide range of business support services to help small businesses.

In addition, small businesses can, of course, take advantage of other business support programmes provided for firms of all sizes and by other Departments.

For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food runs the farm and conservation grants scheme, which provides grants for renewal or replacement of certain capital items to eligible businesses.

Under the action for cities initiative, the Department of the Environment provides grants and loans to eligible small businesses for a variety of purposes.

The Defence Research Agency, an agency owned by the Ministry of Defence, recently launched "Pathfinder" which encourages industry to come forward with research proposals that meet both the Ministry's needs and firms' own research priorities.

The Rural Development Commission provides assistance to small businesses in certain geographical areas. For example, grants are available to eligible businesses in priority locations for converting disused and redundant buildings into premises for providing jobs, or for ensuring that the infrastructure is adequate for work space; and small amounts of grant are also available for marketing consultancy and for attending trade shows and exhibitions.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Garrett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the voluntary testing scheme for smoke detectors containing radioactive isotopes imported from third world countries.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* I have no plans for changing in the immediate future present arrangements for the National Radiological Protection Board's testing of smoke detectors containing radioactive isotopes.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, col. *58* relating to state aid to the electricity supply industry, if he will give details of the state aid to the energy sector within the United Kingdom as notified to the European Commission.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The energy sector in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the electricity sector in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Within my right hon. Friend's responsibilities, a number of arrangements have been notified to the Commission under the provisions of EC competition law since 1973. Arrangements notified in the course of the electricity privatisation exercise specifically include the state aid inherent in the fossil fuel levy.

Directors (Conduct)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many reports and complaints of the unfit conduct of directors were submitted to the insolvency service in 1991 and 1992; and how many disqualification orders against directors were made in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The figures requested by the hon. Member are:

	1991	*1992*
Unfitted conduct reports	5,747	6,607
Disqualification orders made	317	409

The figures are not comparable on a year by year basis because of the interval between receipt of an unfitted report and the making, in appropriate cases, of a disqualification order.

Owners Abroad (Airtours Bid)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the possible referral of the bid by Airtours for Owners Abroad to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Director General of Fair Trading is currently investigating this proposed merger and he will advise the President of the Board of Trade in due course. A decision on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be taken once that advice is received.

Springram Ltd.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much grant assistance has been paid to Springram Ltd. for the construction of the new factory at the Euroway estate in Bradford.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* Details of grant assistance for investment projects are treated as commercial in confidence. However, grants of over £75,000 are normally published in the *Employment Gazette*, together with a brief description of the project, in the quarter following the first payment.

Hospital Radio

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what recent discussions he has had with the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations about the allocation of a freely radiating FM frequency for use by hospital radios; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the findings of the hospital radio trial at Radio Redhill to evaluate the possibility of a freely radiating FM frequency for hospital radio use;

(3) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's proposals to allow hospital radios future access to freely radiating FM frequencies to provide radio services to individual hospitals.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave on 2 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *60-61*. I hope to be able to see the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations in the near future to discuss my Department's involvement in the work of the Radio Authority to evaluate the technical feasibility of hospital radio.

The Redhill experiment showed that although it may be technically feasible to deliver an effective freely radiating FM service within a particular hospital, depending on the nature of the site to be served, signal overspill beyond the site could be significant.

The Radio Authority has the responsibility to determine the priority to give to hospital radio among other possible uses of the radio frequencies available for independent sound broadcasting.

Small Businesses

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the measures he is taking to assist small businesses and individual traders in the light of the current economic climate.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* My Department operates the following measures of support:

the Enterprise Initiative Consultancy Scheme;
the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme;
the Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology;
Support for Products under Research;
Regional Enterprise Grants;
the Export Marketing Research Scheme;
Your Business Success;
Graduate Enterprise;

My Department also provides funding for development work which aims to benefit small firms and individual traders and produces a wide range of publications.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has been charged by the Prime Minister with driving forward a new initiative to cut red tape across Whitehall. The aim of this work is to cut significantly the burdens on business of all sizes, but especially small businesses.

During 1993 my Department will start support for up to 15 pilot schemes which will provide businesses with a single point of access to information and advice.

From April 1993 my Department will take over responsibility from the Employment Department for funding training and enterprise councils (TECs) to provide a wide range of business support services to help small business.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The following consultants have been used at a total cost of £308,000.

Capita Management Consultancy
Coopers and Lybrand
SRU

These private sector consultancies have served to strengthen the Department's market testing capability.

Business Expansion Scheme (Shipping Companies)

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each grant awarded under the business expansion scheme to shipping companies which have subsequently flagged out and replaced British crews with non-British crews.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The BES provides tax relief for investors and not grants for companies. Information about particular companies in respect of which BES relief has been given is not available.

DEFENCE

Contractors (West Midlands)

11. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the defence procurement budget for the last available year was spent on contractors based in the west midlands.

Mr. Aitken: We estimate that, in 1990-91, about £450 million was paid to contractors based in the west midlands for defence equipment.

Job Transfers

12. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to relocate some additional MoD civilian jobs to Imphal barracks, York, to make use of the office space occupied currently by Army manning and records staff prepared for relocation to Glasgow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The proposal to establish a new Army personnel centre in Glasgow is the subject of consultation with the trade unions. In the event that we proceed with this proposal all personnel will be offered the possibility to tranfer to Glasgow at public expense. Every effort will be made to find employment for those unable or unwilling to transfer, at other Ministry of Defence

establishments or with other Government Departments in the area. Other defence uses of the site will be considered once a final decision has been taken.

Yugoslavia

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of United Kingdom operations in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The additional cost of participation to date amounts to some £60 million. The cost of peacekeeping operations will be met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

24. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the United Kingdom contribution to the UN relief operation in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: As I said in the House on 14 January, we are committed to continuing our contribution to the United Nations humanitarian effort so long as conditions on the ground permit.

Dockyards

14. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Her Majesty's Government expect to make an announcement on the future of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Rifkind: It is not yet possible to make an announcement on where the refitting of Trident submarines will take place.

We have received offers from Devonport Management Limited and from Babcock Thorn Limited for developing facilities for nuclear refitting at Devonport dockyard and Rosyth dockyard respectively. We are at present concerned that the prices quoted in the offers may significantly understate the likely eventual cost of the work. Before we can decide between them we need to be absolutely sure that we can be confident of the prices quoted. We are not yet in this position.

We shall be scrutinising these offers, and studying other related matters further, before coming to a final decision, which we hope to do as soon as possible.

17. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Rosyth naval dockyard.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's aim is to achieve a healthy competitive structure to ensure that the future interests of the taxpayer are safeguarded. The Royal Navy will have a continuing and substantial programme of refit work for its surface fleet of frigates, destroyers, carriers, mine counter measure vessels and other ships, as well as its submarine fleet. Although the private shipbuilders can and will continue to do some refit work, they of themselves cannot ensure effective competition. It is through competition that refit prices will provide the best value to the Royal Navy and protect the taxpayer.

As I indicated to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), the prices quoted in the tenders for nuclear refitting at Rosyth and Devonport may significantly understate the likely eventual cost of the work. The scope and nature of nuclear refitting work are such that it must be allocated to one dockyard. However, for the reasons of competition in other work which I have described, we plan to continue with two royal dockyards.

Transport of Forces

15. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the armed services in transporting forces speedily to any area.

Mr. Aitken: Recent operations have confirmed that our armed forces have the ability to move speedily to any area.

Royal Irish Regiment

16. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current complement for the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment; and what were the corresponding figures for the previous three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For security reasons it is not our practice to disclose the complement of any regiment in the British Army however, as at 1 December 1992 the strength for the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment (home service) was 136 officers and 2,618 soldiers.

Corresponding figures for 1 December 1991 were 147 officers and 2,855 soldiers, for 1 December 1990, 148 officers and 2,939 soldiers, and for 1 December 1989, 154 officers and 3,283 soldiers.

Defence Lands

18. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he intends to take to improve the management of defence lands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The general arrangements for managing the Defence Estate are working well, but we are always looking for improvements. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence has set in hand a management review.

United Nations Operations

19. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British service personnel are currently involved in United Nations operations worldwide.

Mr. Rifkind: As at 1 February there were 3,570 British service men participating in United Nations operations world wide, making us the second largest troop contributor to the United Nations. This figure excludes those operating in association with United Nations operations, such as the Royal Naval presence in the Adriatic and the Royal Air Force contribution to Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.

"Options for Change"

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the implication of implementing "Options for Change" for service establishments in Wiltshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some measures have already been announced for establishments in Wiltshire; any further changes will be announced as soon as decisions have been taken.

North Atlantic Treaty Alliance

21. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the future role of NATO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The basis of the alliance's future security policy was set out in the strategic concept issued by the NATO heads of state at a summit in Rome in November 1991. The principles it contains will shape the further development of the alliance's defence policy, operational concepts and force posture.

Trident

22. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of defence expenditure is taken up by the Trident programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme is expected to absorb, on average, less than 2·5 per cent. of the defence budget over its procurement period. The Government consider that Trident represents a highly cost-effective contribution to deterrence.

Nuclear Test Veterans

23. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will meet a delegation of hon. Members to discuss compensation for nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes, but I see no advantage in doing so until the National Radiological Protection Board has published its updated study. The evidence available to date shows that the total incidence of death and malignant disease among nuclear test veterans has been no worse than among the population in general.

Royal Navy (Amphibious Capability)

25. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current state of plans to maintain the Royal Navy's amphibious capability.

27. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve the capability of the Royal Navy to conduct amphibious operations.

Mr. Aitken: Evaluation of tenders for the new landing platform helicopter vessel, received in October, will be complete this summer. An order would be dependent upon the outcome of our evaluation of tenders and the competing demands within the defence programme at the time. On completion of project definition studies, invitations to tender are planned to be issued for the first of the replacement assault ships. Design studies are under way for the refurbishment and re-equipment of the three older landing ships logistic.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

26. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Queen Elizabeth military hospital will become available to the national health service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital is being considered as part of a wider review of service hospital requirements, and I am not yet in a position to announce the outcome of the review.

Defence Exports

28. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by his Department in matters relating to defence exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: In 1993-94 the following staff funded by my Department will be employed on matters relating to defence exports:

	Staff
Export assistance to industry	271
Export policy and control	45

In addition, a further 254 staff will be employed on project management activities financed by overseas customers.

European Fighter Aircraft

29. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Aitken: The agreement reached by the Defence Ministers of the four partner nations on 10 December means the development of a new fighter, to be known as Eurofighter 2000, will go ahead, though with some changes to adapt the design to the new international situation and to make it affordable to all four partner nations. Deliveries to the RAF are planned to commence in 2000. Officials of the four nations are now discussing with the contractors the precise programme and specification changes necessary to give effect to the ministerial decision.

"Options for Change"

30. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many compulsory and voluntary redundancies have so far occurred in the armed forces as a result of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1993, 5,969 service personnel have been selected for redundancy so far, as a result of our restructuring plans for the armed forces. Apart from 227 officers and 127 non-commissioned personnel, all of these redundancies are voluntary.

RAF Greenham Common

Mrs. Chaplin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of RAF Greenham Common; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following the withdrawal of the United States forces from RAF Greenham Common last year, and after careful consideration of potential alternative defence uses, we have decided that we have no long-term requirement for the bulk of the site. With the exception of a few small enclaves, which we shall have to retain for the time being due to inspection obligations under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty, the site will be disposed of.

Discussions have started with the local authorities to establish a strategy for the sale of the site in accordance with the normal planning process. As part of this process we will seek to agree the nature of any development of the site although we envisage that existing open space will be preserved for public amenity.

In addition, we shall seek to return specific assets for the benefit of the local community as quickly as possible. In this connection, we anticipate selling the school complex

and Greenham Lodge, with its associated outbuildings, after consultations with the appropriate local authorities. Although we will retain the housing stock associated with the airfield, the surplus barrack block accommodation at Greenham Close is available for sale to meet local housing needs.

Some minor defence activities will occasionally take place at the site until it is sold and the security of the airfield will be maintained for the time being although we hope to introduce arrangements to allow public access as soon as possible.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Aitken: When agency chief executives write to a Member in response to a parliamentary question, which falls within their area of responsibility, they are authorised to do so direct and do not submit drafts to Ministers. A copy of the letter will be passed to the Minister's private office as it goes out.

Departmental Library

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a book, the title of which has been supplied to him by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Aitken: A copy of the book was obtained on 25 January 1993 and is held in the Ministry of Defence library.

HMS Valiant

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on refitting HMS Valiant.

Mr. Aitken: The total estimated cost of refitting work on HMS Valiant (including the current docking and essential defects period) since the introduction of commercial management into the dockyards, in April 1987, is £90 million.

Refitting expenditure prior to April 1987 could be identified accurately only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the deployment of HMS Valiant.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Valiant is currently undergoing routine repairs at Rosyth. It is not our practice to disclose details of the operational deployment of Royal Navy submarines.

Lynx Helicopter

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many attack helicopter aircraft he plans to procure to replace the Lynx.

Mr. Aitken: We recently announced that the invitation to tender for the attack helicopter competition had been issued to potential bidders. The number of aircraft eventually purchased will depend upon the capabilities and effectiveness of the system offered by the successful bidder as well as its affordability.

TRANSPORT

Car Crash, M40

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were in the two cars involved in the crash on the road from Bicester to the M40 at 6 pm on Sunday 10 January; how many wore seat belts; and how many survived.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The accident is being investigated by Thames Valley police. Preliminary reports indicate that there were four people in one car and three people in the other; that six people were wearing seat belts; and that six people survived the accident.

A49-465 Bypass

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department's current assessment of the comparative construction costs of the A49-465 Hereford bypass *(a)* published route and *(b)* western alternative route 1C and the cost assessment stated by his Department in public inquiry document 11/3 on route 1C; if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the components of the cost assessments in each case; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what number of farms would suffer from severance under *(a)* the published route for the A49-A465 bypass and *(b)* the western alternative route 1C; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he received from English Nature and its predecessor organisations concerning the relative merits of the A49-465 Hereford bypass eastern or western routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on Friday 5 February 1993, Vol. 218, column *390*.

Bridges (Grouted Duct Tendons)

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy in respect of the use of grouted duct tendons as part of box-girder bridges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department announced on 25 September 1992 that until new standards are available no new bridges using grouted duct post-tensioned prestressed concrete will be commissioned. The announcement covered all types of this form of bridge construction including concrete box-girder bridges.

Bridges which are already being designed are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis and decisions taken whether to continue with the design of the bridge as a post-tensioned structure. Those bridges at an advanced stage of design or under construction when the announcement was made are continuing, although where necessary additional quality control is being adopted during their construction.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to introduce an MOT compliance standard on vehicle emissions based on manufacturers' own conformity of production standards.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: An amendment to the EC roadworthiness directive made last year means that emissions standards may be based either on vehicle manufactures' stated maximum limits or on fixed common limits. This directive will take effect on 1 January next year for vehicles with conventional petrol engines, 1 January 1996 for vehicles with diesel engines and 1 January 1997 for petrol-engined vehicles with catalytic converters. I will consider the hon. Member's suggestion and the Department will consult interested parties with draft regulations implementing the directive.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to bring forward proposals for additional powers to his Department's vehicle inspectorate to enable them *(a)* to make a visual assessment of smoking vehicles in use on roads and *(b)* to impose a legal requirement on vehicle owners of a detected smoking vehicle to have the vehicle checked at an MOT testing station following detection.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The vehicle inspectorate's examiners already have the power to assess smoke from a vehicle stopped at a roadside check and to prohibit the use of that vehicle if the smoke is excessive. Such a prohibition can be cleared only when an examiner is satisfied that the emission of smoke has been reduced to an acceptable level and this may require that the vehicle is first inspected at a testing station.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many instances of vehicles emitting excess smoke were reported to each of his Department's area offices during each of the last three years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This information is available for the period from 1 April 1991:

Traffic area	*1991-92*	[1]*1992-93*
South Eastern and Metropolitan	636	468
North Western	154	178
Scottish	36	41
North Eastern	86	114
West Midland and South Wales	114	156
Eastern	159	172
Western	298	949
TOTAL	1,483	2,078

[1] April to December.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action has been taken to date *(a)* to publicise his Department's area offices to whom complaints on vehicles emitting excessive smoke should be made, including contact names and telephone numbers and *(b)* to publicise the courses of action open to his Department to deal with such complaints.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department of the Environment's leaflet "Wake up to what you can do for the environment", issued in 1990, gave advice on how members of the public could help to tackle environmental nuisance, including reporting excessively smoking vehicles to traffic area offices. We hope that a separate leaflet dealing specifically with smoky vehicles will be issued shortly. This will include the addresses and telephone numbers of the relevant offices and it will also outline what follow-up action is taken in response to complaints.

Incident Detection and Signalling Technology

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to date to secure that *(a)* the motorway network and *(b)* the trunk road network in the United Kingdom are equipped with automatic incident detection and signalling technology.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: With only minor exceptions the motorway network in England is equipped with signals. The provision of signalling technology on all purpose trunk roads is governed by safety-related needs.

The installation of automatic incident detection and signalling on sections of motorway where traffic flows are heavy has been approved in principle and a programme for installation is being identified. I have no plans to provide automatic incident detection and signalling technology on all-purpose trunk roads.

A21 (Report)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report from East Sussex county council on the A21.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: East Sussex county council has submitted its report on the study into possible need for further improvements to the A21 trunk road within the county and we are now considering it.

"Good Roads Guide"

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he issued the press release announcing the publication of the "Good Roads Guide"; and on what dates a complete copy of the "Good Roads Guide" was *(a)* placed in the Library and *(b)* placed on sale to the general public.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A press release to announce the launch of the "Good Roads Guide" in England was issued on 6 January 1993.

The "Good Roads Guide" is the name given to a collection of nine United Kingdom advice notes for inclusion in the new United Kingdom design manual for roads and bridges. This is a technical publication and copies are not normally deposited in the Library. A limited number of specially bound editions were produced for the press release. These are no longer available.

The nine United Kingdom advice notes will be available for sale to the general public at the end of the month.

London Transport (Capital Investment)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the capital investment at constant prices by *(a)* London Transport and *(b)* London Underground, excluding the Jubilee line extension in 1991-92, 1992-93 and planned for 1993-94 and 1994-95 in the 1991 autumn statement and now proposed for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Norris: The table sets out LT's investment plans following the 1991 autumn statement. The investment budgets for London Transport and London Underground Ltd. in the light of the 1992 autumn statement have not yet been decided.

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
LT total excluding Jubilee line extension	370	650[1]	870	830
LUL total excluding Jubilee line extension	310	580[1]	820	765

[1] Latest outturn forecasts.
All figures at 1992-93 prices.

Goods Vehicles

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement outlining his Department's position on proposals for a common EC motorway usage charge for goods vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such proposals have been made. The Transport Council has, however, been considering a draft directive which among other things sets out the conditions on which individual member states may, if they wish, levy tolls or other user charges on heavy goods vehicles for the use of their motorways. At its last meeting on 21 December the Council was unable to reach any agreement on this draft.

Car Crashes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 February *Official Report*, column *117*, on injury crashes, if he will express the estimates as incidence rates.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Comparable injury accident rates for drivers aged 17, 18 and 19 in relation to the number of full and provisional car driving licence holders in 1991 within these age groups, are available only for Northern Ireland and Great Britain and are shown in the table:

Accident Rates
(Per 100 driving licence holders within each age group)
Accident Rates: Full and Provisional Licence Holders

Age	Northern Ireland	Great Britain
17	1·3	2·7
18	1·9	2·8
19	1·9	2·3
Total (17 to 19)	1·8	2·6

It would have been preferable to calculate rates in relation to mileage, which is a better measure of exposure to risk than numbers of licence holders, but this information is not available.

Variable Message Signs

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are currently undertaken by his Department to enhance the usage of variable message signs on the motorway network and non-motorway road network in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The use of variable message signs on English motorways and all-purpose trunk roads has increased in recent years, most notably around the Manchester and Birmingham conurbations. A new design of motorway signal incorporating a variable message capability has been trialled on the M25 and approved for installation on all English motorways that are to be widened to dual four lanes.

My Department is preparing to install a traffic management VMS scheme on roads in Kent comprising the M20 and M26 from the M25 to Folkestone and the A2/M2/A2 route from Dartford—M25—to Dover. Further applications for use of VMS are being considered.

Motorways (Productivity Targets)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to *(a)* establish clear productivity targets for each United Kingdom motorway and *(b)* appoint network managers for individual motorways or groups of motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Motorway performance depends on a wide range of factors, including particularly the traffic volumes at the time, maintenance requirements and accidents. Investment is carefully targeted to produce maximum return in reducing delay and accidents, subject to full environmental appraisal. The economic assessment of English motorway schemes continues to produce an overall benefit-to-cost ratio of 2·6:1.

The growing pressures of managing the network of motorways and other trunk roads in England were recognised in the reorganisation of responsibility within my Department in 1990 when regional network management divisions were established.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to establish a target date for all motorways in the United Kingdom to be wholly lit.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not planned to light the whole of the motorway network in England. Lighting is provided, subject to environmental appraisal, where it can be justified on safety grounds, taking account of the savings in night-time accidents.

Concessionary Rail Travel

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *869*, if he will list the number of dependants in each of the categories of people listed in his answer who receive *(a)* free unrestricted travel and *(b)* restricted concessionary travel.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that no recipients of British Rail staff travel facilities have unrestricted free travel on BR train services. All concessionary arrangements exclude specific services which are subject to heavy public demand.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those categories of people entitled to concessionary *(a)* unlimited first-class travel, *(b)* restricted first-class and second-class travel and *(c)* second-class travel on British Rail services, stating the number in each category and the annual total cost.

Mr. Freeman: The figures requested are not readily available. However, it is estimated that approximately 5 per cent. of British Rail staff are granted first-class travel facilities, excluding use only for specific services subject to heavy public demand.

Garage Equipment

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require garage proprietors to maintain air lines and pressure gauges in good working order.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Although it is important that correct tyre pressures are maintained, a new regulatory or other requirement on garage proprietors could not be justified.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Two consultancy advisory commissions have been awarded at a total cost of £26,650 plus VAT.

Mr. R. C. D. Walker, ICI Specialties, was appointed as a consultant to advise on the Department's proposed market testing and contracting-out programme. The appointment commenced on 31 January 1992 and was completed by 31 March 1992.

CSL Group Ltd. was appointed to provide advice for certain customers of the Driver, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology Agency in preparation for changed contractual arrangements resulting from the privatisation of DVOIT. The appointment commenced on 22 January 1993.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to publish the details of the access and charging regime that will apply under his proposals for the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: We have today published a document entitled "Gaining Access to the Railway". Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much expenditure he intends to incur under the provisions of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Act 1993 in preparation for rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: None.

British Rail Timetable

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who will be responsible for maintaining services covered by table 51 in the current BR timetable under his proposals for the railways; whether a national railway timetable will be published twice a year as at present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Following privatisation it will be for the franchising director to specify the passenger services to be provided by franchisees. His specification will be based on the timetable being operated by British Rail prior to franchising. BR will continue to run passenger services until they have been franchised. Railtrack will be required to ensure the publication of a national timetable. We expect that the frequency of publication will coincide with major timetable changes.

Paddington-Fishguard Rail Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with *(a)* his opposite number in the Irish Republic and *(b)* the EC Transport Commissioner in relation to the timing of rail passenger services from Paddington to Fishguard.

Mr. Freeman: I have discussed transport links between the island of Ireland and Great Britain with Ministers of the Irish Republic and the EC Transport Commissioner on a number of occasions. These discussions have not, however, included such detailed matters as the timing of individual rail passenger services.

MV Braer (Oil Spillage)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received arising out of the MV Braer oil incident on the desirability of establishing a tanker exclusion zone.

Mr. Norris: A number of representations have been received calling for tanker exclusion zones in certain areas. This will be covered by Lord Donaldson in his inquiry which in its terms of reference will give due consideration to the international implications of any measures.

Night Flights

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the total number of night flights permitted at Heathrow and Gatwick in the past winter and summer; and what number would be permitted in 1993-94 under the proposals in the recent consultation paper *(a)* on the assumption that airlines use the same mix of aircraft as in the past year and *(b)* on the assumption that airlines choose to use quieter aircraft one quota lower than in the past year and assuming also that in the unlimited zero-rated category there are an additional 25 landings plus 25 take-offs per night; and if he will indicate in each case whether the average volume of noise per year will be greater or less than in the past year.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not specify the total number of aircraft that may operate at night at Heathrow and Gatwick. Under the present night restrictions, the noisiest aircraft are not allowed to operate at night except for a small number of delayed departures. The less noisy aircraft may operate subject to quotas, but some aircraft are exempt. At Gatwick, the quotas were 2,250 movements for winter 1991-92 and 5,190 for summer 1992. At Heathrow, the quotas were 3,000 for winter 1991-92 and 2,750 for summer 1992.

The new quota levels proposed for the next five years in the consultation paper are designed to keep the overall noise levels below those in 1988. If the proposed new quotas were used by aircraft counting 1 or more under the new system, in the same mix as flew in summer 1992, the proposed summer quota of 9,000 for Gatwick would translate into 4,900 movements and 7,000 for Heathrow would translate into 2,550 movements. In addition to aircraft currently exempt, there would have been about 1,200 movements at Gatwick during the summer season by zero-rated aircraft—about six a night—and about 400 at Heathrow—about two a night. Even though the mix of aircraft using the new quotas may change, overall noise levels should not get worse.

M62

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the widening of the M62, junctions 14 to 17, included in the national roads investment plans for 1993-94 is intended to form part of the proposed greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. This widening will bring early, but short-term, relief to this busy motorway. Long-term relief would be provided by the proposed greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his assessment of the environmental hazards involved in the transport of radioactive materials by air, assuming a worst-case scenario of an aircraft carrying the highest permitted level of radioactive materials crashing on a main population centre; and what contingency plans are in place to deal with such an emergency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* In its report to the Secretary of State in 1988, the Advisory Committee for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material estimated that the consequence of a super-severe accident resulting from a plane crash in a suburban area—1,400 people/km^2—would result in a mean value of very much less than one fatal cancer in 50 years, assuming that no counter-measures were taken.

Following such an accident, the police will activate the national arrangements for incidents involving radioactivity. Resources available to the police include experts from British Nuclear Fuels plc who are skilled in the handling of plutonium.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many air movements took place in 1992 conveying radioactive materials in or out of *(a)* Manchester, *(b)* Liverpool and *(c)* other north west or northern airfields; what is the highest permissible level of radioactivity in respect of such flights; what was the actual highest level so transported; and what percentage change he expects to the number of such flights over the coming five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Department does not keep a database of individual movements.

The quantity of radioactive material which may be transported is limited by permitted radiation levels from the type of package and by criticality safety considerations if the material is fissile.

The percentage change in the number of flights in future will depend on commercial considerations.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many movements of radioactive material have been notified to his Department in each of the past five years; and if he will place a list of such movements in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Department does not keep a database of individual movements.

M4

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the widening of the M4 between London and Swindon to begin.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* A contract for widening to four lanes of the short length of M4 between junctions 4B, M25, and 5, A4, has just been let and work will start shortly. Four other commissions to study the need and options for increasing capacity on the M4 between the M25 and junction 15 are proceeding satisfactorily and we expect to be in a position to start public consultation about further sections in the course of this year. Subsequent progress will depend on the outcome of public consultation and of any statutory procedures necessary and the availability of funding.

M1

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when major repairs between junctions 9 and 10 on the M1 were last completed; why further repairs are now necessary; why such repairs will last from March to December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The last substantial repairs on this section were completed in March 1991 and involved extensive patching to maintain the safety of the carriageway until the proposed widening of the motorway.

The works planned for this year are improvement works to widen the motorway to four lanes. At the same time major maintenance works will be carried out to extend the residual life of the existing carriageway. The extensive nature of these works is reflected in the contract period.

Shipping Routes

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on each of the recommendations of the European Parliament relating to tanker movements made in response to the MV Braer oil incident in Shetland.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The recommendations of the European Parliament relating to tanker movements raise a number of complex issues which can be effectively resolved only through international agreement at the International Maritime Organisation and elsewhere. Matters relating to radar coverage and pilotage will fall within the terms of reference of the inquiry that Lord Donaldson will hold.

Rail Staff (Deaths)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the numbers and circumstances of deaths at work of rail staff over the past five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of fatal accidents to railway and contractors staff for each year since 1987 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1987	16
1988	16
1989	18

Year	Number
1990	22
[1]1991-92	17

[1] This report covers a 15-month period 1 January 1991 to 31 March 1992.

Details of the circumstances of the deaths are given in the annual reports on railway safety in Great Britain for each year. Copies are available in the House Library.

SCOTLAND

Skye Bridge

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to prohibit Caledonian MacBrayne from running a vehicle-carrying ferry between Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin following the completion of the Skye bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will not permit Caledonian MacBrayne to provide such a service. At the time when it became necessary to introduce new vessels on the Kyle of Lochalsh-Kyleakin service in 1991, approval was given by the Department on the basis that, when the bridge was completed, the ferry service would be withdrawn and Caledonian MacBrayne would redeploy the vessels elsewhere in the network.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his policy will be, following construction of the Skye bridge, towards the existing piers at Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin *(a)* in respect of allowing vehicular access to the piers for the purposes of (i) enabling regular vehicle-carrying ferry service to operate in competition with the bridge and (ii) providing an emergency vehicle-carrying ferry service at times of emergency closure of the bridge and *(b)* in other respects; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no authority over the existing Kyleakin pier which is owned by the Highland regional council.

(a) (i) should a private vehicle ferry service wish to operate between Kyle and Kyleakin, an operator could do so providing the necessary approvals and licences were obtained and the appropriate facilities were available.

(ii) as the bridge will be open at all times, except on occasions to high sided vehicles, there will be no need for an emergency vehicle ferry service.

(b) The Scottish Office are co-operating with Highland regional council to develop a package of measures aimed at improving the environment and amenity in Kyle to make the maximum use of the opportunity offered by the Skye bridge.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the events organised by, or with the co-operation of, his Department for the European Year of Older People; what arrangements he has made for informing and involving hon. Members of events for the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My Department is participating fully with other Government Departments and voluntary organisations to plan and promote a wide-ranging programme of events for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. The programme of events for the Year is relevant to all parts of the United Kingdom. Events being developed as part of the Scottish contribution to the year include a three year project to support volunteering by older people and a project to examine the experiences of ethnic minority older people in selected European Community countries. I will write to the hon. Member with a full list of events which have been organised so far.

Officials of the Department of Health, the lead organising Department for the Year, recently met with the all party parliamentary group for pensions. In addition honourable Members will be able to learn more about the European Year of Older People from an exhibition to be mounted in the Upper Waiting Hall from 22 to 28 February. Madam Speaker has graciously agreed at the request of the all party group to host a reception on 30 June at the Speaker's House to mark the Year.

Age Concern Scotland has written to all Scottish hon. Members to inform them of the exhibition and to encourage them to support the year. A similar letter will be issued to all other hon. Members shortly.

Caledonian MacBrayne's

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to respond to Caledonian MacBrayne's corporate plan for 1992 to 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has already responded to Caledonian MacBrayne's corporate plan for 1992 to 1996 in approving the company's capital expenditure proposals for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96, increasing the company's external financing limit over the three years by a total of £10.5 million and fixing the level of deficit subsidy for 1993-94 at £7.165 million.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Lang: The chief executives of my four agencies reply direct to parliamentary questions on matters delegated to them. It is not normal practice for chief executives' letters to be submitted to my office prior to reply. I do, of course, see chief executives' replies when they are published in the *Official Report*.

Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 5 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *351*; and if he will state the political affiliation of the appointees where known.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The central data on appointments is updated once a year, at 1 September, and the information given in the answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 6 November 1992 is the latest available. Information not

held centrally could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. On the question of political affiliation I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) on 26 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *711*.

Mr. Muir Russell

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have been taken to ensure that the appointment of Mr. Muir Russell as a non-executive director of Stage Coach plc is compatible with his position as a civil servant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Mr. Russell's appointment is one of many made nationally to build bridges between the civil service and the business community. There is now within the Scottish Office a substantial bank of experience of such appointments, which must comply with the normal principles of conduct for civil servants. In addition new guidance has been published by the Office of Public Service and Science to supplement departmental rules and procedures on such appointments. Mr. Russell's appointment is entirely compatible with the guidance.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms in his Department's budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* The planned 1993-94 expenditure budget for the Departments within my responsibility but excluding the Forestry Commission is 5·0 per cent. in real terms and 7·9 per cent. in cash terms more than planned 1992-93 expenditure as amended by classification changes. After allowing for additional responsibilities of my Departments in care in the community and higher education, the increases are 2·7 per cent. in real terms and 5·6 per cent. in cash terms.

Departmental Press Releases

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to distribute his Department's press releases by electronic mail.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* I intend to continue my practice of distributing news releases from my Department by electronic mail to principal media outlets which have the facilities to receive them. Development of the service is kept under review.

MV Braer (Oil Spillage)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial provision has been made, and by whom, for the long-term monitoring of the impact on both land and the marine environment of the oil spillage from the tanker Braer.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Various Government Departments and public bodies are already engaged in monitoring the impact of the oil spill. Their programmes and priorities will be reviewed by the ecological steering group which was announced by my right hon. Friend on 26 January 1993. Since the long-term monitoring requirements have still to be assessed, it is too early to take a view on the financial arrangements for them.

Severely Disadvantaged Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978, how many farmers within the less-favoured areas designated severely disadvantaged, receive a level of farm income at or below the level at which a family of two adults and two children of school ages 13 and 17 could expect to be entitled to family credit at the current rate.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The information requested is not available.

Scottish Bus Group Companies

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the purchasers of former Scottish Bus Group companies under the terms of the Transport (Scotland) Act 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir Hector Monro) on 2 December 1991, *Official Report*, columns *45-46*.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Applicants (Drug Tests)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates her Department has made of the number of companies requiring drug testing for job applicants; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not produce estimates of the number of companies requiring drug testing for job applicants and has no plans to do so.

Ship Building

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies have been declared in the United Kingdom shipbuilding industry each year since 1979; and what has been the average redundancy payment in constant prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The specific information requested is not available and no information is held on payments made by employers to redundant employees.

Black Workers

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the average pay of black workers as a percentage of the average pay of white workers.

Mr. McLoughlin: These estimates are not made.

Check-off Deductions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the cost per thousand to employers of meeting requirements for renewed check-off deductions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost to those employers who choose to operate check-off arrangements of the new requirements in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill will depend on their particular circumstances. Employers may agree, as part of the arrangements, to recoup some or all of the cost from the trade unions on whose behalf they operate the check-off.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who proposed to Government the requirement that employers would be required to seek renewed consent to check-off deductions from their employees every three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This proposal is based on a recommendation in the response of the Institute of Personnel Management to the Green Paper, "Industrial Relations in the 1990s".

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if employers are presently prohibited from checking at any time and at any interval whether any employee maintains consent previously given for deductions of union subscriptions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. Existing law on the operation of the check-off offers little protection to employees who pay their union subscriptions through the check-off.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which bodies have supported the proposed requirement for renewed consent to check-off deductions.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responses to legislative proposals are automatically treated as confidential. Bodies that have publicly supported the principle of periodic renewal of consent include the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors.

Employment Training

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people graduating from employment training courses in Blyth Valley have gone on to full-time work in each year since 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available. Information on employment training is not held centrally below training and enterprise council level.

Job Shops (Vetting)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what vetting is carried out when potential employers place advertisements for vacancies in job shops.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Bill Michie, dated 9 February 1993.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the vetting carried out when potential employers place advertisements in job shops. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The vast majority of vacancies notified to Jobcentres are from employers who are well known to my local people and give no cause for concern. Where an employer is not known we take extra care to ensure the vacancy is from a genuine employer. If we have any doubts we will normally make local enquiries or arrange to visit the employer.

Any complaints from jobseekers are always followed up and my managers have discretion to refuse to handle recruitment business if they have concerns about the potential vacancy.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make an assessment of the health and safety of those who work in opencast coal mining.

Mr. McLoughlin: Prime responsibility for health and safety at work including assessment rests with employers and self employed persons, where appropriate. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) encourages and promotes health, safety and welfare at work at those places for which it is the enforcing authority, which includes opencast coal sites. HSE inspectors seek to ensure that employers and others comply with health and safety legislation and if necessary take appropriate action to ensure legal requirements are met.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many constituencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have higher registered unemployment at the present time than in June 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest estimates of unemployment rates *(a)* by ethnic origin, broken down into (i) white, (ii) West Indian, (iii) Indian, (iv) Pakistani and (v) Bangladeshi, *(b)* separately by sex and ethnic origin and *(c)* by 16 to 24 year age group, sex and ethnic origin.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available estimates for Great Britain of unemployment rates on the internationally standard ILO definition are given in the following table:

ILO unemployment rates by ethnic origin, Sex and age: Great Britain, summer (June-August) 1992 (not seasonally adjusted)

Percentage

	all persons		Males		Females	
	all 16 and over	aged 16-24	all 16 and over	aged 16-24	all 16 and over	aged 16-24
All persons[2]	10	18	12	21	8	14
White	9	17	11	20	7	13
Ethnic minority groups[3]	20	35	23	40	17	28
Black-Caribbean	24	39	32	49	15	[1]—
Indian	15	28	15	32	15	25
Pakistani	28	44	29	48	[1]—	[1]—
Bangladeshi	38	[1]—	37	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1] The source of the estimates in the table (Labour Force Survey) is a sample survey and all estimates from it are subject to sampling variability, particularly in the case of smaller groups. Following established practice, estimates where the numerator is less than 10,000 are now shown in the table, but the estimates for other small groups, for example some of those within the 16-24 age-bands, should be treated with caution.
[2] Includes people who did not state their ethnic origin.
[3] Includes those of black-African, other black non-mixed (including black-British) and those of mixed and other origins.
Source: Labour Force Survey.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Falkirk East constituency.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Michael Connarty, dated 9 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Falkirk East area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Construction Sites (Accidents)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* deaths and *(b)* serious accidents at construction sites in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers of deaths and major injuries occurring in the construction industry in Wales over the past five years are provided in the table:

Occupational injuries occurring in the construction industry[1] in Wales as reported to HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates and Local Authorities, 1987-88 to 1991-92[6]

Year[2]	Fatal Injuries			Major Injuries[3]		
	Employees	Self employed	Members of public[4]	Employees	Self employed	Members of public[4]
1987-88	9	3	—	158	11	15
1988-89	8	1	—	154	23	10
1989-90	5	4	—	200	34	5
1990-91[5]	6	1	2	189	39	1
1991-92[5]	8	2	1	96	22	8

[1] As defined by Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 5.
[2] Year commencing 1 April.
[3] Major injuries as defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[4] Injured as a result of someone else's work activity.
[5] Includes reports made to HSE's Quarries Inspectorate.
[6] Provisional

Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those referred by the employment service to employment training actually started in the valleys initiative area between April 1991 and March 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Ron Davies, dated 9 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the

percentage of those referred by the Employment Service to Employment Training, in the Valleys Initiative area, who actually started between April 1991 and March 1992. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Although we do not collect information in the format you asked for we have found a way to provide a close alternative, which is based on returns from our local offices located in the Valleys Initiative area. This gives a figure of 39% which is almost exactly equivalent to 1 person starting for every 2·5 who are referred.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers of employment trainees by ethnic origin.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table gives the latest percentage breakdown of entrants to employment training in Great Britain by ethnic origin.

Employment training
April 1992 to September 1992—Great Britain
Starts by ethnic origin

	per cent.
White	89
Black/African/Caribbean	4
Asian	4
Other	2
Not stated (including prefer not to say)	1

Source: ET starts database.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest statistics for 1992 on numbers of *(a)* employment trainees, *(b)* youth trainees and *(c)* job club leavers, by ethnic origin and sex for (i) England and Wales, (ii) Yorkshire and Humberside and (iii) Sheffield.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available in the exact format asked for. Information is only available about the percentage of entrants or leavers by characteristics. The following tables give the latest data.

Table 1
Employment training: characteristics of entrants
April 1992 to September 1992[1]

Per cent.

Region	Ethnic origins[2]					Sex	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Male*	*Female*
Sheffield TEC	86	6	2	4	1	70	30
Yorkshire and Humberside	91	2	4	1	1	68	32
England and Wales	88	5	4	2	1	67	33

Source: Employment Training Starts Database.

Table 2
Youth training: characteristics of leavers
April 1992 to October 1992[1]

Per cent.

Region	Ethnic origins[2]					Sex	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Male*	*Female*
Sheffield TEC	93	3	3	1	1	61	39
Yorkshire and Humberside	94	1	4	1	[4]—	60	40
England and Wales	94	2	3	1	1	57	43

Source: Youth Training Leavers Database.

Table 3
Job club: characteristics of leavers
April 1991 to March 1992[1]

Per cent.

Region	Ethnic origins[2]					Sex	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Male*	*Female*
Sheffield area[3]	94	1	2	2	1	85	15
Yorkshire and Humberside	91	1	7	1	[4]—	82	18
England and Wales	86	6	7	1	1	80	20

Source: Employment Service Management Information System.

Notes to tables:
[1] The latest period for which information is available.
[2] 1 = White; 4 = None of these;
2 = Black/African/Caribbean; 5 = Prefer not to say.
3 = Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan;

[3] Sheffield area does not cover exactly the same area as Sheffield TEC.
[4] Less than 0·5 per cent.
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to independent rounding.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which her Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As part of the Government's deregulation initiative, the Department has compiled a provisional list of regulations for which it is responsible, which impact on business. It is currently being fully checked for accuracy and will be placed in the Library by early March.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many black adults in England and Wales are on training schemes operated by training and enterprise councils in the current year; what was the figure for 1992; and what percentage this is of the total number of trainees on schemes operated by the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: During April to September 1992, the latest period for which information is available, 5 per cent. of adults on employment training in England and Wales were of Black/African/Caribbean descent, the same as in the full financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the members of each training and enterprise council in the Northern region, together with their remunerations, for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: The current board members of TECs in Northern region are listed in the table. Directors of TEC boards do not receive any remunerations other than incurred expenses unless they hold the office of TEC chief executive.

Chief executives who are seconded civil servants are paid the appropriate civil service salary; those who are direct employees of the TEC are paid a salary which is determined by the TEC.

Co. Durham TEC
Mr. B. Robinson
Mr. J. Hamilton
Mr. R. McKechnie
Mr. T. Edge
Mr. D. King
Mr. D. Clifford
Mrs. M. Todd
Mr. D. Gatfield
Mr. L. Aviss
Mr. A. MacConachie
Mr. J. Creaby
Mr. G. McLearie
Mr. K. Mitchell
Mr. F. Crow

Teesside TEC
Mr. L. Bell
Mr. P. C. Kerr
Mr. M. D. Ward
Mr. A. B. Anderson
Mr. P. G. Yuill
Mr. D. Hall
Mr. D. Warnock
Mr. G. E. Penketh
Mr. A. G. Arkley
Mr. P. A. Gate
Mr. K. Robinson
Mr. J. Sefton
Mr. P. McGee
Mr. J. R. Howell

Northumberland TEC
Mr. B. Best
Mr. J. Teward
Mr. P. R. Harding
Mr. C. Tipple
Mr. D. J. R. Smail
Dr. D. Francis
Mr. G. Robinson
Mr. A. Haslam
Mr. P. Wood
Mr. B. Gott
Mr. R. Moules
Miss E. Redpath

Wearside TEC
Mr. J. N. Anderson
Mr. R. Bater
Mr. D. Grabham
Mr. G. P. Key
Mr. K. Raine
Mr. A. Scott
Mr. A. J. Ward
Mr. G. Armstrong
Mr. A. Cass
Mr. H. Moyes
Mr. R. W. Linden
Mr. J. Riddle
Mrs. A. Tye
Mr. P. Wickens
Mr. T. C. Preston

Tyneside TEC
Dr. R. Iley
Mrs. C. Howells
Mr. J. H. Marris
Mr. W. S. Jones
Mr. G. M. Rowarth
Mr. J. C. Sharp
Mr. L. Elton
Mr. P. Vaughan
Mr. R. Howard
Mr. H. Biddle
Mr. S. Clark
Mr. M. Morris
Mrs. O. Grant
Mr. M. Higson
Mr. A. J. G. Winter

Redundancy Payments and Unemployment Benefit

139. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average *(a)* statutory minimum redundancy payment and *(b)* monthly unemployment benefit paid by her Department in the most recent available year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average payment made under the direct payment provisions of the statutory redundancy payments scheme in the 1991-92 financial year was £1,375·00.

I understand from the Department of Social Security that no figure is available for the average amount of monthly unemployment benefit paid. The average weekly amount of unemployment benefit (excluding income

support) paid to each recipient based on 5 per cent. samples taken in May 1991 was £44·64 a week, and in November 1991 was £44·49 a week.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within her responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The chief executive of the Employment Service Agency replies direct on matters delegated to him. I have an opportunity to see the replies when they are published in the *Official Report*.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many compliance cost assessments were sent to her Department in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were none.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reduce the sum of £4 assumed income per week per £1,000 savings which is applied in determining benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In all the income-related benefits, savings up to £3,000 is ignored. Deductions from benefit for capital in excess of this amount are designed to ensure that help is targeted on those who need it most, while not denying benefit to those with only a moderate amount of capital. The rules are kept under review, but we have no plans for change.

Pensions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis he has calculated the 25p rise in pensions paid to those over 80 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The 25p age addition paid to people who are over 80 was introduced in 1971. No Government have ever increased the age addition since its introduction and there are no plans to do so. Instead, we have chosen to target extra resources towards pensioners on income-related benefits.

Artificial Insemination by Donor

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of children conceived by AID who will be entitled to maintenance from their biological father.

Mr. Burt: Where a donation of sperm is made to a licensed treatment centre, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 safeguards the donor's identity. Consequently, where a child is born as a result of artificial insemination by donor, the question of seeking maintenance from the biological father will arise only where the donation is made by private arrangement without the services of a licensed treatment centre. There is no centrally available information on the numbers that might be involved.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of additional claimants and the cost if disability living allowance was extended to children under the age of five years; and if he will estimate these numbers and costs for the northern region.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that for Great Britain the number is 25,000 at a cost of £35 million a year. It is not possible to estimate these numbers and costs for the northern region.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the medical report from Mrs. Elizabeth Pinnock of 45 South Furzeham road, Brixham, mentioned by Michael Bichard in his letter of 11 January to the hon. Member for South Hams, was obtained by the disability living allowance unit from Dr. Sheena, Mrs. Pinnock's general practitioner.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write shortly to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 8 February 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the date on which the Disability Living Allowance Unit obtained the medical report from Dr. Sheena, Mrs. Pinnock's General Practitioner.

The medical report to which you refer was requested on 27 November 1991 and completed by Dr. Sheena on 30 November 1991. It was received in the Mobility Allowance Unit on 4 December 1991.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Carers

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what evidence it was decided that carers of people in receipt of the lower rate care component of disability living allowance should not be entitled to invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance was introduced following surveys of the disabled carried out in 1985-1988 by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We introduced the new lower rates of disability living allowance to help people with less severe disabilities who were unable to qualify for benefit previously.

The purpose of invalid care allowance is to provide a measure of financial assistance to those who forgo the opportunity of full-time work in order to provide regular and substantial care to a severely disabled person. It is doubtful that a person receiving the lower rate of the disability living allowance care component would require such substantial care.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider allowing the record of contributions made by carers in any tax year to count towards unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to change the current contribution conditions.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend entitlement to the carer premium to carers over the age of 65 years who can establish underlying entitlement to invalid care allowance on the same basis as their younger counterparts.

Mr. Scott: Since it is not possible for people who become carers over age of 65 to establish entitlement to invalid care allowance there can be no question therefore of extending carer premium to this group.

Carer Premium

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people in receipt of the carer premium as a percentage of those who are eligible.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 25 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns *585-86*.

Income Support

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what evidence he has on the number of income support claimants in residential and nursing homes who use their personal expenses allowance to pay the fees;

(2) what steps he proposes to take to ensure that under the new community care arrangements from April 1993 the personal expenses allowance for people on income support in residential and nursing homes is not taken to pay home fees.

Mr. Burt: Personal allowances are intended to be used by residents for their needs as they see best. The fees charged for residential and nursing homes are a matter for agreement between the parties involved. Some residents contract for charges higher than the Income Support limits and may use the personal expenses allowance to meet the shortfall. The numbers using their allowance in this way is not known.

From April 1993 all residents placed in residential care or nursing homes by local authorities will retain an amount for personal expenses.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current number of people in receipt of income support in the smallest available area which includes Consett.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms. Hilary Armstrong, dated 8 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the current number of people in receipt of Income Support in the smallest available area which includes Consett.

The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, from latest information available, the Agency's Stanley office, which covers the area of Consett, had approximately 11,000 customers who were in receipt of Income Support at 30 November 1992.

This information has been supplied by the Income Support Management Information Statistics.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the effect on the number of unemployment benefit claimants of the abatement at 55 years introduced on 1 January 1989 for occupational pensioners, and 9 October 1989 for personal pensioners *(a)* at the point of introduction and *(b)* currently.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, the numbers of persons aged 55 years and over whose unemployment benefit is abated in full due to their receipt of an occupational and/or personal pension is shown in the table.

Unemployment Claimants whose Entitlement to Unemployment Benefit is Abated in Full by an Occupational and/or Personal Pension

Date	*Total (Thousands)*
May 1989	6·0
November 1989	5·0
May 1992	9·2

Notes:

1. *Source:* Half-yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants, 5 per cent. sample.
2. Figures shown are for all claimants whose entitlement to UB is abated in full due to receipt of an occupational and/or personal pension. No separate figures are maintained of persons affected solely by the legislation introduced on 1 January 1989 and 9th October 1989.
3. Figures are not available for the points of introduction or present date. Those shown for May and November 1989 are for the first half yearly analysis following introduction. Those for May 1992 are the latest available.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Names of firms of consultants used by the Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 are as follows:

Coopers and Lybrand
Kodak
KPMG
Hemsley Miller and Co.
PA Consultancy
PMMS Consulting
Price Waterhouse
SEMA Consultants
Symonds Facilities Management
Touche Ross

The total cost of consultancy support to the end of December 1992 has been some £610,000.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within his responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Miss Widdecombe: The chief executives of our agencies reply direct on the operational matters which have been delegated to them. Ministers receive a courtesy copy of replies on the day before they are answered.

War Pensioners

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to establish an executive agency for war pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: A new War Pensions Agency will be established on 1 April 1994. The agency will be responsible for the assessment and payment of war pensions, the war pensioners welfare service, and the Ilford Park Polish Home in Devon. I am pleased to be able to announce this fulfilment of the Government's election manifesto pledge.

The establishment of a separate agency for war pensions will lead to greater efficiency in the administration of these benefits and provide a higher quality service for war pensioners and war widows, in keeping with the citizens charter.

Recruitment of a chief executive is beginning immediately.

Benefits Agency

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters addressed to the Benefits Agency by hon. Members, on the subject of attendance allowance and disability living allowance, have taken longer than seven months to secure a reply; when he first assessed the time taken to reply to hon. Members' correspondence; and what action he has taken to reduce delays.

Mr. Scott: The arrangements for replying to correspondence from hon. Members to the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Nicholson, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the time taken to reply to honourable Members' correspondence about Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA).

You ask how many letters addressed to the Benefits Agency on these subjects have taken longer than seven months to secure a reply. I am aware of 13 cases, where letters about DLA have been sent direct to me or have been referred to me by Ministers and a reply has not been sent within seven months. I very much regret that such long delays have occurred. As I explained in my letter to you of 19 January on an individual case you had raised, the delays are due to the backlog of correspondence that has built up in the DLA Unit following the greater than expected workload faced by Unit in the early months of the DLA scheme. In 1992 I replied to 4,461 letters on all subjects from Members.

The delay in replying to Members' letters about DLA does not, of course, mean that action is not proceeding on a customer's claim. In fact in most cases where there is a long outstanding reply the claim will have been resolved much earlier. You will recall that in the case discussed in my letter of 19 January, benefit was awarded in August 1992. Clearly you should have been notified of this very much sooner than you were and I apologise for this.

The Benefits Agency monitors the amount of correspondence received and the time taken to reply on a regular basis. Since December 1992 this has been monitored on a weekly basis; prior to that the position was monitored monthly. The substantial increase in correspondence (80 per cent. up on 1991) and the consequent delays in response time began to become clear from mid 1992 onwards.

As you will understand, the initial impetus was to clear the backlog of claims thus ensuring that decisions were given and payments made to customers as quickly as possible. I wrote to all Members explaining the steps I had taken to tackle this on 19 October 1992.

Since November 1992 additional staff have been taken on in the correspondence sections both centrally and in the DLA Unit and substantial overtime is also being worked. A recovery plan for clearing the backlog of correspondence is now in operation at the DLA Unit with a view to substantially reducing the number of letters awaiting reply by the end of this month. Once the backlog is cleared it will be our aim to respond to all future correspondence within the Agency's target of twenty working days.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Nurses, Merseyside

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide increased funds for skilled nurses on Merseyside, in respect of the community care, hospital in the home, health of the nation, and the patients charter initiatives.

Mr. Sackville: The allocation of national health service funding in Merseyside is the responsibility of Mersey regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Professor A. M. Breckenridge, for details.

Nurse Prescribing

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the *(a)* implementation costs, *(b)* annual running costs and *(c)* potential time saved per year for general practitioners, nurses, carers and patients in hours, associated with nurse prescribing.

Mr. Sackville: The cost benefit study on nurse prescribing carried out for the Department by Touche Ross estimated that the costs of implementation would be approximately £11 million in 1991-92 prices. Running costs would depend substantially on the extent to which nurse prescribing resulted in an increase in the total drugs prescribed. The report made a central estimate of £15 million per year. It estimated possible theoretical savings of 170,000 hours of GP time per year, 650,000 hours of district nurse, health visitor and practice nurse time per year and 590,000 hours of patients' and carers' time. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in each region are on *(a)* yellow alert and *(b)* red alert.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities and trusts all have arrangements for managing their resources to cope with particularly high and unexpected levels of admissions. The action which is needed will vary according to local circumstances and there is not therefore a nationally agreed definition of "red" and "yellow" alerts.

Nurses

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of qualified nursing staff by specialty for each region in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information requested is shown in the tables. The source of the data is the Department's non-medical manpower census. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten. The England totals include figures for family health service authorities and other statutory authorities. The special health authorities figures in 1991 include staff from the special hospitals services authority.

NHS qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work, by RHA at September 1989
Within hospital services

RHA area	General nursing	Care of elderly	Paediatric	Mental illness	Mental handicap	Midwifery/maternity: Midwifery staff	Midwifery/maternity: Nursing staff	Education	Other	Hospital total
Northern	6,830	2,110	490	2,430	910	1,060	240	290	220	14,580
Yorkshire	7,360	2,240	550	2,610	850	1,320	240	380	140	15,690
Trent	8,290	2,610	920	3,280	1,330	1,390	150	450	130	18,840
East Anglia	3,670	1,270	190	1,360	600	620	180	160	160	8,220
North West Thames	5,380	1,610	390	2,770	960	980	260	340	130	12,820
North East Thames	7,920	1,920	370	2,820	820	1,310	300	550	410	16,440
South East Thames	5,290	1,040	480	1,910	270	670	440	190	6,970	17,270
South West Thames	4,750	1,450	350	2,460	1,390	860	150	330	50	11,780
Wessex	5,330	1,600	370	1,890	750	930	190	300	90	11,440
Oxford	4,130	1,090	350	1,230	620	820	220	240	80	8,770
South Western	6,150	1,660	400	2,250	1,220	990	210	300	50	13,230
West Midlands	9,540	2,850	760	3,420	1,460	1,820	410	520	170	20,940
Mersey	4,830	1,540	680	2,160	620	870	180	260	40	11,170
North Western	8,450	2,550	900	2,940	1,270	1,670	300	490	270	18,860
Special Health Authorities	1,670	60	600	350	—	140	60	90	370	3,350
England	89,600	25,610	7,800	33,870	13,070	15,470	3,830	4,880	9,300	203,420

National health service qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work by regional health authority
September 1989

Regional health authorities	Within primary health care: Health visitors	Other health visiting	District nurses	Other district nursing	Midwifery	Education	Other	Primary health care total	Admin. nurses	Centrally based services	Total qualified nurses
Northern	670	60	770	400	260	—	320	2,480	90	110	17,260
Yorkshire	790	120	730	480	350	10	330	2,800	70	110	18,670
Trent	950	100	970	700	490	20	370	3,600	160	120	22,720
East Anglia	360	60	340	250	210	—	180	1,400	40	60	9,720
North West Thames	650	250	520	630	250	10	410	2,710	100	220	15,850
North East Thames	650	150	580	620	300	10	530	2,830	130	160	19,570
South East Thames	230	140	240	330	170	10	520	1,640	60	120	19,070
South West Thames	590	90	580	410	210	10	310	2,190	80	100	14,150
Wessex	590	90	580	340	250	—	240	2,080	60	80	13,660
Oxford	540	50	520	200	180	—	290	1,790	60	70	10,680
South Western	640	40	710	400	240	—	380	2,410	120	100	15,870
West Midlands	1,060	160	990	670	480	10	540	3,900	150	140	25,140
Mersey	540	30	530	320	230	—	280	1,940	40	110	13,260
North Western	1,100	120	980	750	460	—	540	3,950	170	190	23,160
Special health authorities	0	0	10	0	—	0	0	20	20	10	3,390
England	9,340	1,470	9,050	6,480	4,080	80	5,230	35,730	1,340	1,700	242,190

NHS qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work, by RHA at September 1990
Within hospital services

RHA area	General nursing	Care of elderly	Paediatric	Mental illness	Mental handicap	Midwifery/maternity: Midwifery staff	Midwifery/maternity: Nursing staff	Education	Other	Hospital total
Northern	6,680	1,910	480	2,340	860	1,030	260	270	520	14,340
Yorkshire	7,390	2,160	570	2,610	790	1,310	250	370	180	15,630
Trent	8,480	2,790	970	3,230	1,290	1,410	450	490	140	19,250
East Anglia	3,560	1,260	160	1,360	590	610	170	160	430	8,310
North West Thames	5,290	1,620	380	2,660	970	970	260	320	120	12,600
North East Thames	7,930	1,930	400	2,960	840	1,350	290	560	450	16,710
South East Thames	6,290	1,650	590	2,450	570	1,080	250	60	2,780	15,710
South West Thames	4,520	1,410	330	2,440	1,380	790	150	310	100	11,420
Wessex	5,470	1,650	360	1,900	800	910	220	310	120	11,740
Oxford	4,310	1,130	360	1,270	650	830	210	230	130	9,130
South Western	6,420	1,640	450	2,320	1,240	950	220	380	40	13,670
West Midlands	9,730	2,760	820	3,430	1,470	1,880	440	540	250	21,320
Mersey	4,810	1,380	690	2,060	590	880	180	250	50	10,890
North Western	8,400	2,410	950	3,020	1,200	1,690	300	480	150	18,610
Special Health Authorities	1,740	90	560	350	10	60	130	50	340	3,340
England	91,030	25,800	8,090	34,400	13,250	15,730	3,790	4,790	5,850	202,730

National health service qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work
by regional health authority
September 1990

Regional health authorities	Within primary health care: Health visitors	Other health visiting	District nurses	Other district nursing	Midwifery	Education	Other	Primary health care total	Admin. nurses	Centrally based services	Total qualified nurses
Northern	660	60	760	410	240	10	300	2,440	70	110	16,950
Yorkshire	770	110	700	480	350	10	300	2,720	70	120	18,540
Trent	950	100	920	740	480	10	380	3,570	150	120	23,090
East Anglia	330	50	310	250	210	—	190	1,350	40	60	9,760
North West Thames	640	250	510	620	250	10	410	2,680	100	210	15,590
North East Thames	660	160	560	640	270	10	530	2,830	120	150	19,800
South East Thames	710	80	760	450	330	10	510	2,840	80	110	18,740
South West Thames	590	80	550	430	190	10	320	2,150	80	110	13,760
Wessex	600	110	550	350	240	—	250	2,090	60	80	13,970
Oxford	540	50	520	190	180	—	300	1,780	60	70	11,030
South Western	690	50	660	380	280	—	360	2,430	120	100	16,320
West Midlands	1,020	150	970	660	460	10	570	3,850	150	150	25,460
Mersey	500	40	500	330	230	—	280	1,890	50	100	12,930
North Western	1,090	120	960	780	470	0	520	3,940	170	210	22,920
Special health authorities	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	20	10	3,390
England	9,740	1,400	9,230	6,700	4,200	80	5,220	36,570	1,320	1,720	242,340

NHS qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work, by RHA at September 1991
Within hospital services

RHA area	General nursing	Care of elderly	Paediatric	Mental illness	Mental handicap	Midwifery/maternity: Midwifery staff	Midwifery/maternity: Nursing staff	Education	Other	Hospital total
Northern	6,550	1,960	450	2,290	820	1,050	240	280	730	14,360
Yorkshire	7,050	2,000	640	2,660	790	1,290	330	410	270	15,420
Trent	8,770	2,650	1,020	3,200	1,250	1,400	450	520	220	19,480
East Anglia	3,660	1,180	170	1,360	600	580	240	200	330	8,330
North West Thames	5,810	1,760	460	2,660	990	920	340	330	190	13,470
North East Thames	7,950	2,030	420	3,040	830	1,370	320	540	570	17,070
South East Thames	5,790	1,500	460	2,220	570	1,030	250	170	1,930	13,920
South West Thames	5,350	1,490	310	2,140	1,160	860	190	330	100	11,930
Wessex	5,620	1,640	400	1,910	770	910	220	320	120	11,900
Oxford	4,330	1,200	360	1,320	660	850	250	190	210	9,360
South Western	6,180	1,780	470	2,300	1,210	860	290	210	160	13,460
West Midlands	9,560	2,570	920	3,420	1,430	1,820	400	560	420	21,090
Mersey	4,830	1,300	720	1,920	530	880	180	190	80	10,630
North Western	8,700	2,420	990	3,070	1,170	1,720	290	470	140	18,970
Special Health Authorities	1,830	90	600	1,700	10	70	140	90	470	4,990

RHA area	General nursing	Care of elderly	Paediatric	Mental illness	Mental handicap	Midwifery/maternity: Midwifery staff	Midwifery/maternity: Nursing staff	Education	Other	Hospital total
England	92,000	25,560	8,400	35,210	12,790	15,590	4,120	4,800	5,920	204,390

National health service qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) by area of work by regional health authority
September 1991

Regional health authorities	Within primary health care: Health visitors	Other health visiting	District nurses	Other district nursing	Midwifery	Education	Other	Primary health care total	Admin. nurses	Centrally based services	Total qualified nurses
Northern	650	50	720	410	240	10	290	2,360	60	100	16,880
Yorkshire	770	130	560	470	340	—	380	2,660	270	130	18,480
Trent	940	100	880	740	490	10	400	3,560	130	120	23,290
East Anglia	350	40	280	290	210	10	230	1,390	30	60	9,810
North West Thames	630	260	460	630	220	10	370	2,570	70	180	16,280
North East Thames	650	150	550	580	240	10	520	2,710	120	160	20,050
South East Thames	650	70	650	390	280	10	490	2,540	60	100	16,620
South West Thames	520	70	560	280	180	—	290	1,910	150	130	14,120
Wessex	580	120	540	340	240	—	270	2,100	50	80	14,130
Oxford	550	50	530	190	180	—	340	1,830	60	70	11,320
South Western	610	80	560	450	320	10	400	2,430	120	120	16,130
West Midlands	1,010	140	950	690	420	10	620	3,840	140	140	25,210
Mersey	490	40	480	350	220	0	280	1,650	40	100	12,620
North Western	1,100	80	950	790	490	20	510	3,930	160	170	23,230
Special health authorities	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	30	10	5,050
England	9,490	1,390	8,680	6,590	4,090	90	5,380	35,710	1,470	1,680	243,250

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to include a question on the number of Welsh speakers residing in the United Kingdom as a whole within the next census.

Mr. Sackville: Full consideration will be given to the case for including a language question in the next census which would count people living outside Wales who speak Welsh.

The topic content of the censuses of population in the United Kingdom, planned for 2001, will need to be approved by Parliament, around the end of 1999.

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to introduce ring-fenced funding for residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Mr. Yeo: On 2 October 1992 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced her decision that a ring-fenced community care special transitional grant would be made available to local authorities in England in 1993-94 for the implementation for community care, including for the purchase of residential care for people who misuse alcohol and/or drugs.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the financial terms of the appointment of the temporary chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority; what provisions there are for extending his contract; and what financial provisions cover the termination of his contract.

Dr. Mawhinney: All regional health authority chairmen receive annual remuneration of £20,925. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made no decision to extend the appointment of Sir Donald Wilson beyond 30 April 1993 nor are there contractual provisions which cover the termination of such an appointment.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the auditors and legal advisers of each trust in the Gateshead and Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside health authority areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: The appointment of legal advisers is a matter for each National Health Service trust, and this information is not held centrally. The external auditors of health bodies are appointed by the Audit Commission. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Audit Commission for details of auditors of the relevant trusts.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the membership, remuneration and place of residence of hospital trust board non-executive members in the northern region; and whether she proposes to increase the remuneration scales in the next financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: A list of all trust non-executive appointees in the Northern region, together with their place of residence, is as follows.

National health service trust non-executive directors are entitled to remuneration of £5,000 per annum. No decision has been made to increase the remuneration of chairmen or non-executive directors.

First wave trusts Northern region

The Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Border—Newcastle
Mr. R. Middleton—Wylam
Mr. J. Ward—Newcastle
Miss H. Goodworth—Newcastle
Dr. R. Freeman—Newcastle

Newcastle Mental Health Services NHS Trust
Mrs. I. Cheyne—Newcastle
Mr. D. Wilsoner—Newcastle
Professor I. Ferrier—Newcastle
Mr. B. Roycroft—Newcastle
Mr. N. Price—Newcastle

Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust
Mr. P. Moth—Newcastle
Dr. J. Higson—Newcastle
Mr. A. Ferguson—Ashington
Mr. A. Knight—Hexham
Mr. D. Smith—Newcastle

Second wave trusts Northern region

Northern Tees Health NHS Trust
Ms. Jean Slater—Stockton-on-Tees
Mr. Paul Jackson—Stockton-on-Tees
Mr. Nevile Tate—Stockton-on-Tees
Mr. Robert Stewart—Guisborough
Mr. Charles Porter—Stockton-on-Tees

South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. David Collier—Richmond
Mr. John Webster—Redcar
Mr. Roger Kingdon—Stockton-on-Tees
Mr. Simon Still—Darlington
Mrs. H. Thompson—Middlesborough

Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust
Mr. Terry Weastell—Northallerton
Ms. Susan Bush—Northallerton
Mr. Kevin Fletcher—Middlesbrough
Mr. Keith Hellawell—Saltburn
Mrs. Patricia Campbell—Guisborough

Gateshead Community Health NHS Trust
Mrs. Penny Remfry—Whitley Bay
Mr. Malcolm Scott—Gateshead
Mr. David Mitford—Newcastle
Mr. Ronald Dixon—Blaydon
Dr. R. Jackson—Blaydon

Northgate NHS Trust
Ms. Susan Adams—Wall
Mrs. Jocelyn Stephenson—Morpeth
Mr. Jeremy Handley—Morpeth
Professor John Rear—Newcastle
Mr. G. Rutherford—Morpeth

The RVI Infirmary and Associated Hospitals Trust
Professor John Davison—Newcastle
Mrs. Susan Wilson—Whalton
Miss Audrey Willis—Hexham
Mr. P. Stoddart—Sunderland
Mrs. K. Brunton—Corbridge

Third wave trusts Northern region

Cumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. David Dickinson—Whitehaven
Rear Admiral Ian Pirnie—Ulverston
Mr. J. Clayton—Carlisle
Mrs. Fiona Cartnell—Kendal
Mr. Peter Simpson—Penrith

Durham County Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. Michael Hemingway—Barnard Castle
Mr. John McIndoe—Ponteland
Professor Charles Baker—Durham City
Mr. Neville Martin—Durham City

Gateshead Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. Nancy Cookson—Sunderland
Mrs. Ann Cooper—Newcastle
Mr. David Irwin—Newcastle
Dr. James Dalgleish—Gateshead
Miss Mary Davies—Newcastle

Northumberland Mental Health NHS Trust
Mrs. Jean Turner—Whitley Bay
Mr. John Herron—Hexham
Professor Mary Bromly—Whittingham
Mr. Stephen Gibson—Blyth
Mr. Dennis Davison—Ryton

South Cumbria Community and Mental Health NHS Trust
Mrs. Madeline Davies—Kendal
Mr. Linden Davies—Windermere
Mr. Julian Davies—Grange-over-Sands
Mrs. Susan Godfrey—Waberthwaite
Dr. Rodney Leach—Windermere

South Tees Community and Mental Health NHS Trust
Mr. David Bowles—Sedgefield
Mr. Geoffrey Crispin—Middlesborough
Mrs. Hillary Sillars—Middlesborough
Dr. Susan Miller—Northallerton
Mr. James Wilson—Darlington

South Tyneside Health Care NHS Trust
Mrs. Frances Walker—Sunderland
Mr. Martin Wright—Cleadon
Mr. Edward Russell—South Shields
Mr. Robert Graham—Jarrow
Mrs. Margaret Mills—South Shields

South West Durham Mental Health NHS Trust
Mr. John Scally—Shotley Bridge
Mrs. Caroline Hillery—Bishop Auckland
Mr. Norman Hart—Durham City
Mr. Paul Briggs—Durham City
Mr. David Bright—Durham City

Westmorland Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. Claire Hensman—Kendal
Mrs. Shirley Evans—Grange-over-Sands
Mr. Morten Lund—Kendal
Mr. David Hawkes—Kendal
Mr. George Turnbull—Silverdale

West Cumbria Health Care NHS Trust
Mrs. Rosemary Porter—Millom
Mr. David Gill—Cockermouth
Dr. Peter Inglis—Cockermouth
Mr. Graham Lamont—Cockermouth
Mrs. Claire Madden—Cockermouth

General Practitioners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of whole time equivalent general practitioners and the total number of general practitioners in each regional health authority in each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Whole time equivalent unrestricted principal GPs by RHA

RHA	*October 1990*	*October 1991*	*April 1992*
Northern	1,609·00	1,607·25	1,609·00
Yorkshire	1,919·25	1,917·50	1,913·50
Trent	2,360·00	2,370·75	2,385·50
East Anglia	1,085·75	1,095·00	1,106·50
North West Thames	1,959·00	1,922·25	1,924·75
North East Thames	2,013·25	1,991·25	1,994·75
South East Thames	1,920·00	1,923·25	1,928·25
South West Thames	1,547·50	1,534·25	1,531·75
Wessex	1,553·75	1,553·25	1,563·50
Oxford	1,322·75	1,331·00	1,329·50
South Western	1,926·00	1,922·75	1,941·00
West Midlands	2,694·30	2,661·00	2,663·50
Mersey	1,231·00	1,223·50	1,221·00
North Western	2,007·25	1,986·50	1,995·75

Number of unrestricted principal GPs by RHA

RHA	*October 1990*	*October 1991*	*April 1992*
Northern	1,639	1,652	1,657
Yorkshire	1,953	1,964	1,968
Trent	2,402	2,424	2,445
East Anglia	1,112	1,128	1,142
North West Thames	1,998	1,968	1,975
North East Thames	2,050	2,042	2,046
South East Thames	1,947	1,965	1,980
South West Thames	1,576	1,575	1,578
Wessex	1,591	1,605	1,624
Oxford	1,357	1,374	1,377
South Western	1,980	1,994	2,018
West Midlands	2,736	2,721	2,725
Mersey	1,249	1,250	1,249
North Western	2,032	2,024	2,039

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been removed from their general practitioner's lists in each month from January 1992 to January 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what stage *(a)* drafts and *(b)* copies of letters from chief executives of agencies within her responsibility, in response to parliamentary questions, are submitted to Ministers.

Mr. Sackville: Chief executives reply directly to hon. Members on matters delegated to them. Ministers have the opportunity to see replies when they are published in *Hansard*.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had in regard to compensating people with haemophilia who have contracted hepatitis in the course of treatment under the NHS; what reply she is sending; what action she will be taking; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I shall be writing to the right hon. Member in response to his representations soon.

The Government recognised the special case for making payments to haemophiliacs and recipients of blood or tissue infected with HIV through medical treatment within the United Kingdom. There are no plans to extend these special payments.

Drugs

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on drug costs in each member state of the European Community.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health does not formally monitor the levels or movement of prices for individual drugs in the other member states.

The consensus which emerges from various independent studies carried out in this field is that prices in the United Kingdom are slightly above the average for the EC. The most recent information available is for 1990 and is taken from a study by Dr. Diener of the German Pharmacists Association, ABDA. He in turn based his work on a 1988 study by BEUC, an umbrella grouping for European consumer organisations.

If the price of a basket of commonly-used pharmaceuticals is adjusted for local factors, such as varying rates of VAT, prices were higher in Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland. The adjusted price, for the same basket of drugs, was lower in all the other member states.

Many member states are currently taking steps to reduce central government expenditure on drugs, by a variety of means such as across-the-board price reductions, limiting the availability of certain products, increasing patient co-payments and encouraging more rational prescribing.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the composition of the advisory committee on NHS drugs; for how long appointees have served on the committee; and what was the level of remuneration, where appropriate.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of the members and the dates they were appointed are as follows:

	First appointed
Chairman	
Dr. Jeremy Metters	1989
Members	
Professor Alasdair Breckenridge	1985
Professor Mark Castleden	1990
Mr. David Coleman	1985
Professor Hugh Edmondson	1987
Professor David Ganderton	1985
Dr. Iona Heath	1990
Dr. Derwyn Jones	1992
Professor Ronald Jones	1990
Mr. Alan Kerr	1990
Dr. Elizabeth Poskitt	1989
Dr. Jane Richards	1989
Dr. Charles Swan	1991
Professor Peter Tyrer	1989
Dr. Dorothy Ward	1991

Members other than the Chairman receive a fee of £100 for attending each meeting.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list what is the procedure for *(a)* pharmaceutical companies and *(b)* those who prescribe drugs to (i) ask for a particular drug to be included in the selected list and (ii) overturn a decision to blacklist a drug from the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: Manufacturers are notified before their products are reviewed by the advisory committee on national health service drugs and given a further opportunity to make representations against any decision to add a product to the list of drugs which cannot be prescribed under the NHS before it is finalised. Prescribers can also make their views known to the committee.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the representations she has received from *(a)* the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, *(b)* those who prescribe drugs and *(c)* others, to extend the number of drugs on the current selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received no such representations.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with *(a)* representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and *(b)* the advisory committee on NHS drugs, about research and development into new products and medicines that may be affected by the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry on 19 November and discussed the implications of extending the selected list scheme. The advisory committee on national health service drugs is able to take into account any matters brought to its attention by the manufacturers of individual products, in the light of its remit to ensure that drugs to meet all clinical need in the specified categories can be provided as economically as possible under the NHS.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what procedures are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the advisory committee on NHS drugs;

(2) what consultations there have been on the effectiveness of the advisory committee on NHS drugs since its introduction.

Dr. Mawhinney: The committee has demonstrated its effectiveness by enabling downward pressure to be applied to the growth of the drugs bill without patient care being prejudiced. We expect it to continue to do so.

Drug Prescription

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list those drugs which have been deleted from the current selected list and their manufacturers;

(2) if she will list the drugs that have been included on the selected list since 1985; and if she will list them and their manufacturers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The selected list scheme specifies those categories of drugs which are to be reviewed by the advisory committee on national health service drugs, with a view to advising the Health Departments which particular products within those categories should not be available for NHS prescription. The list of drugs which currently cannot be prescribed by general practitioners under the NHS is published in the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulation 1992. Names of the relevant manufacturers could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Over-the-Counter Medicines

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the availability of over-the-counter medicines.

Dr. Mawhinney: We intend to extend the range of medicines which may be supplied over the counter without prescription where this can be done safely. We have recently revised our procedures to facilitate and speed up reclassification of medicines from prescription only to over the counter status.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has held with the Wessex regional health authority on the confidential district auditor's report on the Wessex RHA RISP—regional information systems plan—project; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Management Executive have held a number of discussions with the Wessex regional health authority about the RISP project and the findings of the district auditor.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role her Department played in the decision of the Wessex regional health authority not to take legal action against IBM and Andersen regarding the RISP project.

Mr. Sackville: This was and remains a matter for the regional health authority.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role her Department played in the settlement obtained by the Wessex regional health authority with AT and T Istel, in connection with the RISP project; and what sums were paid to the Wessex regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The settlement reached between AT and T Istel in connection with the RISP computer project was entirely a matter for the Wessex regional health authority and AT and T Istel.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date she received the district auditor's confidential report on the Wessex regional health authority RISP project; what action she took; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Wessex regional health authority supplied the Department with a copy of certain confidential material provided by the district auditor in July 1992. The RHA is taking action to follow up that material and the Department is closely monitoring the position.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken on the report of the district auditor into losses on computer contracts by Wessex regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: Remedial action has been taken by the Wessex regional health authority to address many of the problems associated with RISP. These have included:

(i) bringing the IBM 3090 computer into use on the basis of independent advice, and the disposal of surplus computing equipment;

(ii) an investigation of payments made to some contractors;

(iii) an investigation of allegations of fraud;
(iv) a review of IT contracts and the procedures used to negotiate them;
(v) the creation of an IT directorate and the provision of effective contract management;
(vi) a comprehensive review and overhaul of all financial systems. Standing Orders have been revised;
(vii) legal action to recover amounts overpaid to contractors;
(viii) seeking competitive tenders and letting contracts for the provision of computing services on the basis of independent advice;
(ix) a move away from central control of IT towards a more client orientated/partnership approach;
(x) the commissioning and implementation of new procedures for the control and letting of contracts together with improved monitoring procedures;
(xi) rationalisation of future computer usage; and
(xii) improvements in the standard and style of reporting on all major issues to all members of the WRHA.

This action is reported and commended in the district auditor's report.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish the confidential district auditor's report on the Wessex regional health authority RISP project;

(2) what plans she has to publish the district auditor's report on Wessex regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The district auditor undertook an investigation of the RISP computer project at the invitation of the Wessex RHA's regional general manager. A report in the public interest was published on 24 July 1992.

The publication of any additional confidential material is entirely a matter for the RHA. As the district auditor made clear in his statement of 4 February 1993. the information he provided, outside the report in the public interest, if published, may prejudice police inquiries and civil proceedings.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *46*, to whom in the Wessex regional health authority advice was given regarding the inclusion of penalty and performance targets in the contract between the RHA and Wessex Integrated Systems; what reply was received; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Advice on contractual matters was given to the then regional general manager, who indicated that the regional health authority would consider the Department's advice when reviewing the contract between the RHA and WIS.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *46*, to what extent action taken by Wessex regional health authority officials regarding the inclusion of penalty and performance contracts in the regional health authority's contract with WIS was in accordance with her Department's advice.

Mr. Sackville: Detailed information about the contract entered into by the Wessex regional health authority with WIS is entirely a matter for the RHA.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve the management of Wessex regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service in Wessex delivers a good service to patients in the region and I am confident that management in the regional health authority is discharging its role properly.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instructions have been given to senior staff at Wessex regional health authority about discussing losses on computer contracts with the press and hon. Members.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Drugs Advisory Committee

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the representations there have been from pharmaceutical manufacturers regarding the new posts on the advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Director of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 December on this matter. A reply was sent on 25 January.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria appointees to the advisory committee on NHS drugs have to meet.

Dr. Mawhinney: Members are appointed to the advisory committee on national health service drugs on the basis of their professional expertise and experience in relevant areas, following consultation with appropriate professional bodies.

Chemical Entity Products

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those new chemical entity products that were made available to the NHS since 1985 that would have been covered by the areas on the original selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: The United Kingdom licensing authority has no information as to whether products have been made available to the national health service. Product licences for the following new chemical entities have been granted by the United Kingdom licensing authority since 1985 in the therapeutic categories originally covered by the selected list scheme.

Therapeutic category	*Product name*	*Drug name*
Indigestion remedy	Prepulsid	Cisapride
Laxative	Importal	Lactitol Monohydrate
Vitamin	Elcarn	L-carnitine

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those new chemical entity products covered by the areas on the new selected list that have been made available to the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The United Kingdom licensing authority has no information as to whether products have been made available to the national health service. Product licences for the following new chemical entities have been granted by the United Kingdom licensing authority in the therapeutic categories to which the selected list scheme has recently been extended.

Therapeutic category	*Product Name*	*Drug Name*
Anti-Diarrhoeal	Imodium	Loperamide
Allergic Disorders	Zirtex	Cetirizine

Therapeutic category	Product Name	Drug Name
	Semprex	Acrivastine
	Tavegil	Clemastine
	Tinset	Oxatomide
	Hismanal	Astemizole
	Triludan	Terfenadine
Hypnotics and Anxiolytics	Rohypnol	Fluntrazepam
	Lexotan	Bromazepam
	Xanax	Alprazolam
	Noctamid	Lormetazepam
	Zimovane	Zopiclone
	Buspar	Buspirone
	Frisium	Clobazam
	Loprazolam	Loprazolam
Appetite Suppressants	Adifax	Dexfenfluramine
Vaginal and Vulval conditions	Gyno-Pevaryl	Econazone
Contraceptives	Femodene	Gestodene and Ethinyloestradiol
	Cilest	Norgestimate and Ethinyloestradiol
	Ovran	Levo Norgestrel and Ethinyloestradiol
	Noristerat	Norethisterone Enanhate
	Marvelon	Desogestrel and Ethinyloestradiol
Drugs used in Anaemia	Eprex	Epoetin
Topical Antirheumatics	Difflam	Benzydamine
Drugs acting on the Ear and Nose	Exterol	Urea Hydrogen Peroxide
	Syntaris	Flunisolide
	Flixonase	Fluticasone
	Rhinolast	Azelastine
Drugs Acting on the Skin	Retin A	Tretinoin
	Visderm	Amcinonide
	Daktarin	Miconazole
	Sulcosyn	Sulconazole
	Decoderm	Fluprednidene
	Iodosorb	Cadexomer Iodine
	Bactroban	Mupirocin
	Exelderm	Succonazole
	Modrasone	Alclometasone
	Mycospor	Bifonazole
	Epogam	Gamolenic Acid
	Lyclear	Permethrin
	Loceryl	Amorolfone
	Neotigason	Acitratin
	Dovonex	Calcipotriol
	Travase	Sutilaine
	Lamisil	Terbinafine
	Dermovate	Clobetasol
	Eumovate	Clobetasone
	Debrisan	Dextranomer
	Tigason	Etretinate
	Roaccutane	Isotretinoin
	Halciderm	Halcinonide
	Trosyl	Ticonazole
	Exoderil	Naftifine
	Skinoren	Azelaic Acid
	Efalith	Lithium Succinate and Zinc Sulphate
	Elocon	Mometasone

Community Care Support Force

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his reply of 2 February, if he will list those local health authorities that have invited the assistance of the community care support force.

Mr. Yeo: The community care support force has visited 27 local authorities. It is not appropriate to list these authorities by name.

Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the level of capital expenditure on the new ward block at the Royal Victoria infirmary, Newcastle after the completion of the initial contract in July 1991;

(2) when she expects the obstetrics and gynaecology wards to open at the Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary Trust new ward block; and what further additional capital cost will be involved;

(3) pursuant to her answer of 2 February, col. *155*, if she will list the value and purpose of the additional contracts, capital spending or post-contract variations at the Newcastle Royal Victoria infirmary's new ward block.

Mr. Sackville: The post-contract modifications to implement the decision to amalgamate obstetrics and gynaecology at the new ward block, are expected to cost £6·2 million. The gynaecological ward will open on schedule on 29 March 1993, and the obstetric ward is planned to open on 8 November 1993. Additionally, the antenatal clinic on the site is expected to cost £2·1 million and is also planned to open on 8 November 1993. No additional capital costs are anticipated.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the original estimated capital cost for the unified ophthalmology service at the Royal Victoria infirmary, Newcastle when selected by her for special funding; when this estimated cost was submitted; and what the cost is now.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated capital cost of unifying ophthalmology services at the Royal Victoria Infirmary when the scheme was submitted to the Secretary of State on 2 May 1992 was £7·6 million. The final cost should be contained within this sum.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the ward and other facilities for kidney treatment in-patients to open at the Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary Trust new ward block; and what further additional capital cost will be involved.

Mr. Sackville: Ward 36 for renal medicine and transplant services was opened as planned on 5 January 1993. Ward 37, for dialysis of both in-patients and out-patients is open and in partial use. No further capital costs will be incurred in commissioning these facilities.

Hepatitis B Vaccination

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review her Department's guidelines on the screening and vaccination of health care workers in relation to the hepatitis B virus.

Mr. Sackville: The 1992 edition of "Immunisation against Infectious Disease", issued to all doctors and to

other health professionals with immunisation responsibilities, contains advice on immunisation against hepatitis B for risk groups, including health care personnel.

The advisory group on hepatitis, which advises United Kingdom health departments, has produced revised guidelines designed to prevent transmission of hepatitis B from health care workers. These have gone out to consultation with professional bodies and the national health service, and they should be available for distribution later this year.

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health service authorities have used their capital reserves to maintain dental services since July 1992; and how much they are spending from the reserves.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no reason to believe that any family health service authority is using capital reserve funds for this purpose.

Computerisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the computerisation of each region of the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There is no specific plan to review computerisation of each region of the national health service. There is a national strategic framework for the development of information management and technology which contains major computing elements.

Individual regions will make plans within that strategy and the NHS management executive will monitor the approach of each region against nationally defined standards.

Juveniles (Secure Accommodation)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date she asked local authorities to bid for the available capital funds to provide secure accommodation for juvenile offenders; and if she will place a copy of the invitation in the Library.

Mr. Yeo: Following the national steering group's assessment of demand for an additional 60-65 places nationally, last summer, local authorities were approached collectively and individually to consider how they would respond to meet the national steering group's assessment.

Regional Health Authority Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the contracting out of services undertaken by each regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The White Paper "Competing for Quality" published in November 1991 set out the case for the use of market testing procedures to test the quality and cost effectiveness of services in central Government and the national health service.

Revised guidance on market testing will be published shortly. Regional health authorities will be asked to follow the guidance where they undertake market testing of their own headquarters and other services.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities have used their reserves in the last quarter of the financial year 1992-93 or have plans to use their reserves, and by what amount; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Oral Contraceptives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the effects of high doses of hormones on women taking oral contraceptives.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Oral contraceptives containing high doses of hormones are more likely than low-dose preparations to cause side-effects. The most serious side-effects include high blood pressure, thrombosis and thromboembolism involving the heart and lungs, but occur rarely in women without predisposing factors. To minimise side-effects doctors are advised to use the lowest effective dose and the use of oral contraceptives in those with significant predisposing factors for cardiovascular disease is discouraged.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 10 February 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Privity of Contract and Estate

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when it is intended to introduce legislation to implement the Law Commission's report on "Privity of Contract and Estate"—Law Commission No. 95; and what representations the Lord Chancellor has received from the business community about legislation on this subject.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the recommendations of the Law Commission on this subject and hopes to be able to make an announcement in the near future. He has received representations from both tenants and landlords and is well aware of their respective interests.

Parking Fines (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the revenue from on-street parking fines in Liverpool for the past three financial years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The fines, fees and fixed penalties collected by the magistrates courts are remitted to the Exchequer as an aggregate amount and the proportion relating to parking penalties cannot therefore be separately identified.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the adult population in England is currently eligible for legal aid; and what is his estimate of the proportion of the adult population which after 1 April will be eligible for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Estimates of eligibility that have been made are based on family expenditure survey data and relate to households. The proportion of households currently eligible for civil legal aid is estimated to be between 50 and 55 per cent. in England and Wales. I estimate that after the changes are introduced in April about 48 per cent. of households in England and Wales will be eligible for civil legal aid. There is no upper financial limit for criminal legal aid: all those whose financial resources are such that they require assistance in meeting their costs are eligible and will continue to be eligible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Martial Arts Weapons

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ban the importation of martial arts knives and similar weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The importation of 14 types of offensive weapon, including certain martial arts knives, is already prohibited by virtue of an order made under section 141 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

My right hon. and learned Friend will consider, in the light of all the evidence, whether further restrictions on the importation of any offensive weapon that is brought to his attention are necessary.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A provisional list of regulations that impact on business has recently been put together by my Department. I shall place the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Prison, Fazakerley

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a decision has yet been made on the proposal to build a prison at Fazakerley in Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government believe that there is a clear need for more secure prison places in the north-west. A new prison at Fazakerley would enable us to locate many prisoners from Merseyside much closer to home than is now possible. I have looked into the concerns expressed against building a prison at Fazakerley, but have concluded that the site is suitable for such a use. In view of the planning authority's reservations the matter will now be referred to the Secretary of State for the Environment who will consider its request that the matter should be the subject of a public inquiry.

Police Restructuring

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation he has had, or proposes to have, with the Greater Manchester police authority about the restructuring of police forces and police authorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has not held discussions with individual police authorities. He is considering what reforms in police organisation and structure may be needed. He will announce his proposals as soon as possible. Interested parties will be consulted before final decisions are reached.

Drugs, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies he intends to promote to tackle drug problems in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Jack: The Government's overall strategy for tackling drug misuse is aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs throughout the United Kingdom.

Local drugs prevention teams have been set up in both Manchester and Salford under the Home Office drugs prevention initiative, and they will continue to work with the local community in finding effective ways of preventing the spread of drug misuse.

Greater Manchester, like other areas, will also benefit from other aspects of the Government's drug strategy such as the assistance we are providing to other countries to help reduce the supply of drugs into this country and the tougher controls which we are introducing on precursor and essential chemicals.

At the national level, we are committed to bringing forward proposals to ensure that the control of drug misuse is co-ordinated effectively, and the Criminal Justice Bill which we hope to bring before the House shortly, further tightens the law on drug trafficking and money laundering.

Youth Crime, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to deal with car crimes committed by young people in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Jack: The Government has encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes aimed at tackling youth crime and has funded a number of initiatives. The Home Office safer cities projects in the Greater Manchester area, Salford and Rochdale, have committed £120,000 and £18,000 respectively in 1992-93 to schemes aimed at diverting young people from crime, including car crime. We also established local drug prevention teams in Manchester and Salford in February 1992 with the aim of tackling the spread of drug misuse, particularly among the young. In addition the Home Office currently funds four projects which, in the main, are aimed at providing programmes of supervision or support for young offenders and defendants, in the Greater Manchester probation area through its probation supervision grant scheme. An application in respect of a go-kart project is in the early stages of consideration. The Department of Education announced recently that Manchester is to receive £147,000 in 1992-1993 under its grants for education support and training programme for youth crime prevention schemes. Five estates are targeted and the schemes will focus on car crime and burglary.

As part of its programme of action on youth crime for 1993, Crime Concern is planning a series of regional seminars, one of which is to be held in the north-west, on best practice in diverting young people from crime.

The Government are also considering what means might be needed to reduce offending by the very small group of persistent juvenile offenders.

Wolds Prison

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grade of staff member has been appointed race relations liaison officer at the Wolds prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The post of race relations liaison officer at HM prison Wolds is held by the training manager. Staff at Wolds are not ascribed grades as such.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults on staff there were at the Wolds prison between 1 July and 31 December 1992; and what was the average population of prisoners at the Wolds during this period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the period in question there were 16 assaults on staff by prisoners. The average prisoner population was 195.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disciplinary adjudications were carried out at the Wolds prison in the most recent convenient month; in how many cases prisoners were found guilty; in how many cases prospective loss of remission was ordered; and what was the average number of days' remission forfeited.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In December 1992, 71 adjudications were carried out at HM prison Wolds. Prisoners were found guilty in 62 cases and punishment of prospective added days was used in 22 cases. The average number of days forfeited was 3·8.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults by prisoners on other prisoners took place at the Wolds prison between 1 July and 31 December 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Twelve incidents of assault by prisoners on other prisoners took place at HM prison Wolds during the period in question.

Prison Staff (Ethnic Origins)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* black and *(b)* female prison officers, there were in 1963, 1970, 1980, 1990 and at the latest available date; and what proportion these figures form of the total prison staff establishment;

(2) how many *(a)* black and *(b)* female prison governors, there were in 1963, 1970, 1980, 1990 and at the latest available date; and what proportion these figures form of the total number of prison governors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service is currently in the process of conducting a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of its staff, and until that survey is complete we shall not have comprehensive data. However, the tables set out the information currently available on staff who have recorded their ethnic origin as other than white.

Prison officer grades

	Total number in officer grades	Number of non-white officers		Number of women officers	
			per cent.		per cent.
1 February 1993	24,135	173	0·7	2,106	8·7
1 January 1990	20,710	26	0·1	1,711	8·3
1 January 1980	15,548	[1]	—	629	4·0

[1] Figures not available.

Governor grades

	Total number in governor grades	Number of non-white staff in governor grades	Number of women officers in governor grades	
				per cent.
1 February 1993	1,024	0	92	9·0
1 January 1990	884	0	86·5	9·8
1 January 1980	565	[1]	40	7·1

[1] Figures not available.

Figures for 1963 and 1970 are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, if at all. Figures for prison officers relate to unified grades from prison officer to principal officer.

Prison Officers

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers are working in prisons where the prisoners are of the opposite sex.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 1,124 female prison officers work in establishments with male prisoners and 110 male prison officers work in establishments with female prisoners. One hundred and sixty-one female prison officers and 649 male prison officers work in establishments with prisoners of both sexes.

Prisoners (Cardphones)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons prisoners now have access to cardphones; and when inmates of all prisons will have access to cardphones.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Cardphones for prisoners' use are available in all establishments in England and Wales, except Durham prison and Wormwood Scrubs, where installation is due to take place by the end of February.

Prisoners' Clothing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons sentenced prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes; and what plans he has to extend this to all prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prisoners other than convicted male prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes, and the Government aim progressively to allow convicted male prisoners to wear their own clothes.

Prisoners at Belmarsh, High Down and Woodhill prisons have been allowed to wear their own clothes since they opened in 1991 and 1992. Formal trials are being held at Her Majesty's prison Wellingborough and in Huntercombe and Finnamore Wood young offender institutions to assess the implications of a more general move towards prisoners wearing their own clothes. In addition, some other establishments allow male convicted prisoners to wear certain items of their own clothing.

Prisoners in category C and D establishments, including open young offender institutions, are allowed to wear their own socks and underwear if adequate laundering or exchange arrangements are available and they may also be allowed to wear their own shoes.

The scope for further relaxations will be considered later this year in the light of the trials.

Prison Service Agency

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the framework agreement for the Prison Service Agency to be finalised.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I plan to publish the agency's framework document on 1 April, when the agency is launched.

Remand Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if all area criminal justice consultative committees have discussed the Criminal Justice Consultative Council paper on prisoners awaiting trial and reported back to the council.

Mr. Jack: All area committees are to discuss this paper which was published on 1 December 1992. Those that have not already dealt with this matter are scheduled to do so at their next meeting.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults by prisoners on other prisoners took place in male prisons holding remand prisoners in the most recent six-month period for which figures are available; and what was the average population of those prisons during that period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provisional figure for assaults by prisoners on other prisoners in male prisons holding remand prisoners during July to December 1992 is 460 and the average population was 17,162.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults on staff there were in male prisons holding remand prisoners in the most recent six months period for which figures are available; and what was the average population of those prisons during that period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provisional figure for assaults on staff, including attempted assaults, in male prisons holding remand prisoners during July to December 1992 is 535 and the average population was 17,162.

Criminal Justice Consultative Council

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how often the Criminal Justice Consultative Council has met; and what topics it has discussed;

(2) what plans there are for the Criminal Justice Consultative Council to produce an annual report of its work; and when it will be published.

Mr. Jack: The Criminal Justice Consultative Council has met on five occasions. It has discussed the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; the establishment of area criminal justice liaison committees; projections for the criminal justice system; prisoners awaiting trial; race issues within the criminal justice system; the mode of trial decisions and sentencing; notification of guilty pleas at an early stage; the public expenditure survey 1992 as it relates to the criminal justice system; the criminal justice special conferences programme 1993-94 and its own programme of work.

The council will produce a report of its first year's work which will be published after its next meeting on 22 April.

Prisoners (Televisions)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons prisoners are allowed television in their cells; and what plans he has to extend this to all prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the announcement in the White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice", a trial of battery-operated televisions began at HMP The Mount in December 1991 and of mains-powered sets at HMP Stocken in October 1992. Television in cells has also been allowed in some other establishments, including HMP Garth and HM young offenders institution, Feltham, and we are considering allowing televisions in cells in some other prisons.

The trials are addressing a number of issues including safety, security, licensing, cost and effects on prisoners' behaviour and participation in regime activities. The trials are being evaluated and decisions on whether to extend the availability of in-cell television further will be taken as soon as possible.

Prison Meals

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to serve meals in prisons at times of day which correspond more closely to mealtimes outside prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A model regime for local prisons and remand centres was published in November 1992 which governors are expected to work towards. This sets out reasonable times at which meals should be served. A code of standards for the Prison Service is also being developed, for publication by the end of the year, and is expected to include provisions about mealtimes. At contracted prisons, there is a contractual obligation to provide meals at normal times.

Prison Staff (Name Badges)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons staff now wear name badges; and when staff in all prisons will be required to wear name badges.

Mr. Jack: It is a commitment by Her Majesty's Prison Service that all staff in both headquarters and establishments will be required to wear name badges from 1 April 1993 when they come in contact with the general public and prisoners. Many staff have already been issued with their name badges and are being encouraged to begin wearing them, but as the manufacture and issue of these name badges is a rolling programme aimed for completion by 19 March 1993, it is not possible at this point in the programme to indicate how many prison establishments have received their badges.

Police Officers (Plumstead)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposed number of police officers in the Plumstead division of the Metropolitan police for 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* There are currently 257 officers in the Plumstead division.

Allocation of officers in the Metropolitan police district is a matter for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police. I understand that at present there are no plans to alter the number of officers stationed at Plumstead.

Prison Education

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many potential contractors have bid to provide prison education services in 1993-94; how many bids are from local education authorities; and how many are from colleges of further education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 11 January 1993, c. 597.]:* A total of 154 bids have been received to provide future education services in one or a number of prison establishments. Of these, 113 are from colleges and institutions of further education, 28 from private sector organisations and 13 from local education authorities.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science Budget

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the distribution of the science budget in 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have considered the Advisory Board for the Research Councils' recommendations on the

distribution of the science budget, and have decided to accept the advice that the £1,164·56 million for 1993-94 should, subject to approval by Parliament of the estimates in due course, be allocated as follows:

Allocations for 1993-94	*£ million*
Agricultural and Food Research Council	109·8
Economic and Social Research Council	53·5
Medical Research Council	256·9
Natural Environment Research Council	140·0
Science and Engineering Research Council	582·1
The Royal Society	18·5
The Royal Academy of Engineering	1·7
Other, including OST initiatives, ABRC Science Policy Studies and CEST subscription	2·0
	1,164·6

I am publishing the board's advice today. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

European Bioinformatics Institute

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps the Government are taking to secure the establishment of the European Bioinformatics Institute in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to announce that the United Kingdom has today submitted a bid to host the European Bioinformatics Institute at Cambridge. This presents an exciting and important opportunity for the United Kingdom to secure an international research facility at the forefront of modern science and in an area of great and increasing importance for health care and for industry.

The EBI will be an out-station of the European molecular biology laboratory in Heidelberg. Its task will be to provide a database of biological information to researchers throughout Europe. The bid is being underwritten by the Medical Research Council, with support from the Wellcome Trust. Copies of the full text have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Scientists

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he is considering to provide incentives for scientists to continue to work within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government provide substantial funding to maintain a healthy science base in this country and to ensure continuing opportunities for our scientists. The question of career structures for scientists is one which is being examined in the context of the forthcoming White Paper on science and technology.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Investment Bank

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the new projects that are to be submitted for financing by the European investment bank and their approximate cost.

Mr. Nelson: The European investment bank—EIB—is required by its statute to seek the opinion of EC member states in whose territory a project is situated before considering it for approval. The Government are, and will remain, in close contact with the EIB, to discuss proposals submitted by United Kingdom organisations for new investment projects. However, projects under consideration are classified by the EIB as commercially confidential and it would therefore be inappropriate for the Government to list those in the United Kingdom, before the loans had been approved by the bank's board of directors.

Household Debt

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of debt per household for every £100 of disposable income for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the level of household debt outstanding are not available. The levels of debt of the personal sector, which includes apart from households, all unincorporated private businesses, sole traders, partnerships, non-profit-making bodies, serving persons and private trusts, per £100 of disposable income for the years 1979-91 were as follows:

	£
1979	57
1980	57
1981	62
1982	67
1983	74
1984	79
1985	85
1986	90
1987	98
1988	106
1989	111
1990	116
1991	116

Charities (VAT Rebates)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received to date calling for the introduction of a VAT rebate scheme for charities within the next Budget.

Sir John Cope: A considerable number.

Debt Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *225*, when the new contracting terms for Government contractors to be paid within 30 days came into effect.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* Guidance was issued on 14 April 1992 to all Government Departments and executive agencies. For all contract award procedures initiated after that date, all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract, or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

SCOTLAND

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Since November 1991 two firms of consultants have been used by my Department in connection with my market testing programme. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte helped to undertake the initial scoping exercise to identify possible activities for market testing in my Department. Capita Management Consultancy is being used to assist my Department in undertaking the 1992-93 market testing programme. The total cost of these consultants up to the end of December 1992 has been £207,625 excluding VAT and expenses.

Drinking Water

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the report on drinking water quality in Scotland in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: A report has been published today by the Scottish Office Environment Department which gives an overview of drinking water quality in Scotland in 1991, under the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 and associated regulations. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The report shows that drinking water quality in 1991 has improved since 1990 as a result of the action taken by authorities to deal with water quality problems. In 1991, 98 per cent. of all regulatory determinands met the prescribed standards compared with 97 per cent. in 1990. Reported data also showed that for 48 out of 55 numerical standards, 99.8 per cent. of analytical results complied compared with 99.6 per cent. in 1990.

The failures to meet quality standards fully did not represent a risk to public health.

Ministers' Health

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice is given to Ministers in his Department *(a)* concerning their own personal fitness and *(b)* their role in promoting good health by example.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer of 21 January 1993]*: Having published the policy statement "Scotland's Health: A Challenge To Us All", my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues are fully aware of the life style factors which contribute to personal fitness and good health. We are also firmly committed to the undertaking in the statement that the Scottish Office will develop health promotion policies as exemplars for other employers, and this process has already begun.

Shetlands (Oil Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his Department took before authorising the use of chemical dispersants on the Braer oil slick off the Shetland Islands.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 January 1993]*: My Department's marine scientists have extensive knowledge of dispersants because of their long involvement with the North sea offshore oil industry. The limits on the sea area in which spraying could take place followed discussions which local fisheries and environmental interests.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what permission he has given for the use of Dispolene 34S and Enersperse dispersants to break up the oil slick from the Braer tanker accident off Shetland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 January 1993]*: My Department authorised the use of type 2 and type 3 dispersants, of which Dispolene and Enersperse are two varieties.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the preparedness of further education colleges to transfer from local authority control on 1 April 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 January 1993]*: Colleges are in a good state of readiness. New management structures are in place and the necessary management systems are being set up. Those working in colleges are to be congratulated on the good progress which has been made.

Tree Planting

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hectares of *(a)* Forestry Commission planting, *(b)* private planting and *(c)* new trees have been planted in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales and (iii) England each year since 1981; and what were the Government targets for these years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]*: Information on the planting undertaken by the Forestry Commission and the private sector since 1981 is given in the tables.

My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. Younger, stated on 10 December 1980, *Official Report*, column 927:

"there should be scope for new planting to continue in the immediate future at broadly the rate of the past 25 years"

that is about 30,000 hectares a year. In his statement on the rural economy made on 9 February 1987, *Official Report*, columns *38-39*, my right hon. Friend the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. Jopling, announced that the Government's new planting aim would be changed to 33,000 hectares a year. This remains the indicative level.

Forestry Commission planting

hectares

Year ending 31 March	*New planting*		*Restocking*	
	broadleaves	*conifer*	*broadleaves*	*conifer*
Scotland				
1982	36	10,058	14	2,023
1983	50	7,971	15	2,274
1984	36	7,674	15	2,632
1985	42	4,735	16	2,429
1986	41	3,997	71	3,292

Year ending 31 March	New planting broadleaves	New planting conifer	Restocking broadleaves	Restocking conifer
1987	221	4,845	212	3,107
1988	297	4,320	382	3,145
1989	243	3,671	283	3,561
1990	224	3,563	298	3,486
1991	191	3,275	211	3,453
1992	223	2,651	270	3,358
Wales				
1982	0	326	21	1,503
1983	11	425	11	1,471
1984	4	271	15	1,524
1985	12	149	32	1,268
1986	2	47	29	1,749
1987	3	135	168	1,767
1988	9	148	119	1,922
1989	0	61	119	1,617
1990	10	86	91	1,273
1991	3	12	82	1,390
1992	5	50	175	1,599
England				
1982	15	543	125	1,824
1983	23	406	178	1,849
1984	11	386	211	2,356
1985	7	160	88	2,083
1986	13	233	206	1,950
1987	46	92	374	2,410
1988	67	111	323	2,286
1989	31	99	376	2,519
1990	27	171	433	2,284
1991	7	27	323	2,163
1992	17	53	345	2,513

Private sector planting

Hectares

Year Ending 31 March	New Planting Broadleaves	New Planting Conifer	Restocking Broardleaves	Restocking Conifer
Scotland				
1982	56	10,607	105	1,234
1983	95	9,991	63	905
1984	141	13,988	88	931
1985	127	14,008	122	1,055
1986	245	17,047	184	1,375
1987	439	16,781	266	1,281
1988	1,084	20,113	448	1,212
1989	1,551	20,882	657	1,591
1990	2,284	9,204	852	1,132
1991	2,640	7,923	1,170	1,670
1992	2,540	7,285	1,168	2,042
Wales				
1982	41	963	36	187
1983	60	851	48	108
1984	90	974	29	84
1985	34	884	46	76
1986	41	702	72	362
1987	134	574	51	229
1988	262	683	134	342
1989	213	710	104	152
1990	232	320	161	109
1991	228	282	153	143
1992	218	[illegible]	219	360
England				
1982	297	498	726	1,162
1983	445	1,069	800	1,194
1984	447	1,033	916	1,019
1985	434	542	884	883
1986	563	421	1,236	1,110
1987	775	444	1,522	1,122
1988	1,149	530	1,745	973
1989	997	755	1,414	916
1990	2,611	755	2,532	1,339
1991	3,455	908	2,824	1,146
1992	3,275	691	2,590	1,452

WALES

Wayne Darvell

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what reasons underlay his decision on the provision of community support for Wayne Darvell following his release after the quashing last year of his conviction for murder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The assessment of need for, and provision of, services in the community for any individual is a matter for the relevant statutory authorities—including the social services authority and/or health authority—acting in consultation with one another. I am advised that West Glamorgan social services department had already sought to give help to Mr. Darvell when he was in their area. Most recently, I understand Mr. Darvell is now living in South Glamorgan where he has been seen by health and social services staff who are discussing his needs with him.

Travellers and Displaced Persons

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the date on which his Department invited local authorities to bid for the specific grants for the education of travellers and displaced persons in the financial year 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No new bids have been invited for 1993-94. The programme for 1993-94 will support expenditure of £100,000 relating to ongoing projects in Gwynedd, Dyfed and South Glamorgan.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns 2-3, if he will give further details of the capital programme for the year 1993-94 and the percentage rate of increase thereof since the year 1987-88.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish figures for *(a)* the gross budget for capital expenditure and *(b)* [illegible] budget for capital expenditure in respect of his Department's programmes (i) for each year from 1987-88 to 1992-93 and (ii) planned for 1993-94;

(2) if he will publish figures for *(a)* gross capital expenditure and *(b)* net capital expenditure in respect of his Department's programmes for each year from 1987-88 to 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Capital expenditure within the responsibility of and allocated by the Welsh Office[1]

£ million

	Gross expenditure	*Net expenditure*
[2]1987-88	981	822
[2]1988-89	1,050	777
[2]1989-90	1,206	910
[2]1990-91	1,220	1,037
[2]1991-92	1,288	1,136
[3]1992-93	1,369	1,180
[4]1993-94	1,497	1,257

[1] The figures do not take account of changes in functional responsibilities.
[2] Outturn.
[3] 1992-93—Forecast Outturn. The special package of housing measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1992 Autumn Statement—£38 million—is additional to the forecast outturn shown.
[4] 1993-94—Plans. Planned gross expenditure in 1993-94—£1,497 million—represents an increase of 52·6 per cent. over the outturn for 1987-88; an increase of 8 per cent. in real terms.

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish the right of employees of statutory bodies in Wales to make claims for a specified number of work days each year for attending courses to assist with the reading, writing and speaking of Welsh.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of opportunities for employees to learn Welsh is a matter for individual employers and organisations to consider.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much financial assistance has been provided by his Department to establish Welsh language learning centres in Wales in each of the last five years; and if he will list the amount granted to each centre.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office awards grant aid to a number of organisations which support Welsh language learning, for example the Urdd, local authorities and the learners' organisation CYD. Figures for grants awarded in respect of learning centres run by these organisations are not kept separately. However, direct support for the Welsh language centres at Nant Gwrtheyrn and Canolfan Iaith Clwyd over the last five years has been as follows:

Year	*Total*
1988-89	49,000
1989-90	76,000
1990-91	105,000
1991-92	93,500
[1]1992-93	103,000

[1] Provision.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated by his Department in each of the last five years to assist directly the marketing of Welsh learners' courses for adults.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Direct Welsh Office support for teaching Welsh to adults over the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93 is as follows. Figures for previous years were not kept separately.

Year	*£*
1990-91	538,000
1991-92	645,000
1992-93	[1]697,000

[1] Provision.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hired consultants have been employed by *(a)* central and *(b)* local government and by the public sector excluding local government in Wales to advise on the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering to (i) professional and specialist services, (ii) executive and clerical operations, (iii) office services and (iv) estate and construction services since the publication of the "Competing for Quality" White Paper; and what was the total cost of hiring consultants according to (1) the type of work to be tendered and (2) the organisation conducting or partaking in the tendering process.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available in the form requested. Three firms of consultants have been employed by the Welsh Office to advise on the Department's own current market testing programme. The cost to date of employing these consultants is £25,000. Information on the employment of consultants by other parts of the public sector is not collected centrally.

Air Quality

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on recent air quality audits conducted in Wales by the Warren Spring Laboratory on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Warren Spring Laboratory conducted a survey of nitrogen dioxide levels in the United Kingdom in 1991-92. All the readings for Wales were well below EC guideline limits.

The laboratory is also currently taking measurements in Wales as part of a survey of toxic organic micropollutants in urban air and an interim report was published in September 1992. Monitoring is continuing and trends in readings are being analysed.

Copies of the published reports of both surveys are held in the Library of the House.

Contracting Out

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific processes have been established by his Department to monitor the effectiveness of contracted-out services in comparison to services undertaken prior to contractorisation in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Monitoring of contracted-out service delivery in the local authority and health service sectors is the responsibility of those sectors. Specifications for contracts let in respect of the Department's own current market testing programme will be performance-based and will form the basis for the monitoring of the service deliverer's performance.

Credit Approvals

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 10, what is the estimated amount in the reduction of basic credit approvals *(a)* to Mid-Glamorgan and *(b)* to Welsh counties arising from the transfer of further education institutions.

Mr. David Hunt: Local authority credit approvals have been reduced in total by £8·915 million in 1993-94 compared with the level which would otherwise have been set to take account of the transfer of further education institutions. A deduction was not made as such for each individual county. Basic credit approvals are allocated according to a formula agreed with the local authority associations.

Inward Investment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment is made of environmental factors in encouraging inward investment into Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The excellent environmental attractions of Wales continue to be a factor in encouraging high levels of inward investment.

Astra Skillcentre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the south Glamorgan training and enterprise council concerning the future of the Astra skillcentre at Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Recycling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress made by local authorities in introducing recycling schemes in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information relating to increases in the number of bottle banks will be published in the 1992 series of the "Environmental Digest for Wales". Definitive information on other aspects of recycling will not be available until district councils complete their recycling plans under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in the coal industry in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd in (i) deep mining and (ii) opencast mining in 1980, 1990 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. David Hunt: The available information is presented in the following table:

Number employed in coal mining

	1980	*1990*	*1992*
Wales			
Deep-mined	30,842	4,669	1,293
Opencast	2,265	1,221	1,311
Clwyd			
Deep-mined	1,322	587	437
North Wales[1]			
Opencast[1]	165	21	11

[1] Separate figures for Clwyd are not available.
Source: British Coal.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in the steel industry in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd in 1980, 1989 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of people employed in the steel industry in Wales in 1980, 1989 and 1992 were 32,200, 19,400 and 16,500 respectively. Comparable figures for Clwyd cannot be given, as to do so would breach rules of company confidentiality.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in the aerospace industry in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales in 1980, 1990 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. David Hunt: According to the census of employment, in September 1981 there were 6,500 people employed in the aerospace industry in Wales. In the latest available census, in September 1989, this figure had risen to 9,300.

Figures at county level cannot be given, as to do so would breach rules of company confidentiality.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many construction workers are currently unemployed in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The sample size for the labour force survey is not sufficiently large to allow a reliable estimate of unemployment by region and by previous industrial sector.

Road Congestion and Accidents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the cost to industry of road congestion and road accidents in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the cost to industry of road congestion and road accidents is not available. The total cost of road accidents in Wales in 1991 is estimated to be £230 million.

Upland Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning hill livestock compensatory allowances in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from Welsh Members of Parliament, the Welsh farming organisations and individual farmers in respect of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in Wales. I have also recently had meetings with two Welsh Members of Parliament, some farmers and representatives from the Welsh farming unions to discuss this matter.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy for upland areas in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 19 June 1992, at column *711*.

Liverpool Bay Gas Reserves

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the development in Clwyd of the Liverpool Bay gas reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received many representations in relation to the application by Hamilton Oil for planning permission for a gas and oil terminal at Point of Ayr, Clwyd. A public local inquiry has been held and a decision will be issued as soon as possible.

Hospital Incinerators

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospital incinerators in Wales that *(a)* burn less than 25 kg of clinical waste per hour and *(b)* burn less than 1 tonne of clinical waste per hour.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are no hospital incinerators in Wales that burn less than 25 kg of clinical waste per hour. The hospital incinerators that burn less than 1 tonne of clinical waste per hour are as follows.

District and location	*Number*
Clwyd	
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	1
Wrexham Maelor General Hospital	1
East Dyfed	
West Wales General Hospital	1
St. Davids Hospital	1
Prince Phillip Hospital	2
Bronglais Geriatric Hospital	2
Gwent	
Nevill Hall Hospital	1
St. Woolos Hospital	2
Gwynedd	
Ysbyty Gwynedd	2
Llandudno General Hospital	1
Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital	1
Eryri Hospital	1
Bryn Beryl Hospital	1
Bron-y-Garth Hospital	1
Dolgellau Hospital	1
Mid Glamorgan	
East Glamorgan General Hospital	1
Prince Charles Hospital	1
Aberdare General Hospital	1
Princess of Wales Hospital	2
South Glamorgan	
University Hospital of Wales	2
Lansdowne Hospital	2
Prince of Wales Hospital	1
Sully Hospital	1
Llandough Hospital	1
West Glamorgan	
Neath General Hospital	2
Singleton Hospital	2

PRIME MINISTER

Fisheries Decommissioning Scheme

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will administer the fishing decommissioning scheme for the entire United Kingdom fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will administer the decommissioning scheme on behalf of all four fisheries departments. The scheme is part of a package, including effort control measures, designed to conserve fish stocks and help to meet targets the United Kingdom as a whole under the European Community's multi-annual guidance programme.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to co-ordinate the activities of Departments on the transportation of radioactive materials from and to Thorp; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Transport arrangments are the responsibility of the consignor, subject to meeting the requirements of the Department of Transport on safety issues and the Department of Trade and Industry on export control and security issues. The two Departments co-ordinate as necessary.

Youth Policy

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration he has given to the establishment of a ministerial group to co-ordinate youth policy across Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The interests of young people can best be served through action which addresses specific issues. Where action involves more than one Department, co-ordination between Ministers takes place. These arrangements work satisfactorily and there is currently no need to establish a formal ministerial group.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Financial Management

Mr. Steen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *551*, if he will outline the initiatives planned by the Director of Finance and Administration to improve financial management systems in House Departments.

Mr. Beith: In addition to the further development of measures already taken, the Director of Finance and Administration is planning to introduce an integrated payroll and personnel system for staff of the House early in the next financial year. A new computer system for the Fees Office is also under consideration.

EDUCATION

Sanctuary Buildings, London

Mr Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the amount to be spent in 1993-94 in rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department in Sanctuary buildings, Great Smith street, London.

Mr. Boswell: The estimated rent for Sanctuary buildings for the financial year 1993-94 is £10,368,823. This figure includes the service charge and VAT. The estimated contribution in lieu of rates to be made for Sanctuary buildings is £2,350,400.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing for each education authority the percentage cash increase between education standard spending assessments for 1992-93 and 1993-94; how much of this increase is due to changes in student numbers; how much this increase is in standard 1992-93 price terms, using the inflation estimate in the autumn statement; and what is the percentage relationship of the 1993-94 standard spending assessment with the 1992-93 budget.

Mr. Boswell: Local education authorities' standard spending assessments—SSAs—for 1993-94 are not directly comparable with those for 1992-93: they will be lower in cash terms, mainly because local authorities will from this April hand over responsibility for most further education to the Further Education Funding Council, and will begin to relinquish responsibility for school inspections. When these changes of functions are taken into account, there is an underlying percentage cash increase in the national total of education SSAs of 2·9 per cent. This reflects falling inflation and the Government's policy that in the coming year public sector pay increases should be held to between nil and 1·5 per cent. It also acknowledges differing spending pressures on LEAs including demographic changes, and their general scope for obtaining further improvements in value for money.

The table sets out for each local education authority the education component of the SSA for 1992-93, adjusted on an estimated basis, to remove the element relating to functions that the LEA will relinquish from next year; and compares this with the education component of the SSA for 1993-94.

Local authorities' education SSAs for 1993-94 were not calculated by reference to further education student numbers because of the transfer of responsibility for most of further education to the new funding council. The differences in the percentage change in individual LEAs' education SSAs reflect differences between LEAs in the relative rate of growth or decrease of school pupil or client group numbers and changes in LEAs' relative positions on the indices for additional educational needs, sparsity of population, free school meals and area costs.

The aggregate total of authorities' education budgets for 1992-93 is £19,013 million. The aggregate total of authorities' education SSAs for 1993-94 is £16,530·7 million, which is 13 per cent. less than this total budget figure. However the two figures are not comparable. LEAs' 1992-93 education budgets take account of expenditure on further education, for which local authorities will not be responsible in 1993-94, and expenditure supported by specific grant, which is excluded from the 1993-94 aggregate total of education SSAs.

Name	*Adjusted 1992-93 total education SSA* £ million	*1993-94 total education SSA* £ million	*Actual change* £ million	*Percentage change*
City	0·315	0·425	0·110	34·9
Camden	57·937	63·990	6·053	10·4
Greenwich	98·375	100·437	2·062	2·1
Hackney	99·671	108·349	8·678	8·7
Hammersmith	48·660	52·782	4·122	8·5
Islington	72·477	76·064	3·587	4·9
Kensington	32·571	33·301	0·730	2·2
Lambeth	115·784	124·033	8·249	7·1
Lewisham	99·806	104·392	4·586	4·6
Southwark	99·082	99·952	0·871	0·9
Tower Hamlet	111·165	115·580	4·414	4·0
Wandsworth	86·281	88·261	1·980	2·3
Westminster	47·438	50·212	2·774	5·8
Barking	57·580	58·783	1·203	2·1
Barnet	99·224	101·703	2·479	2·5
Bexley	78·775	81·653	2·877	3·7
Brent	113·885	118·569	4·684	4·1
Bromley	87·346	89·805	2·459	2·8
Croydon	107·014	109·660	2·646	2·5
Ealing	112·300	117·801	5·501	4·9
Enfield	101·415	104·134	2·719	2·7
Haringey	88·659	95·091	6·433	7·3
Harrow	65·716	67·112	1·397	2·1
Havering	78·761	80·056	1·294	1·6
Hillingdon	80·024	82·943	2·920	3·6
Hounslow	80·439	81·775	1·337	1·7
Kingston	40·174	41·367	1·193	3·0
Merton	50·246	52·909	2·663	5·3
Newham	114·679	120·318	5·640	4·9
Redbridge	83·824	87·990	4·166	5·0

Name	Adjusted 1992-93 total education SSA £ million	1993-94 total education SSA £ million	Actual change £ million	Percentage change
Richmond	36·276	36·953	0·677	1·9
Sutton	55·265	57·953	2·687	4·9
Waltham Forest	88·723	92·901	4·178	4·7
Birmingham	429·989	446·733	16·745	3·9
Coventry	109·556	111·417	1·861	1·7
Dudley	92·276	93·914	1·638	1·8
Sandwell	107·961	111·180	3·219	3·0
Solihull	60·981	61·901	0·920	1·5
Walsall	96·959	98·193	1·234	1·3
Wolverhampton	99·013	100·591	1·578	1·6
Knowsley	69·951	71·195	1·245	1·8
Liverpool	191·778	198·796	7·018	3·7
St. Helens	61·859	61·756	−·103	−0·2
Sefton	94·835	95·630	0·795	0·8
Wirral	120·691	121·804	1·113	0·9
Bolton	92·563	95·090	2·527	2·7
Bury	52·885	53·490	0·605	1·1
Manchester	174·399	181·953	7·554	4·3
Oldham	83·168	82·989	−0·179	−0·2
Rochdale	76·266	78·519	2·253	3·0
Salford	72·810	75·472	2·662	3·7
Stockport	84·014	84·761	0·747	0·9
Tameside	72·331	72·772	0·441	0·6
Trafford	66·897	68·493	1·595	2·4
Wigan	98·254	100·128	1·874	1·9
Barnsley	70·390	71·339	0·950	1·3
Doncaster	109·416	113·091	3·675	3·4
Rotherham	90·403	91·171	0·768	0·8
Sheffield	154·546	160·606	6·061	3·9
Bradford	205·863	212·346	6·483	3·1
Calderdale	69·407	71·397	1·990	2·9
Kirklees	135·726	140·873	5·147	3·8
Leeds	233·570	238·354	4·783	2·0
Wakefield	101·202	101·798	0·596	0·6
Gateshead	66·353	68·218	1·866	2·8
Newcastle	89·701	92·166	2·465	2·7
North Tyne	64·449	63·514	−0·935	−1·5
South Tyne	52·150	52·248	0·098	0·2
Sunderland	104·697	106·298	1·601	1·5
Isle of Scilly	1·174	1·194	0·020	1·7
Avon	280·449	290·419	9·970	3·6
Bedfordshire	197·921	208·117	10·196	5·2
Berkshire	254·440	261·858	7·418	2·9
Buckinghamshire	234·337	242·179	7·842	3·3
Cambridge	212·245	217·752	5·507	2·6
Cheshire	312·294	319·277	6·983	2·2
Cleveland	214·700	216·411	1·712	0·8
Cornwall	150·271	152·770	2·499	1·7
Cumbria	155·855	160·123	4·269	2·7
Derbyshire	290·215	296·017	5·801	2·0
Devon	302·349	314·363	12·014	4·0
Dorset	177·658	185·549	7·891	4·4
Durham	199·555	201·760	2·205	1·1
East Sussex	187·054	202·200	15·146	8·1
Essex	512·144	530·727	18·614	3·6
Gloucestershire	161·639	166·832	5·193	3·2
Hampshire	466·023	488·477	22·454	4·8
Hereford and Worcestershire	208·978	211·588	2·610	1·2
Hertfordshire	331·486	340·153	8·667	2·6
Humberside	299·924	305·451	5·528	1·8
Isle of Wight	41·293	42·695	1·401	3·4
Kent	514·163	537·360	23·197	4·5
Lancashire	468·602	473·160	4·558	1·0
Leicester	304·348	311·210	6·862	2·3
Lincolnshire	194·521	199·004	4·483	2·3
Norfolk	229·490	233·013	3·523	1·5
North Yorkshire	209·175	211·142	1·967	0·9
Northamptonshire	202·203	206·165	3·961	2·0
Northumberland	103·897	106·388	2·491	2·4
Nottinghamshire	336·427	342·430	6·003	1·8
Oxfordshire	167·394	175·758	8·364	5·0
Shropshire	131·831	133·995	2·164	1·6
Somerset	135·244	139·024	3·780	2·8

Name	Adjusted 1992-93 total education SSA £ million	1993-94 total education SSA £ million	Actual change £ million	Percentage change
Staffordshire	331·243	339·638	8·395	2·5
Suffolk	195·386	199·679	4·293	2·2
Surrey	273·254	277·550	4·296	1·6
Warwickshire	149·024	151·414	2·390	1·6
West Sussex	202·639	209·127	6·487	3·2
Wiltshire	177·191	181·284	4·093	2·3
Total	16,065·200	16,530·700	465·500	2·9

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the per capita standard spending assessment for 1993-94 for *(a)* Wiltshire and *(b)* English education authorities on average.

Mr. Forth: For the purpose of determining standard spending assessments, the education component of standard spending, net of specific grants, is divided into five sub-blocks—under-fives, primary, secondary, 16 plus, and other education. Within each sub-block, the money available is distributed on the basis of the relevant pupil or other client group numbers. The per capita figures for each sub-block for 1993-94 are set out in the table.

Some care must be taken in drawing conclusions from the figures. First, the figures are only notional allocations. The standard spending assessment system is a mechanism for distributing grant between authorities. Because authorities have discretion to decide their own spending priorities, the sub-blocks and the per capita figures in them have no meaning outside the framework of the distribution mechanism.

Second, the per capita figures for primary, secondary and 16 plus pupils include provision for children in special schools, related central services and related functions such as home-to-school transport. Therefore they are not comparable with age weighted pupil units in LEAs' schemes of local management.

Third, the control total for the 16 plus sub-block notionally reflects LEAs' residual responsibilities for 16 plus students in sixth form colleges, such as home to college transport, as well as their continuing responsibilities for pupils in school sixth forms. The main client group for this sub-block is the number of pupils aged 16 and over but part of the control total is distributed by reference to the number of pupils aged 11 to 15.

The Other Education block is based on the population aged over 11 years, with an additional weighting for those aged 16 to 24 years to reflect LEAs' continuing responsibilities for some further education students after the transfer of responsibility for most further education to the Further Education Funding Council this April.

Subject to these qualifications the figures in pounds are:

	Wiltshire	England	
Under 5	224	279	per head of under 5 population
Primary	1,787	1,921	per pupil aged 5 to 10
Secondary	2,590	2,775	per pupil aged 11 to 15
16+	3,644	3,864	per pupil aged 16+
Other			
(a) 11+	13	15	per head of 11+ population
(b) 16-24	39	43	per head of 16-24 population

English Teaching

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received about key stage 3 English.

Mr. Forth: Since the beginning of the year my right hon. Friend has received about 1,500 letters on the subject of key stage 3 English assessment tests.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the Government's expenditure plans for the Higher Education Funding Council for such years as figures are available.

Mr. Boswell: Provision for recurrent grant for the Higher Education Funding Council for England is £2,465 million in 1993-94, £2,606 million in 1994-95 and £2,598 million in 1995-96. Provision for capital grant is £319 million, £322 million and £329 million.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has completed two market tests since November 1991. Its publications dispatch service has been contracted out to Westex Ltd.; the Department's library service has remained in-house.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Department's market testing programme is co-ordinated by six staff—1·5 full-time equivalent posts—who undertake this work within their

normal duties. Line management staff in the areas being market tested also contribute. The estimated cost of the programme, in direct staff costs and consultancy costs, since November 1991 is some £203,000.

Research Course Degrees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if, further to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *281*, he will list those institutions which have applied to him for authority to award *(a)* taught and *(b)* research course degrees and have not yet been awarded it.

Mr. Boswell: Applications for degree-awarding powers are made to the Privy Council. The Privy Council receives advice on such applications from the Secretary of State who is advised by the Higher Education Quality Council —HEQC. The following institutions have made applications which are presently under consideration:

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Royal Agricultural College
Royal Northern College of Music
Luton College of Higher Education

The applications from the first three institutions did not specifically distinguish between taught course or research degree powers, and the HEQC is discussing with these institutions the appropriate scope of the applications. The application from Luton college is for research degree powers only, as the college already has taught course degree-awarding powers.

Further and Higher Education Colleges

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *282*, he will list those institutions who have applied to him to be incorporated under sections 15 and 16 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and which wish to designate themselves colleges of further and higher education.

Mr. Boswell: In addition to those institutions listed in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 January, the following colleges, which have been incorporated under section 15 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, have applied to my right hon. Friend to adopt the title college of further and higher education:

Grimsby College of Technology and Arts
Guildford College of Technology
Northbrook College of Design and Technology, Worthing.

Medical School Applicants

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the percentage of United Kingdom resident medical school applicants accepted, broken down by sex and by ethnic origin, distinguishing *(a)* Asian-Bangladeshi, *(b)* Asian-Chinese, *(c)* Asian-Indian, *(d)* Asian-Pakistani, *(e)* Asian—other, *(f)* total Asian, *(g)* black, *(h)* white and *(i)* total; and what are the percentages for each medical school.

Mr. Boswell: Universities Central Council on Admissions statistics show that 51 per cent. of all accepted home applicants for undergraduate medical courses in autumn 1991 were women. The UCCA does not publish information on the ethnic origin of applicants by subject category, nor for individual universities.

ENVIRONMENT

Structure Plan, Hampshire

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to approve the structure plan submitted by Hampshire county council.

Mr. Baldry: As soon as possible.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many cases he has overruled a Boundary Commission's recommendations in London since 1989; and if he will identify changes proposed by the commission in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table gives details of the decisions made so far on Local Government Boundary Commission reviews of London. None of the rejected proposals was referred back to the commission for a fresh review.

Table showing the number of rejected proposals on the London boundary reviews

Report Number	*Name of area*	*Number of proposals*	*Number rejected*	*Name(s) of rejected proposals*
594	Barnet	13	0	———
598	Bexley	16	1	Stanham Farm
610	Harrow	26	0	———
615	Croydon	80	0	———
618	Waltham Forest	48	0	———
620	Bromley	46	1	Stonehouse
622	Greenwich	28	4	Thamesmead
623	Croydon	12	0	———
624	Lambeth	10	0	———
632	Crystal Palace	20	0	———
634	Tower Hamlets	5	0	———
636	City of London	27	0	———
637	Southwark	17	0	———
638	Islington	14	0	———
641	Bromley	53	0	———
642	Greenwich	14	0	———
647	Richmond upon Thames	2	0	———
648	Redbridge	21	4	Woodford Green, Grange Hill
652	Hounslow	33	0	———
653	Lewisham	28	0	———
654	Havering	45	1	Rush Green
656	Camden	22	3	Regents Park, Fitzrovia
666	Westminster	5	0	———
672	Enfield	46	0	———
676	Hillingdon	16	0	———

EC Environmental Directives

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources his Department will commit to providing the European Commission with data in regard to the annual report on implementation and enforcement of EC environmental directives and regulations.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission's plan to present to the Environment Council the findings of their annual report on environmental legislation arises from an initiative we took as presidency to encourage other member states and the Commission to take implementation and reporting as seriously as we do. The United Kingdom need commit no new resources.

PM_{10} Particulates

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the major sources of PM_{10} particulates in the local atmosphere; what are the principal health effects; and whether he will set an air quality standard for PM_{10}.

Mr. Maclean: The major sources of PM_{10} particulates in the local atmosphere are fuel conbustion—in towns and cities, principally diesel and petrol—wind-blown dusts both natural and man-made and aerosol particles formed by chemical reactions of primary pollution emissions. At high concentrations particulate material in conjunction with sulphur dioxide can exacerbate respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis, and can lead to reductions in lung function. Trace amounts of carcinogens can also occur in association with airborne particulates.

My Department, in close collaboration with the Department of Health, has established the expert panel on air quality standards to develop recommendations for possible new standards and guidelines for air quality in the United Kingdom. The panel is considering several air pollutants, one of which is PM_{10}, and will report on these in due course.

Air Pollution

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring stations he plans to establish in urban areas by 2000; which sites are already committed; what criteria will be used to prioritise commitments to future sites; and what resources he will make available to local authorities without enhanced urban network stations who wish to undertake quality-assured air quality monitoring.

Mr. Maclean: In the second year report on the environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", we announced our intention to continue the expansion of the urban network to cover all major cities by 1997. The

precise number of stations will depend on the availability of resources. Stations are already operating or expected to come into operation this year in London, Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Newcastle, Leeds, Bristol, Liverpool, Hull, Leicester and Southampton.

In determining priorities for future sites my Department will take account of factors such as population and associated traffic activity, other significant local sources of pollution and any other local features, such as topography, that may be of relevance.

My Department will issue a discussion paper later this year on how central and local monitoring efforts can best be integrated and supported, taking account of the need for adequate quality assurance and control. Meanwhile, my Department is pleased to help local authorities with documentation and advise on these matters so far as resources permit.

Local Authority Debts

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the methodology for the future treatment of accumulated local authority debt, in circumstances where an authority ceases to exist as a result of local government reorganisation.

Mr. Robin Squire: I would expect the assets and liabilities of such local authorities to be transferred to successor authorities, as in previous reorganisations of local government. But the detailed financial implications of reorganisation are still under consideration.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to publish the proceedings of the seminar on sustainable development policies for Britain which his Department is holding in Oxford in March.

Mr. Maclean: My Department will hold a seminar at Green college, Oxford, from 18 to 20 March with a range of people from other Departments and outside government to inform our thinking about the report which the United Kingdom must submit to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development this year. Green college will produce a summary of highlights from the discussion which will be distributed to many people with whom we are discussing the preparation of the report. I shall place a copy in the Library of the House. The seminar itself is just one part of a wide public consultation exercise.

Environmental Policy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from among the United Kingdom research community and environmentalists on the level of Government funding for research on international environmental policy issues; and what assessment he has made of the performance of Economic and Social Research Council and other Government-funded research programmes in this area.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is in frequent contact with the United Kingdom research community and environmentalists on the levels and direction of research on international environmental policy issues. Responsibility for assessing the performance of ESRC and other Government-funded research programmes rests with the funding bodies concerned.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set up a consultation process with academic specialists, environmental groups and other expert parties in order to establish national and international environmental research programmes, along the lines of that operated in the Netherlands.

Mr. Maclean: My Department already operates a well-established, comprehensive system of consultation on its research programmes.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on the proposed development of the east Thames corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The report by the consultants commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in 1991 into the potential of the east Thames corridor for development and environmental enhancement was received in November 1992. Consideration is being given to the findings of that study in the context of the wider planning guidance for the south-east, which is under review. It is hoped to publish consultation papers on the regional guidance and the east Thames corridor in the near future.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about air quality and air pollution along the east Thames corridor.

Mr. Maclean: The Department has received three representations in the last three months.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the proposed east Thames corridor development.

Mr. Baldry: Frequent representations are received from local authorities, business interests, the development industry, organisations concerned with the conservation of the natural and built environment and others about the studies which are being undertaken of the east Thames corridor and about future planning policy for the area.

Parliament Square (Air Quality)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what records his Department has of the results of monitoring air quality at Parliament square, Westminster.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has no records of air quality at Parliament square, Westminster.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an announcement about his Department's spending plans for the years 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Mr. Howard: Yes. I have today published my Department's annual report for 1993, Cm 2207. This sets out in detail the outcome of the public expenditure survey announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement on 12 November 1992. It also provides the policy background to each of the spending programmes and policies and information on performance targets, output measures and value for money.

The report sets out what we are doing to improve the quality of life internationally, nationally and locally. This is the central thread which ties all our policies together.

This is true whether the policies and programmes are aimed at protecting the environment; enhancing, and improving access to, the countryside; regenerating the inner cities; helping every family to have a decent home or improving the framework for the delivery of local government services.

The environment is at the forefront of the agenda for each of these areas, and details of how environmental objectives are integrated into the Department's work are provided throughout the report.

The report plays a key part in the Department's accountability to Parliament and to the public—a significant theme of the citizens charter—with its performance and plans laid out for all to see.

Rural Petrol Stations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications of the EC directive on vapour recovery for the operation of rural petrol stations.

Mr. Maclean: A draft EC directive is under consideration which would require the recovery of vapour from the storage and distribution of petrol in order to minimise emissions of volatile organic compounds. We welcome this in principle. However, our consultations with industry, including the operators of petrol stations, suggest that the costs of compliance with the proposed directive in its present form could represent an unreasonable burden on small stations in rural areas for very little environmental benefits. We are therefore seeking an exemption for such stations from the requirement to fit vapour recovery equipment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rubber Bullets

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on which date rubber bullets were first issued to security forces in Northern Ireland; and whether rubber bullets were available to soldiers in Northern Ireland in January 1972.

Mr. Mates: Rubber bullets were first made available to members of the security forces in Northern Ireland in 1970 and remained in use until 1975, when they were replaced by plastic baton rounds.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The following firms of consultants have been used to advise on the Northern Ireland market testing programme since November 1991:

BET FM Ltd.
CAPITA
Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte
Helm Corporation
Leopold Joseph & Sons
Logicom
Michael Willacy Associates
MVM Consultants Plc
SERCO
Symonds Facilities Management Plc
Witt Thornton (Management Services)

The total cost was £348,549.

In line with the White Paper "Competing for Quality", private sector consultancies have helped to determine the most promising new areas for market testing and contracting out and have also been used to strengthen Northern Ireland Departments' market testing capability.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many late applications were received for suckler cow premium in respect of 1990 and 1991; and how many of these were *(a)* paid in full, *(b)* paid in part and *(c)* refused.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

		1990	*1991*
Number of late applications received		124	74
(a)	Number paid in full	—	—
(b)	Number paid in part	85	51
(c)	Number refused	39	23

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many late applications for suckler cow premium in respect of 1992 he has received to date.

Mr. Hanley: Two hundred and thirty-three to date.

TRANSPORT

Airports (Credit Approvals)

Sir Jerry Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the 1993-94 supplementary credit approvals for public airport companies and local authority airports.

Mr. Norris: Supplementary credit approvals totalling £12 million will be available for public airport companies and local authority airports for 1993-94. These credit approvals, together with other resources which public airport companies expect at this stage to invest, will assist the airports concerned to provide facilities which they estimate could cost some £83 million in 1993-94.

We have today agreed to supplementary credit approvals totalling £4 million at this stage. The projects concerned include the continuation of work on the south apron and taxiway and on the new control tower and fire station at Coventry airport, runway resurfacing at Exeter airport and lighting schemes at Biggin Hill airport. Formal supplementary credit approvals for these and other projects will be issued to the local authorities shortly.

The £12 million supplementary credit approval provision for local authority airports, used in conjunction with airports' internal resources, will ensure that safety and security schemes can proceed. We look to the private sector to play the major role in financing significant airport expansion.

Tanker Routes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that tankers and owners use a shipping route west of St. Kilda.

Mr. Norris: Tanker routeing around the United Kingdom coast, including St. Kilda, will be considered by Lord Donaldson in his inquiry. Pending the outcome of that inquiry, a voluntary code is being developed which will place restrictions on tankers navigating through sensitive areas.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has submitted proposals for the attention of the EC Council of Transport and Environmental Ministers in respect of tanker exclusion zones on environmental and safety grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: As my noble friend the Minister for Shipping announced on 4 February, agreement in principle has been reached with organisations representing oil companies, tanker operators and shipping interests on voluntary measures in the form of a code to be promulgated by mid-March, which it is intended will include restrictions on tankers operating in sensitive areas. The code will be transmitted by the Government to the International Maritime Organisation for consideration and endorsement by the maritime safety committee in May with a view to publication internationally as an addition to the "Ship Routeing" document issued by the IMO. I will draw these developments to the attention of the European Commission.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the outcome of the EC Council of Transport and Environment Ministers on 25 January concerning tanker exclusion zones; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what timetables have been agreed by *(a)* the EC Council of Ministers and *(b)* the United Nations International Maritime Organisation for the consideration of submissions for tanker exclusion zones; and what is the relationship between the two timetables.

Mr. Norris: The EC Council of Transport and Environment Ministers urged the Commission to bring forward its communication on maritime safety so that a first discussion of it can take place at the March meeting of the Transport Council. Among other matters to be examined in the communication is identification of areas of ecological interest for which restrictions, such as routeing measures or areas to be avoided, might be appropriate. No timetable has been agreed either in the EC or in the IMO for consideration of any proposals that may emerge.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which sensitive areas around the coast of Northern Ireland are included in the areas to be avoided by tankers; and which fishermen's organisations were consulted in preparation of the voluntary agreement between his Department and the oil companies.

Mr. Norris: It is too early to anticipate the detailed provisions of the voluntary agreement, including the designated sensitive areas, that is being developed by industry. The following fishermen's organisations attended the meeting on 4 February that led to the concept of the code:

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations.
Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

Marine Safety

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new areas which he will propose to the May meeting of the International Maritime Organisation marine safety committee as recommendations for the status of areas to be avoided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No decision has yet been taken to propose any new "areas to be avoided" to the IMO. The routeing of tankers, among other issues, is within the terms of reference of the inquiry to be conducted by Lord Donaldson. Pending the outcome of that inquiry, officials met with organisations representing oil companies, tanker operators and shipping interests on 4 February and agreed in principle voluntary measures in the form of a code to be promulgated by mid-March, which it is intended will include restrictions on tankers operating in sensitive areas. The code will be transmitted by the Government to the IMO for consideration and endorsement by the maritime safety committee in May with a view to publication internationally as an addition to the "Ship Routeing" document issued by the IMO.

Model Aircraft (Air-misses)

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the air-miss incidents involving model aircraft flying *(a)* within and *(b)* outwith controlled air space which have been reported to the Civil Aviation Authoirity since reporting of such incidents was made mandatory.

Mr. Norris: The records of the Civil Aviation Authority's safety data and analysis unit show that between April 1977 and December 1992 there have been 12 reports of air misses between model aircraft and real aircraft. Of these six took place in controlled air space. The other six took place outside controlled air space, but of these three were in aerodrome traffic zones.

In addition, between June 1979 and May 1992, there have been four collisions between full size aircraft and other airborne objects which are believed to have been model aircraft. Also since 1987 there have been three fatal accidents involving model aircraft; in one case a hang glider pilot was killed and the other two each resulted in the death of a person on the ground.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to privatise the Vehicle Inspectorate agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend has consulted publicly on the future of the Vehicle Inspectorate's heavy goods and passenger-carrying vehicle testing functions, including the scope for private sector

involvement; the consultation document made clear that he does not consider the inspectorate's enforcement functions appropriate for privatisation. He is considering a decision in the light of the consultees' responses and will make an announcement in due course.

Maritime Emergency Oganisation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable of his proposals in respect of the privatisation of the Marine Emergency Organisation.

Mr. Norris: We have no plans to privatise the MEO. We are currently considering the possibility of executive agency status.

DVOIT

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the timetable for the privatisation of the Driver, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend announced proposals for the privatisation of DVOIT on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *209*. I expect that DVOIT will move into the private sector by about the end of 1993.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable of his proposals in respect of the privatisation of the DVLA.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *406-7*.

Driving Standards Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable of his proposals in respect of the privatisation of the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *406-7*.

Surveyors General Organisation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable of his proposals in respect of the privatisation of the Surveyors General Organisation.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 10 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *675*. The Surveyors General Organisation is not being privatised. A consultation document on the scope for increased private sector participation in respect of that part of its work relating to survey and certification was issued on 14 December 1992; the deadline for responses is 12 March 1993.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable of his proposals in respect of the privatisation of the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Transport Research Laboratory became an executive agency in April 1992. At the same time the control of research budgets passed to departmental customers; TRL now must compete for an increasing proportion of the Department's research business. I keep the future of the agency, as with all parts of my Department, under constant review and any plans for privatisation would, of course, be notified to Parliament and be the subject of consultation with staff.

London-Portsmouth Railway Line

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy on the future of the railway line between Portsmouth and London Victoria via the south coast, Barham and Gatwick airport.

Mr. Freeman: It is our intention to franchise, in due course, the operation of all passenger services currently run by British Rail. The franchising director will base the initial franchises on the timetable operated by British Rail prior to franchising. Subsidy will be available for all socially necessary services.

West London Rail Links

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the privatisation of British Rail on the residents of Northolt, Perivale, Greenford, Hanwell and Ealing.

Mr. Norris: We expect that the privatisation of BR will lead to an improvement in the quality of all rail services.

Bristol Harbour Revision Order

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will postpone his Department's public inquiry into the Port of Bristol Harbour Revision Order until the House has debated and reached a decision on the recommendations in the First report of the Trade and Industry Committee on energy policy and the market for coal.

Mr. Norris: I refer to my written reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) on 14 January 1993, at column *816*.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments he has made of the arrangements for preventing a casualty such as the Braer, or mitigating the effects of such a casualty, off the south coast of England.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Secretary of State for Transport announced in his statement to the House of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns 609-10, an inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson to advise on whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the United Kingdom coastline from pollution from merchant shipping.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential", as it applies to his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Most of the action points in "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential" which come under the remit of my Department have been taken forward, in most cases via the statutory tourist board.

The British Tourist Authority held a successful conference in October last year to encourage foreign language training in the tourism industry; the British Tourist Authority, the English tourist board—ETB—and the regional tourist boards are working to promote training opportunities within the industry; my Department's proposal for an initiative to disseminate information on facilities for tourists with disabilities was incorporated in the European Community tourism action plan; in November last year we hosted, with the English tourist board, an international Tourism and the Environment conference with speakers and delegates from the United Kingdom and other EC member states; together with the Department of the Environment—DoE—we have commissioned research into the feasibility of obtaining better information on the numbers of day visitors, to assist the calculation of standard spending assessments; we collaborated with the Department of the Environment on the production of the planning policy guidance note on tourism development; the English tourist board will launch Industrial Heritage Year in February; industry leaders have had the chance to comment on the JICTOURS working group's report, and a more permanent user forum is being established.

My Department continues to work with other Departments to take forward issues under their control which were mentioned in "Tourism in the UK" and which affect the tourism industry.

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he intends to meet the chairman of the British Tourist Authority to discuss the future of tourism in Great Britain.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the British Tourist Authority. I expect to discuss the authority's corporate plan with the chairman when it is submitted in the spring.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the cost per visitor for each museum and gallery in receipt of funding deriving from his Department.

Mr. Key: The estimated cost per visitor is as follows, taken to one decimal place for figures for the grant-in-aid and number of visitors:

	Grant-in-aid (financial year 1992-93) £ million	*No. of visitors (1992) million*	*Cost per visitor £*
British Museum	32·4	6·7	4·84
Natural History Museum	28·9	1·6	18·1
Imperial War Museum	11·0	1·1	10·0
National Gallery	17·9	4·3	4·20
National Maritime Museum	11·6	0·5	23·20
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	13·4	1·2	11·20
National Portrait Gallery	5·6	0·8	7·00
Science Museum	22·4	2·6	8·62
Tate Gallery	16·6	2·2	7·55
Victoria and Albert Museum	30·1	1·5	20·07
Wallace Collection	1·9	0·2	9·50
Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	2·2	0·3	7·33
Museum of London	4·1	0·3	13·70
Sir John Soane's Museum	0·6	0·04	15·00
Geffrye Museum	0·9	0·05	18·00
Horniman Museum	2·6	0·2	13·00

Royal Palaces (Entrance Fees)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total amount of the entrance fees collected at those royal palaces open to the public for the latest year for which figures are available; and to what purposes the revenues are applied.

Mr. Key: This is an operational matter for the Historic Royal Palaces agency which is responsible for managing those royal palaces open to the public. I have therefore asked the chief executive of the agency to reply to the hon. Member and will arrange for his reply to be published in the *Official Report*.

Letter from David Beeton to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 5 February 1993:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about entrance fees collected at the Royal Palaces. My Agency is responsible for the management of the Historic Royal Palaces.
The Agency's income and expenditure for 1991-92 was:-

	£ million	*£ million*
Total Expenditure (net of VAT refunds)	—	23.5
Entrance Charge income	10·1	—
Other Business income	5·7	15·8
Borne by the taxpayer	—	7.7

You may be interested in the enclosed copy of our latest Annual Report and Accounts, which includes full details of our income and expenditure in 1991-92. Copies of this report may also be found in the House of Commons Library.
The Government has no funding or supervisory responsibility for entrance charges at the occupied Royal Palaces.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department is currently in the process of contracting out a range of central services, including mailroom services, minor maintenance, office cleaning, porterage, reprographics, security, central typing and secretarial cover. No contracts have yet been awarded for these. The Department has awarded a contract to Sema Group Limited for the supply of computer equipment and associated services.

Royal parks division contracted out grounds maintenance work in February 1992. The successful contractors were: Brophy plc, Glendale Industries Limited, Serco plc, Turfsoil Limited and Tyler Environmental Services Limited. The division is currently market testing building agent services and estates management.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: A small number of staff in my Department have been assigned to work on the market testing programme amongst their other duties. The total cost of the programme since November 1991 would include staff costs and associated overheads, plus consultancy fees of £541,198. It is not readily possible to separate the cost of the relatively minor staff involvement and overheads to give an overall total.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Five firms of consultants have been used to advise on areas which are now the responsibility of my Department since November 1991: PE International have advised on the provision of central services in the Department; Cluttons, Watts and Partners and Gillhespies have advised my Department's Royal Parks Division; and Land Use Consultants have advised the Historic Royal Palaces agency. The total cost of consultancies is £541,198. A proportion of this cost would have been met by the Department of the Environment, which was responsible for the royal parks and the Historic Royal Palaces agency until April 1992.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Africa

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the conclusions of the World Bank report "Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth" about the amount by which real levels of official aid to Africa need to increase per year through the 1990s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The World Bank report concludes, on certain assumptions, that to achieve 5 per cent. per annum GDP growth, additional development assistance to Africa needs to grow at 4 per cent. per annum in real terms.

We agree that Africa will require a sustained high level of concessionary external assistance. However, the provision of such assistance will only have lasting impact if it is accompanied by the successful implementation of economic and political reform in individual African countries, enabling domestic resources to be used efficiently and encouraging the private sector.

We aim to maintain a significant level of development assistance for sub-Saharan Africa in the years ahead both bilaterally and through multilateral and EC channels. We have also been prominent among those calling for more generous relief of official debt and we are pleased that 11 African countries have now benefited from Trinidad terms.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the bilateral and multilateral aid programme spent in Africa has been *(a)* project aid and *(b)* programme aid for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The figures requested are as follows:

Project and programme aid to Africa 1979 to 1991[1]

Year	Gross British bilateral aid to Africa		
	£ millions	Project aid[2] Per cent.	Programme aid Per cent.
1979	231	42·1	16·8
1980	257	35·7	13·6
1981	300	38·6	10·5
1982	247	43·1	13·4
1983	237	42·4	8·9
1984	268	46·9	6·1
1985	315	32·1	9·2
1986	285	31·4	15·2
1987	308	26·6	17·2
1988	427	22·7	26·2
1989	514	27·3	30·9
1990	389	32·3	13·2
1991	521	29·2	21·2

[1] Data are not readily available on multilateral disbursements by project and programme aid.

[2] Project aid also includes disbursement from the Aid and Trade Provision and CDC project expenditure; it does not include Technical Co-operation projects.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the bilateral aid programme was spent in Africa for each year since 1979; and what the amount was in cash terms and in constant terms since 1979.

Mr. Lennox Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The figures requested are as follows:

Gross bilateral aid to Africa 1979-91

Year	Cash terms	Constant terms (1991 prices)	Percentage of total bilateral aid allocable by continent Per cent.
1979	231	551	38·3
1980	257	513	42·3
1981	300	538	40·7
1982	247	411	43·2
1983	237	375	40·6
1984	268	405	40·0
1985	315	451	45·3
1986	285	394	40·5
1987	308	406	49·5
1988	427	528	50·3
1989	514	593	53·8
1990	389	417	46·0
1991	521	521	49·4

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase bilateral and multilateral aid to Africa in the next financial year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Africa remains a priority for the overseas aid programme. Almost half of our bilateral aid is directed to Africa. The precise level of spending varies from year to year and depends upon the progress of individual projects and programmes. We will aim to make available substantial support to poorer countries in Africa with which we have close connections and which are pursuing sound development policies. We take the same view in the multilateral agencies to which we contribute.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the multilateral aid programme was spent in Africa for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The information requested is in the table.

United Kingdom share of multilateral aid to Africa 1979 to 1990

Year	United Kingdom share of multilateral aid to Africa £ million	Total allocable multilateral aid £ million	Allocable multilateral aid spent in Africa Per cent.
1979	N/a	N/a	N/a
1980	116	242	48
1981	147	316	46
1982	173	371	47
1983	189	429	44
1984	227	479	47
1985	232	432	54
1986	233	462	50
1987	239	478	50
1988	301	587	51
1989	334	615	54
1990	366	626	58

Notes:

1. The figures given are estimated by the Overseas Development Administration Statistics Department using data provided by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD on the spending patterns of multilateral agencies, and United Kingdom contributions to multilateral organisations.
2. Estimates were first calculated for 1980 and are not available for 1979.
3. The 1990 figure is a provisional estimate.

Multilateral Aid (Contracts)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the value of contracts won by United Kingdom companies in competition for contracts financed through multilateral aid and how many jobs are created or secured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Aggregate figures for the value of contracts awarded through multilateral aid agencies, including multilateral development banks, are difficult to estimate because not all agencies compile statistics on contracts awarded by nationality; and for those which do, there are significant differences in the way data are reported. Because of these limitations, it is not possible to estimate the total value of business secured by United Kingdom firms through multilateral aid agencies. As I told the hon. Member on 26 January, at column *636*, our best estimate is that for every £1 we contribute to multilateral agencies, they spend on average £1·40 on British goods and services. This is based on incomplete data averaged over several years. No estimate has been made of the employment impact of such business.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to provide for displaced persons in Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* We have committed over £70·5 million in humanitarian relief to displaced people and other victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. £41 million has been committed through the EC. The remaining £29·5 million is in direct bilateral assistance, nearly all of which is focused on Bosnia-Hercegovina where the needs are greatest. This bilateral assistance has been spent on such things as the rehabilitation of buildings to provide accommodation for 20,000 displaced people in the Zenica area, the provision of 43 trucks and support staff to deliver relief goods, and the restoration of electricity supplies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Agencies (Performance Measures)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the current primary and secondary performance measures for *(a)* the Warren Springs Laboratory Agency, *(b)* the National Engineering Laboratory Agency, *(c)* the Laboratory of the Government Chemist Agency and *(d)* the National Physical Laboratory Agency; and what steps are taken to keep the measures under review.

Mr. Leigh: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 13 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *739* in respect of the Warren Spring Laboratory agency; the answer given on 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *144-45* in respect of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist agency; the answer given on 16 July

1992, *Official Report*, column *992* in respect of the National Engineering Laboratory agency; and the answer given on 3 July 1990 *Official Report*, columns *499-500* in respect of the National Physical Laboratory agency. All the agencies' targets are reviewed annually, including the National Physical Laboratory agency's longer-term targets, as part of their corporate planning processes.

SMART and SPUR Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications and acceptances for SMART and SPUR grants were made in each region in the first six months of the current financial year; and what was the value of *(a)* grants awarded and *(b)* grants paid.

Mr. Leigh: The number of applications and acceptances, and the grants awarded and paid under the small firms merit award for research and technology—SMART—and support for products under research—SPUR—schemes from 1 April 1992 to 30 September 1992 are as follows:

SMART
(Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology)

Region/Office	*Applications*	*Acceptances*	*Grants Awarded £ million*	*Grants paid £ million*
East	160	22	1·02	0·58
East Midlands	90	24	1·16	0·49
North East	42	9	0·38	0·32
North West	110	16	0·68	0·71
South East	374	33	1·45	1·14
South West	158	25	1·18	0·74
West Midlands	121	22	0·96	0·55
Yorkshire/Humberside	79	22	1·03	0·52
Welsh Office	70	15	0·67	0·55
Scottish Office	111	18	0·80	0·79
Northern Ireland Office	28	6	0·24	0·23
Total	1,343	212	9·57	6·62

SPUR
(Support for Products Under Research)

Region/Office	*Applications*	*Acceptances*	*Grants Awarded £ million*	*Grants paid £ million*
East	9	3	0·18	0·10
East Midlands	4	2	0·08	0·20
North East	3	2	0·09	0·07
North West	27	21	1·86	0·22
South East	19	17	1·80	0·35
South West	10	5	0·20	0·15
West Midlands	7	4	0·31	0·12
Yorkshire/Humberside	17	7	0·46	0·35
Welsh Office	8	4	0·40	0·08
Scottish Office	5	5	0·61	0·34
Total	109	70	5·99	1·98

Premium Rate Phone Calls

Mrs. Lait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what protection parents have from the excessive use of premium rate phone calls by children responding to magazine competitions.

Mr. Leigh: The Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services—ICSTIS—recognises that children are a vulnerable audience for premium rate telephone services and are not responsible for paying for them. The ICSTIS code of practice therefore contains a number of measures which help to protect children and their parents. No children's service may exceed seven and half minutes in length and all children's services must terminate automatically. Promotional material must feature a clear and prominent statement giving the maximum cost of the call and stressing that the service should only be used with the permission of the bill payer. In addition, any children's service which exceeds one minute in length must begin with a statement which urges the caller to seek the permission of the bill payer before using the telephone. There are a number of other conditions in the ICSTIS code relating to games and competition services, including rules on the clarity of the promotional material and the requirement not to exaggerate the chances of winning.

In addition to these controls, BT customers served by digital exchanges can request that access to all premium rate services from their line is barred. This "call-barring" is available free of charge and is now available to some 60 per cent. of BT's customers.

Intellectual Property Rights

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures will be taken by his Department in order to implement the European directive on rental right and lending right.

Mr. Leigh: This directive will be implemented by means of a statutory instrument amending the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Member states have until 1 July 1994 to comply with the directive. In view of the complexity of the directive and the options which it makes available to member states, my Department intends to consult widely before finalising the amending legislation. I expect consultations to begin in the next few months.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what actions and consultation his Department is undertaking with regard to a possible instrument on the protection of the rights of performers and producers of phonograms by the World Intellectual Property Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The United Kingdom has been at the forefront in urging the World Intellectual Property Organisation—WIPO—to draw up a new international agreement on the protection of performers' and record producers' rights. WIPO has now begun preparatory work on such an agreement. This is a development of an earlier WIPO initiative on a possible protocol to the Berne convention on authors' rights, on which work is continuing. More than 50 organisations representative of United Kingdom copyright interests have already been consulted on the protocol, and there will be similar consultation on the new instrument when WIPO makes this available in draft form. United Kingdom officials also take part in regular informal discussions on these matters involving the European Commission, the United States, Japan and other major countries.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those EC directives related to copyright and intellectual property presently under consideration by his Department; and if he will list those individuals and organisations who have been consulted with regard to them.

Mr. Leigh: Four draft directives in the intellectual property field are currently under consideration: a proposal for a Council directive on the co-ordination of certain rules concerning copyright and neighbouring rights applicable to satellite broadcasting and cable retransmission; a proposal for a Council directive harmonising the term of protection of copyright and certain related rights; a proposal for a Council directive on the legal protection of databases; and a proposal for a Council directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions. In addition, the Department is considering the implementation into United Kingdom law of two adopted directives —directive 89/104/EEC to approximate the laws of the member states relating to trade marks, and directive 92/100/EEC on rental right and lending right and on certain rights related to copyright in the field of intellectual property.

Numerous organisations and individuals have been consulted in connection with these measures. In general, consultation has taken place through bodies representing particular interest groups, where these exist. Organisations consulted in relation to the measures listed above include the following.

Copyright
Arts Council
Association of County Councils
Association of the Electronics Telecommunications and Business Equipment Industries (EEA)
Association for Geographic Information
Association of Independent Radio Companies
Association for Information Management (ASLIB)
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Photographers
Authors Licensing and Collecting Society
British Academy
British Academy of Film and Television Arts
British Actors Equity Association
British Broadcasting Corporation
British Computer Society
British Copyright Council
British Film Institute
British Library
British Microcomputer Federation
British Office Technology Manufacturers Alliance
British Photographers Liaison Committee
British Phonographic Industry
British Retail Consortium
British Screen Advisory Council
British Sky Broadcasting
British Telecom
British Videogram Association
Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematographic and Theatre Union
Business Equipment and Information Technology Association
Business Software Alliance
Cable Television Association
Centre for Commercial Law Studies
Channel Four Television
Cinema Exhibitors Association
Committee of Directors of Polytechnics
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Common Law Institute of Intellectual Property
Computer Users of Europe
Computing Services Association
Confederation of British Industry
Confederation of Information Communication Industries
Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities
Consumers Association
Copyright Licensing Agency
Council of Polytechnic Librarians
Design and Artists Copyright Society
Direct Marketing Association
Directors and Producers Rights Society
European Information Industry Association
European Information Researchers Network
Federation Against Software Theft
Federation of Local Authority Chief Librarians
Independent Television Association
Independent Television Commission
Institute of Electrical Engineers
International Association of Music Libraries (UK)
International Federation of the Phonographic Industry
Law Society
Law Society of Scotland
Library Association
Mechanical Copyright Protection Society
Museums and Galleries Commission
Music Copyright Reform Group
Music Publishers Association
Musicians Union
Music Users Council
National Computer Users Federation
National Council for Education Technology
Newspaper Publishers Association
Newspaper Society
Ordnance Survey
Performing Right Society
Periodical Publishers Association
Phonographic Performance Limited
Post Office
Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television
Public Lending Right Office
Publishers Association
Radio Authority
Royal Society
Scottish Software Federation

S4C
Society of Authors
Society of Film Distributors
Standing Conference of National and University Libraries
Writers Guild of Great Britain
Patents and Trade Marks
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Bar Council
BioIndustry Association
British Agrochemicals Association
British Association of Rose Breeders
British Poultry Breeders and Hatcheries Association
British Retail Consortium
British Sugar Beet Seed Producers Association
Centre for Commercial Law Studies
Chartered Institute of Patent Agents
Chartered Society of Designers
Compassion in World Farming
Confederation of British Industry
Consumers Association
Federation of Small Businesses
Food and Drink Federation
Greenpeace
Incorporated Society of British Advertisers
Institute of Patentees and Inventors
Institute of Trade Mark Agents
Law Society
Law Society of Scotland
Licensing Executives Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Meat and Livestock Commission
Medical Research Council
Milk Marketing Board
National Consumer Council
National Federation of Womens Institutes
Patent Concern
Plant Variety Rights Office
Potato Marketing Board
Trade Marks Patents and Designs Federation
Worldwide Fund for Nature (UK)

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the developments in copyright matters made under Britain's Presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Leigh: One directive in the copyright field was adopted during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community—directive 92/100/EEC of 19 November concerning rental and lending rights and certain rights related to copyright. The United Kingdom also sought agreement at the December Internal Market Council on a draft directive dealing with copyright and related rights in the field of cable and satellite broadcasting, but a minority of member states resisted this. Regular discussions were held at Council working group level on a draft directive on the duration of copyright and neighbouring rights protection. The United Kingdom also played a leading role in Community efforts to further the work of the World Intellectual Property Organisation in the copyright field.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce his review of the assisted areas map; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to make a decision on Coventry and Warwickshire's application for continued assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) on 2 December 1992, at column *260*

Export Insurance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with organisations representing British exporters concerning the provision of public funds for insuring exports against political risk.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I have had frequent consultations on political risk insurance with organisations representing British exporters and banks.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received, and what discussions he has had, concerning the planned discontinuation of export reinsurance for political risk in 1994; and if he will give details;

(2) if he will make a statement on the Export Credits Guarantee Department's capacity to provide export reinsurance, particularly for political risk;

(3) what was the total level of export reinsurance provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in each of the last 10 years; and what proportion specifically related to reinsurance for political risk, in each export sector and for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England;

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the likely effect of the planned discontinuation of export reinsurance for political risk, in 1994, for United Kingdom exports, exporters and the balance of trade, in each export sector and for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department is able to provide reinsurance, subject to Treasury consent, under the terms of the Export and Investment Guarantees Act 1991.

The ECGD currently supplements the private sector reinsurance treaties, for both commercial and political risk, of the privatised successor of the insurance services group. This support will be available for up to December 1994 in order to give time for the new company to arrange to source its full reinsurance requirement from the private market. The new company is working to achieve this outcome. Over 90 per cent. of its needs are currently being met by the private market.

Quite separately, the Export Credits Guarantee Department provides the new company with 100 per cent. reinsurance of the risks arising on certain higher risk markets for which no capacity has been made available by the private market. This facility is not time limited. Subject to satisfactory financial performance, it will continue for as long as the Government consider it essential to meet the reasonable needs of United Kingdom exporters.

I believe that the combined effect of these arrangements will be to maintain a good level of short-term export credit insurance support for United Kingdom exporters.

These reinsurance facilities have only been available since December 1991 and apply to less than 10 per cent. of the new company's reinsurance exposure for standard short-term business. The Export Credits Guarantee Department reinsurance is provided on a global basis and it is not possible to provide a breakdown between the risks, goods or geographical location of exporters reinsured.

Representations have been made to me by interested parties about the likely adequacy of the reinsurance

market to meet future demand and any implications this may have for Government policy. I am considering these representations.

Incentives to Industry

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has set up a committee in his Department to examine the flow of incentives towards industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department carefully examines each year the balance of priorities, and value for money, of our spending on grants to industry.

Research and Industrial Support

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the allocation of funds for research and industrial support within his Department during the course of 1992.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the Department's allocation of funds on research and industrial support in 1992 was given in the regional and general industrial support and other support for industry sections of "Trade & Industry; The Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95", Cm 1904. Further information was included in the selective assistance to industry and research and development and other programmes sections of "The Government's Expenditure Plans within the Energy Sector 1992-93 to 1994-95" Cm 1905. The supply estimates—1991-92 HC273-IV & V—as subsequently updated by the supplementary estimates—1992-93 HC45, HC231 and HC434—contain detailed information on expenditure in 1992-93. The Department's latest plans are given in "Trade & Industry; The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96", Cm 2204, published on 10 February 1993.

Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are directly or indirectly employed in the oil and gas industry *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: A survey by the Scottish Office and what is now Scottish Enterprise estimated that in 1990 direct and indirect employment by the oil and gas industry in Scotland was some 97,400. A similar, but less comprehensive, survey covering employment in 1992 is in preparation. No comparable survey exists for the United Kingdom as a whole, but the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association has estimated that direct and indirect employment could be 300,000.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Eight staff in my Department are assigned to the market testing programme. Since November 1991, the programme has cost the Department £460,000. This covers direct staff costs and consultants brought in to add private sector skills in line with the principles of the "Competing for Quality" White Paper.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Following publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality", I put forward a programme of market tests for completion by September 1993. While a number of these tests are at an advanced stage, none has yet completed the full process.

In the period in question, there have been numerous instances of contracting out services for management or policy reasons, but in these cases the formal testing of the market against internal provision has not been necessary.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give for Standard Industrial Classification Orders 3302 and 3341 *(a)* annual output, *(b)* United Kingdom market size and *(c)* balance of trade for each year since 1987; and if he will give the figures on a similar basis for Standard Industrial Classifications 3302 and 3341, together with Standard Industrial Classifications 3301, 3443, 3453 and 3454.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures may be obtained readily from the summary tables of Central Statistical Office "Business Monitors" PAS3301, PQ3302, PAS3441, PAS3443, PQ3453, and PAS3454, copies of which are available in the Library. The best estimate of the United Kingdom market size may be calculated by adding imports to, and subtracting exports from, the figures for sales of principal products shown in these tables.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of actual capital expenditure on current petroleum and natural gas development in the United Kingdom continental shelf in each of the last 15 years; if he will forecast the level of future capital expenditure in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Details of actual capital expenditure on petroleum and natural gas development in the United Kingdom continental shelf are given in my Department's report to Parliament, the "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom", the Brown Book, copies of which are available in the Library. A survey conducted by my Department during 1992 shows company intentions to invest some £4·7 billion in each year from 1993 to 1995, £4·1 billion in 1996, and £3·2 billion in 1997. The decline shown in the intended expenditures over the later years of the survey period is usual in these surveys, since companies cover only projects which are sufficiently advanced to enable reasonable estimates of expenditure to be made. However, if these intentions are realised real annual expenditure will remain higher than in any of the years between 1987 to 1989.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will forecast the number of orders for platforms for United Kingdom oil and gas production development

in each of the next five years and the estimated level of capital expenditure this represents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A survey conducted by my Department during 1992 shows company intentions to order some 44 platforms over the next five years, on which intended expenditure is some £8·3 billion for the structures, decks, modules and equipment alone. The survey does not collect the number of orders in each year, and only includes projects where company plans are sufficiently advanced to enable reasonable estimates of expenditure to be made.

Gas-fired Power Projects

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licence applications have been received in each of the last five years for gas-fired power projects; and if he will give details of their generation capacity.

Mr. Eggar: The following is the information requested.

Year	*Number*	*Capacity (MW)*
1988-89	0	0
1989-90	4	3,280
1990-91	11	9,485
1991-92	15	8,508
[1]1992-93	4	989

[1] To date.

Notes:

1. Prior to section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 coming into effect on 31 March 1989 application for consent for power stations, other than those made by the Central Electricity Generating Board, were made to local planning authorities under the Town and Country Planning Acts.
2. Applications for consent for power stations with a capacity of 50 MW or less are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning Acts and my Department does not have information on such applications.
3. Power stations in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many gas-fired power projects are *(a)* currently under construction or *(b)* already in operation; and what is the output/generation capacity of each.

Mr. Eggar: Major—above 50MW—gas-fired generating stations in England and Wales are as follows:

Station	*Location*	*Proposer*	*Capacity*
Commissioned			
Killingholme	South Humberside	PowerGen	900MW
Roosecote	Cumbria	Lakeland Power	230MW
Under construction			
Barking	London	Barking Power	1,000MW
Brigg	South Humberside	Regional Power Generators	240MW
Calder Hall	Cumbria	British Nuclear Fuels	160MW
Corby	Northamptonshire	Corby Power	350MW
Deeside	Clwyd	Deeside Power Development Company (National Power)	450MW
Keadby 1	Near Scunthorpe	Keadby Power	680MW
Killingholme "A" (phase 1)	South Humberside	National Power	650MW
Little Barford	Bedfordshire	National Power	680MW
Medway	Kent	Medway Power	660MW
Peterborough	Cambridgeshire	Peterborough Power	355MW
Rye House	Hertfordshire	PowerGen	680MW
Spondon	Near Derby	Derwent Cogeneration	318MW
Wilton	Teesside	Teesside Power	1,750MW

Power stations in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, respectively.

ECGD

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the role and functions of the Export Credits Guarantee Department; which functions have been privatised and on what basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department's 1991-92 annual report and trading accounts, which were laid before the House on the 28 January 1993, provide full details of the Department's role and functions. These documents have been placed in the Library.

The Insurance Services Group of ECGD was privatised on 1 December 1991. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) on 2 December 1991, *Official Report*, columns *11-12* in which he set out the terms of the sale.

Leyland DAF

Mr. Corbett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what considerations he has given to the implications for the British Army of the cessation of the supply of Leyland DAF military trucks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I understand that the Ministry of Defence is in contact with the receivers.

Red Star Parcels

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his latest estimate of the date of the publication of the memorandum of sale for Red Star parcels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The British Railways Board at present hopes to issue a memorandum of sale for Red Star in March of this year.

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the effect of the Government's proposals for rail privatisation on the pension of existing Red Star employees, who *(a)* lose their jobs as a result of privatisation and *(b)* remain in the employ of the new company following privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The British Railways Board, which is handling the sale of Red Star, is considering appropriate arrangements for the pensions of all existing Red Star employees.

BNFL (Accidents)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all reportable accidents and incidents that have occurred at *(a)* BNFL Chapel Cross, *(b)* BNFL Calderhall, *(c)* BNFL Sellafield, *(d)* BNFL Springfield and *(e)* BNFL Capenhurst since 1962; and if he will provide a breakdown of the annual totals into the number of (i) fatalities, (ii) major injuries, (iii) other injuries, (iv) dangerous occurrences and (v) disease.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The full answer to the question can be provided only at disproportionate cost. Incidents at nuclear installations reported to the President of the Board of Trade or Secretary of State for Scotland are published by the Health and Safety Executive in its quarterly statements of incidents at nuclear installations. Copies of these are held in the House of Commons Library along with the site newsletters. The available information on conventional accidents at these sites is given in the table:

Occupational injuries and dangerous occurrences reported to Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate as occurring in specified BNFL establishments

Year[1]	*Fatal injuries*	*Major injuries*[2]	*Over three day injuries*[3]	*Dangerous occurrences*[2]
Chapel Cross				
1986-87	—	1	3	—
1987-88	—	1	8	—
1988-89	—	—	8	—
1989-90	—	2	12	—
1990-91	—	—	12	—
1991-92[5]	—	—	5	1
Calderhall[4]				
1986-87	—	1	8	—
1987-88	—	1	4	—
1988-89	—	1	—	2
1989-90	—	3	6	—
1990-91	—	1	23	—
1991-92[5]	—	—	26	1
Sellafield				
1986-87	—	—	—	—
1987-88	—	—	—	—
1988-89	—	—	4	—
1989-90	—	4	193	3
1990-91	—	5	132	4
1991-92[5]	—	4	108	3
Springfield				
1986-87	—	—	—	—
1987-88	—	—	—	—
1988-89	—	—	—	—
1989-90	—	5	70	1
1990-91	—	3	44	—
1991-92[5]	—	2	42	1
Capenhurst				
1986-87	—	—	—	—
1987-88	—	—	—	—
1988-89	—	—	3	—
1989-90	—	2	20	—
1990-91	—	—	16	—
1991-92[5]	—	2	16	1

[1] Year commencing 1 April.
[2] As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[3] Injuries causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days.
[4] Also includes injuries and incidents reported as occurring at BNFL's Calder Tip, and Windscale and Calder sites.
[5] Provisional.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Macedonia

17. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support Macedonia's application to become a member of the United Nations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in close consultation with fellow members of the Security Council on Macedonia's United Nations application. Our decision will be taken in the light of these consultations.

Iraq

18. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to persuade the United Nations to lift sanctions against Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There can be no question of lifting sanctions against Iraq at present. Iraq is not in compliance with its obligations under all relevant United Nations resolutions.

20. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his current plans to place the Iraqi question before the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Security Council frequently discusses Iraq, both in formal and informal sessions. On 25 January the Security Council concluded that there was no basis for the lifting of economic sanctions. Discussions are continuing on the Secretary-General's proposals for the reinforcement of the United Nations Iraq/Kuwait observer mission.

28. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications or other approaches on the recent attack on Iraq he has had from countries which formed the UN alliance during the Gulf war, other than the USA and France; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in close touch with our coalition partners. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed Iraq with the Sultan of Oman and King Fahd during his recent visit to the Gulf.

European Foreign Policies

19. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mr. Hurd: I meet my European Community partners regularly to discuss the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign policy issues.

Serbia

21. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Serbian Government about the persecution of Muslims in the Sandzak region of Serbia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European Community partners have repeatedly condemned the Serbian Government's treatment of minorities, including Muslims in Serbia.

South Africa

22. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he is considering to encourage sporting, cultural and trading links with South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We support sporting and cultural contacts with South Africa. The British Overseas Trade Board has designated South Africa as one of its targets for trade promotion. A programme of events is planned to draw the attention of United Kingdom exporters to opportunities in South Africa.

Kuwait

23. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in respect of the current situation in Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in regular touch with our allies about the threat to Kuwait's security.

Abu Dhabi

24. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between Britain and Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I said in reply to the hon. Gentleman's question on 3 June 1992, at column *825*, relations are excellent.

Maastricht

25. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the timetable for ratification of the Maastricht treaty in each other EC country.

Mr. Hurd: Nine member states have ratified the treaty. Germany has completed the ratification process but has yet to deposit its instrument of ratification in Rome, pending resolution of a private action brought in the constitutional court.

A second Danish referendum will be held on 18 May.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

26. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider his policy on meeting officials of the Palestine Liberation Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We maintain regular contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organisation at senior official level. Ministerial contacts were broken off because of PLO support for Saddam Hussein. Our policy remains under review.

35. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel regarding recognition of the PLO.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is up to the Israeli Government to decide whether to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Balkans

27. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British policy in the Balkans.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy is to support the international effort to find peaceful solutions to the area's problems, notably by the international conference for the former Yugoslavia; to prevent the conflict spilling over into Kosovo or Macedonia; and to provide humanitarian reflief to those caught up in the fighting.

Kashmir

29. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Indian Government on self-determination for the people of Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister when he visited New Delhi recently. He made clear that the best way forward should involve simultaneous progress on dialogue between India and Pakistan, an improvement in human rights and a genuine political process in Kashmir in which the political aspirations of the population there can be accommodated; and a cessation of all external support for violence in Kashmir.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by him recently to the Government of India about human rights in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised British concerns about human rights in Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to India last month. He also encouraged the Indian Government to allow independent human rights organisations and others to visit Kashmir. Mr Narasimha Rao assured us of his Government's commitment to respect human rights and determination to take action against wrongdoers.

Turkey

30. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Turkish ambassador to discuss human and civil rights in Turkey.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans for such a meeting.

We have been in regular contact with the Turkish Government on the subject of human rights.

The issue was most recently discussed during the visit to the United Kingdom of the Turkish Prime Minister in November. During the visit Mr Demirel reiterated his Government's commitment to its programme of reforms which aims at improving human rights and increasing democratisation in the country.

We welcome this clear commitment to human rights by the Turkish Government and look forward to the implementation of their programme.

UN Security Council

31. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's continuing permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 2 February, at column *81*.

Falkland Islands

32. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the constitutiona! position of the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will issue a letter of comfort to oil companies currently prospecting in water around the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The question of a "letter of comfort" is under active consideration.

Japan

33. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to strengthen United Kingdom relations with Japan.

Mr. Goodlad: Relations with Japan are excellent. We intend to maintain the momentum of regular ministerial and other visits. Subject to final confirmation from the Japanese Government, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs plans to visit Tokyo in April. The Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary will visit Tokyo in July for the economic summit. Both Governments actively encourage a range of cultural, educational, scientific and academic exchanges to expand knowledge of each other's societies. We warmly welcome Japanese investment in this country. The meeting in Japan next month of the UK-Japan 2000 Group will continue the valuable contribution made by that group. Trading relations have greatly improved under the impetus of the Opportunity and Priority Japan campaigns, but both sides recognise the need to address the growing imbalance.

Norway

34. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made on considering Norway's application to join the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Edinburgh European Council invited the Council of Ministers to decide on the opening of negotiations with Norway once the Commission's opinion, a detailed assessment of Norway's suitability for membership, is available. If the opinion is favourable, we expect negotiations with Norway to start soon after.

Overseas Representatives (British Cars)

36. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on buying British cars for use by overseas representatives.

Mr. Goodlad: In accordance with Government guidelines the policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is to purchase cars for use by overseas representatives on a value-for-money basis.

British manufacturers are used where they are competitive on quality, fitness for purpose, price and delivery.

Angola

37. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Angola.

39. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking through the international community to end the violence in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government supported Security Council resolution 804 and will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to promote dialogue between the Government of Angola and UNITA with a view to agreeing a ceasefire and full implementation of the Bicesse peace agreements. We therefore welcome the meeting, held under UN auspices, at Addis Ababa last month between the two parties and hope that this will be followed by further dialogue.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *30*, what further action he is taking to secure the release of three British citizens held by UNITA forces in Angola; what joint action he proposes with other governments with citizens similarly held; whether this issue will be raised at the UNITA/government talks in Addis Ababa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* Since first hearing of the detention of three British citizens by UNITA in Angola, we have made strong representations to UNITA for their release. I am pleased to say that all three were released on 7 February together with a number of other foreign detainees, and have now left Angola.

Former Soviet Republics

38. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the assistance being given by the United Kingdom to the former Soviet republics.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The purpose of British assistance to the states of the former Soviet Union and the Baltics is to support economic and political reform. We have pledged bilateral aid totalling over £131 million, including £100 million for the know-how fund. So far, we have spent £35·7 million, and a further £11 million is already committed to specific activities. Our assistance is directed to priority sectors, mainly small business development, financial services, energy and food production and distribution. There is £280 million in medium-term export credit cover for the region, for which only Russia at present qualifies. We also contribute about 18 per cent. of European Community grant aid to the region, totalling 1,305 mecu in 1991 and 1992. The European Community has also made available 1.75 billion ecu in loans and credits. We provide further support through the World bank, the European bank for reconstruction and development and the Asian development bank.

Customs Fines

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what rulings have been made by the European Court of Justice regarding the illegality of customs fines; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

My attention has not been drawn to any rulings by the European Court of Justice regarding the illegality of Customs fines.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Neither the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor the Overseas Development Administration have staff assigned specifically to market testing. Since November 1991, however, market testing has accounted for a significant proportion of the time of some 25 diplomatic wing staff and 11 staff of the Overseas Development Administration. The cost, including direct staff costs, of the diplomatic wing's market testing programme up to 31 December 1992 was approximately £170,000; the cost of the Overseas Development Administration's programme was approximately £93,000.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: In following up the requirements of the White Paper "Competing for Quality", Cm 1730, the diplomatic and ODA wings of the FCO each agreed a programme of market testing with the efficiency unit.

Market testing exercises for the implementation of this programme are in hand but none has yet been completed.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Sri Lankan high commissioner.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not met the Sri Lankan high commissioner recently. I last met the high commissioner on 19 January.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Sri Lanka concerning the human rights situation in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We frequently discuss our concerns on human rights with the Sri Lankan Government. We take every opportunity to stress the importance we attach to respect for the rule of law.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Foreign Office officials or Ministers have had with representatives of the Tamil Tigers in *(a)* Sri Lanka, *(b)* the United Kingdom and *(c)* elsewhere, and on what dates.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We try to keep in touch with all shades of Sri Lankan opinion. This is consistent with our frequent offer of good offices if all sides would find it useful to help negotiations take place.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings his Department's officials or Ministers have had with representatives of the Tamil community in the United Kingdom to discuss human rights in Sri Lanka in the last year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before I visited Sri Lanka in October 1992, I met a group of representatives of human rights organisations, including those representing Tamil concerns. FCO officials are in frequent contact with both governmental and non-governmental human rights organisations in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to visit Sri Lanka. I visited Sri Lanka from 12 to 18 October last year.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will estimate *(a)* the number of barges on the River Danube which have broken United Nations sanctions by delivering oil or oil products to the territory of the former Yugoslavia, *(b)* the number of tankers in the Adriatic which have done so and *(c)* the number of aircraft originating in Iran which have done so.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We know of at least five barges that have breached UN Security Council resolution 757 of 1992 by delivering oil or oil products to Serbia on the Danube since the imposition of sanctions. We are aware of six tanker deliveries of oil to Montenegro via the Adriatic. No plane originating in Iran has yet been suspected of carrying oil or oil products to the former Yugoslavia. However, we know of at least one attempt by an Iranian plane to deliver arms to one of the parties to the Yugoslav conflict, in breach of UN Security Council resolution 713 of 1991.

Weapons Convention

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government propose to ratify the 1981 convention on the use of weapons which may be excessively injurious or indiscriminate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are currently considering ratification of the convention by the United Kingdom, and expect to reach a decision soon.

Global Environmental Change

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what detailed studies his Department has made or commissioned over the past three years in the foreign policy implications of global environmental change; and if he will make them available in whole or in part to the House.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We keep the foreign policy implications of global environment change under continuous review within the FCO. The Department has not commissioned specific external studies in this area.

Environmental Policy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his plans for developing a dialogue with national non-governmental organisations and academic bodies in areas of international environment policy where his is the lead Department.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regular dialogue with non-governmental organisations and academic bodies covering a range of international environmental policy issues. We also maintain close contact with non-governmental organisations on international aspects of a range of specific environmental issues.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Decommissioning Scheme

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out for each fishing fleet within England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland the payments made under the fishing decommissioning scheme of 1984.

Mr. Curry: Payments made in respect of vessels in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland under the Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983 were as follows:

	£ million
England	15·54
Scotland	2·24
Wales	0·46
Northern Ireland	0·26

Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on the implementation of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Curry: I shall shortly be laying before Parliament an order setting out the principles on which days-at-sea allocations will be worked out. On the basis of this order, Fisheries Departments will issue provisional days-at-sea figures to fishermen, who will have an opportunity to comment on them before days-at-sea restrictions start to operate. All fishermen will have a further opportunity to make a formal appeal to the Sea Fish Licence Tribunal which is now being set up.

I am placing in the Library of the House today an information note giving further details.

EMPLOYMENT

Bridging Allowances

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of bridging allowances for October, November and December 1992 on a comparable basis to the figures given in the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), of 29 October, *Official Report*, columns *832-34*.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 10 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the

numbers of 16 to 17-year-olds in receipt of bridging allowance for October, November and December 1992. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The information you have requested is provided in the attached tables.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Numbers in receipt of bridging allowance—by ES region
October 1992-December 1992

	October	*November*	*December*
Northern	490	388	368
Yorkshire and Humberside	702	618	672
East Midlands	840	728	700
London and South East	1,971	1,771	1,877
South West	611	540	620
Wales	439	384	407
West Midlands	908	687	818
North West	1,189	855	1,056
Scotland	1,154	813	806
Total	8,304	6,764	7,324

Numbers of males and females in receipt of bridging allowance—by ES region
October 1992-December 1992

	October		*November*		*December*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Northern	316	174	255	133	247	121
Yorkshire and Humberside	452	250	421	197	455	217
East Midlands and Eastern	566	274	460	268	463	237
London and South East	1,264	707	1,149	622	1,242	635
South West	418	193	356	184	423	197
Wales	293	146	257	127	252	155
West Midlands	581	327	450	237	544	274
North West	784	405	571	284	697	359
Scotland	732	422	510	303	533	273
Total	5,406	2,898	4,429	2,335	4,856	2,468

Numbers in receipt of extended child benefit
October 1992-December 1992

	Weekly average per month
October	26,581
November	26,343
December	25,691

Restart Interviews

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing the results of Restart interviews for the period 1 April 1992 to 1 December 1992 on the same basis as the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), of 29 October, *Official Report*, columns *834-36*.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 10 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the results of Restart interviews conducted during the period April to December 1992. This is something which falls with the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The information you asked for is given in the attached annex. As you will appreciate, these figures reflect only the direct results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview. It is through these indirect results of the help which advisers give clients in reviewing their options for returning to work that Restart has its effect.

An indication of the scale of that effect is provided by the report "The Restart Effect" which was recently published by the independent Policy Studies Institute. It is based on an analysis of the largest survey of unemployed people in the United Kingdom since 1980. This showed conclusively that the programme had a major effect in reducing the time it takes people to leave unemployment, to get a job and to enter Employment Training, particularly for those people who were at a disadvantage within the labour market.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Outcomes of Restart interviews
April 1992—December 1992

Region	*Interviews*	*Job placings*	*ET*	*Jobclub*	*Restart courses*	*EAS*
Northern	126,957	557	3,938	4,454	5,995	112
Yorkshire and Humberside	152,981	1,683	6,301	4,840	7,857	518
East Midlands and Eastern	181,669	2,345	4,868	7,075	6,524	507
London and South East	624,657	9,826	14,988	27,755	19,079	2,087
South West	141,185	1,211	4,770	5,467	4,874	512
Office for Wales	106,575	1,518	3,648	3,884	4,133	250
West Midlands	190,619	2,333	5,875	6,881	9,287	552

Region	Interviews	Job placings	ET	Jobclub	Restart courses	EAS
North West	320,600	3,003	7,369	10,900	13,483	535
Office for Scotland	208,639	3,305	5,944	7,296	8,071	424
Great Britain	2,053,882	25,781	57,701	78,552	79,303	5,497

Temporary Employment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the numbers of people who have been employed in temporary employment in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: Available information based on estimates from the labour force survey is given in the following table.

People employed in temporary employment
Great Britain

Spring	Numbers (thousands)
1983	1,345
1984	1,497
1985	1,403
1986	1,439
1987	1,547
1988	1,529
1989	1,465
1990	1,442
1991	1,450
1992	1,185

Construction Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the rate of unemployment among construction workers in each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Available information for Great Britain based on estimates from the labour force survey is given in the following table.

Spring each year	ILO Unemployment rate for construction workers (Per cent)
1984	11·6
1985	11·8
1986	12·0
1987	11·0
1988	6·7
1989	7·9
1990	7·1
1991	12·6
1992	17·6

Source: labour force survey.
Note: ILO unemployment rates obtained from the labour force survey are defined following internationally standard guidelines. Comparable information on this basis is not available for years prior to 1984.

DEFENCE

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all reportable accidents and incidents that have occurred at AWE Burghfield and AWE Cardiff since 1962; and if he will provide a breakdown of the annual totals into the number of (i) fatalities, (ii) major injuries, (iii) other injuries, (iv) dangerous occurrences and (v) disease.

Mr. Aitken: The breakdown of figures for reportable accidents and incidents for AWE Burghfield and AWE Cardiff during the period 1962 to 1992 is not readily available in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member when they are available.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Aitken: A provisional list of regulations that impact on business has recently been compiled. It will be fully checked for accuracy and placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Trident

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average weight of a Trident submarine.

Mr. Aitken: The submerged displacement of the Vanguard class Trident missile submarine is some 16,000 tonnes.

Public Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Three appointments have been made to Ministry of Defence executive non-departmental bodies since 1 November 1992. Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit, and political affiliation, if any, is not relevant or recorded.

UN (Military Secretariat)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to send a retired senior officer to the United Nations to advise on the establishment of a military secretariat there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on Monday 8 February, *Official Report*, column 498.

Army Redundancies

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the redundancies in the British Army in 1993-94 will be compulsory.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 9·6 per cent. of Army redundancies, all of whom will be officers, will be compulsory.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what levels of redundancies are to be made in the British Army in the year 1993-94; and what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of those redundancies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The position on planned redundancies remains as set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *800;* the estimated cost of the redundancy payments—special capital payments—is £188 million.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place about the replacement of the royal yacht Britannia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 26 January, *Official Report*, column *646*.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what current discussions he has had with the German Government about prospects for German participation in the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie) on 9 February.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost, and how many people would benefit, if the earnings limit for invalid care allowance was *(a)* raised to the lower earnings limit for paying national insurance contributions or *(b)* abolished.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 18 November 1992 at column *252*.

War Disablement Pensions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of war disablement pensions have made a claim for loss of hearing below the 20 per cent. level in 1990, 1991 and 1992; and how many are currently outstanding.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, claims for war disablement pension have increased significantly during the period as follows.

	Claims
1990	27,004
1991	42,881
1992	133,972

Note: Records do not show how many of these claims were for noise induced hearing loss.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants received income support in respect of costs for *(a)* nursing care homes and *(b)* residential care homes in (i) May 1991 and (ii) May 1992; and if he will provide a regional and social services authority based breakdown of these figures.

Mr. Burt: Information in the form requested is not available. Such information as is available is in the table.

May 1991	*Residential Care People receiving income support in (thousands)*	*Nursing Homes People receiving income support in (thousands)*
England	123	76
Scotland	8	9
Wales	7	9
Great Britain	139	94

May 1992	*Residential Care (thousands)*	*Nursing Homes (thousands)*
England	135	95
Scotland	10	12
Wales	7	10
Great Britain	152	116

Notes:
All data rounded to nearest thousand.
Source: Quarterly statistical inquiry.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the relevant regulations to allow claims for vibration white finger in circumstances where the claimant has been mainly working with wood; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There are no plans at present to amend the industrial injuries benefit regulations relating to claims for vibration white finger. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is currently studying the scientific evidence relating to hand/arm vibration syndrome, which includes vibration white finger, and will report in due course.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct the Benefits Agency to cease to refer to members of the public eligible for benefits of any sort as customers and to substitute applicants or other words or phrases appropriate to the context.

Mr. Burt: Ministers fully support the Benefits Agency's use of the word "customer" where appropriate. I have asked Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, to write with a full reply to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Nigel Spearing, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if the Agency will cease to refer to members of the public eligible for benefits as customers and substitute the word applicant or some other words or phrases.

At the launch of the Benefits Agency in April 1991 one of the four Core Values on which the Agency was to conduct its business was Customer Service. The term "customer" was introduced in an attempt to focus our attention on the people we serve and to break down long standing barriers often implied in the use of other terminology. People who use the services of the Benefits Agency are entitled to be treated with the care and respect which is normally denoted by the term customer.

"Customer" is also a more useful and all-embracing term than either claimant or applicant. The Benefits Agency deals not only with people who are claiming (or in the process of claiming) benefit, but also with their relatives, people acting on behalf of those claiming benefits, employers, welfare rights officers, other government departments and agencies. We use the term "internal customer" when describing the relationship between the links in the organisation, and this is a principle common to many organisations. The term reflects the attitude we should adopt and we have no plans to change it at the present time.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an estimate of the number of *(a)* individual claimants and *(b)* households in Lambeth dependent upon income support at any one time.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Fraser, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for an estimate of the number of *(a)* individual claimants and *(b)* households in Lambeth dependent upon Income Support at any one time.

The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I have listed below the available information, as at 30 November 1992, of the number of Income Support recipients at the Benefits Agency Districts covering the London Borough of Lambeth. Benefits Agency District boundaries do not correspond with those of individual boroughs and some may, therefore, live outside the borough of Lambeth. This information has been obtained from the Income Support Management Information Statistics.

District	*Number of Recipients*
Bankside	25,616
Lewisham and Brixton	57,393
Palace	65,007
South West Thames	55,474
Total	203,490

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants who have lost their benefit books have been refused a replacement in the 1991-92 financial year and from April 1992 to date; and where there has been a previously lost book, how many have been subject to unauthorised encashments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many Income Support claimants have lost their benefit books and were then refused a replacement in the 1991-92 financial year and from April 1992 to date; and where there has been a previous lost book, how many have been subject to unauthorised encashments.

The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I should explain that the number of cases where a customer reported an Income Support order book lost in 1991-92 and up to the quarter ending 30 June 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, were:

	1991-92	*Q/E 30 June 1992*
Number of IS books issued:	6,472,016	1,337,865
Number of IS books reported lost:	66,594 (1·03 per cent.)	19,873 (1·48 per cent.)
Number of IS books reported lost, stolen, destroyed after receipt:	28,004 (0·4 per cent.)	10,559 (0.8 per cent.)

When customers report that they have lost an order book, they will be asked about the circumstances of the loss, and a replacement will be issued. The interviewing officer will have to be satisfied that reasonable efforts to trace the book have been made. The customer may not automatically receive a replacement book, but could be paid benefit temporarily by girocheques on a weekly basis.

The overall number of payment transactions makes a full reconciliation of order books by weekly counterfoils impracticable and not cost effective. It is therefore not possible to readily identify how many of those missing order books have subsequently been cashed.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to begin paying Mrs. Shirley Wakeham of The Nook, Ugborough, Ivybridge, South Devon, the disability living allowance awarded to her on 26 February 1992; if he will make a statement as to the reasons for the delay; and if he will consider the payment of interest to reimburse Mrs. Wakeham for the unpaid benefit.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr Anthony Steen, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, about when payments of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) awarded to Mrs Shirley Wakeham of The Nook, Ugborough, Ivybridge, South Devon, will begin, the reasons for the delay, and whether he will consider the payment of interest to reimburse Mrs Wakeham for the unpaid benefit.

Outstanding payments of DLA were made to Mrs Wakeham on 5 February 1993. Payment was unfortunately delayed due to a clerical error made in recording the Adjudication Officer's (AO) decision onto the DLA computer system.

The rules governing the payment of compensation for loss of interest are quite specific and require that delay in making payment on a claim must amount to 12 months or more before compensation can be considered. In Mrs Wakeham's case the delay amounts to less than 12 months therefore compensation cannot be paid.

Clearly her payments have not been handled with the efficiency I would expect and I offer my sincere apologies for any distress or inconvenience caused.

I have separately replied to you in greater detail about this case. I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to make a decision on the application for attendance allowance submitted by Graham Peter Barton of 7 Churchill Cottages, Ugborough, Ivybridge, South Devon, NI No. NZ 46 58 27 A; and if he will make a statement as to the reasons for the 13 month delay in settling this matter.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be place in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about when he expects to make a decision on the application for Attendance Allowance (AA) submitted by Graham Peter Barton of 7 Churchill Cottages, Ugborough, Ivybridge, South Devon NI No NZ 46 58 27 A; and if he will make a statement as to the reasons for the 13 month delay in settling this.

A decision was made on Mr. Barton's AA claim on 24 June 1992 and notified to him on 30 June 1992. The subsequent review decision was made on 26 January 1993 and notified to him on 3 February 1993. Unfortunately Mr Barton's original AA claim made on 5 December 1991 was mislaid. A further claim was not obtained until 19 March and subsequent delays have resulted from the heavy volumes of work following the successful launch of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

My letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs explained the problems the Agency has faced since the successful launch of DLA and the positive steps I have taken to improve the situation. Further steps are being taken to recruit additional, and redeploy existing resources to clear the backlog of reviews.

I must apologise for the delay in dealing with Mr Barton's case. Such matters are not taken lightly when they fail to come up to the standard of service the Benefits Agency is trying to give all its customers and in this instance Mr Barton has clearly not received the standard of service to which he is entitled.

I have separately replied to you in greater detail about Mr Barton's case. I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency (Customer Charter)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of claimants who have applied for compensation under the Benefits Agency's customer charter; and what is the number of successful claims.

Mr. Burt: The administration of compensation under the Benefit Agency's customer charter is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms. Mildred Gordon, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking, what is the number of claimants who have applied for compensation under the Benefit Agency's Customer Charter; and what is the number of successful claims.

I would like to explain that the Department has operated Special Payment arrangements for many years and not solely as a result of the Benefits Agency's Customer Charter.

However, the information you require is not available in the precise form requested. This is because, although some customers request compensation themselves, cases are normally forwarded for consideration as a result of identification by Benefits Agency office staff.

I am able to state that, in the period 1 April 1992 to 30 September 1992, compensation for delay in payment of benefit was agreed in 3,085 cases.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the arrangements detailed in Mr. Michael Bichard's letter of 6 January, whereby Mr. James Johnston of 17 Summerlands Court, Brixham, will receive his disability living allowance each month by automatic credit transfer, will be activated; and when Mr. Johnston may expect to receive the next instalment of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 9 February 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, about when the Disability Living

Allowance awarded to Mr. James Johnston will be paid by automated credit transfer and when may he expect to receive the next instalment of his benefit.

Mr. Johnston's benefit has been paid by automatic credit transfer since 14 September 1992 and the next payment is due on 24 February 1993. I have written to you separately and in greater detail regarding Mr. Johnston's claim.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Drugs

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has received from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry regarding membership of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs; what was the date of any representations; and what was her Department's response.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Director of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry wrote to me on 11 December on this matter. A reply was sent on 25 January. I can now announce the names of the new members. They are as follows:

Dr. P. R. Fellows—General practitioner, Gloucestershire and chairman of Gloucester local medical committee.

Miss A. F. Glasier—Consultant gynaecologist and director of family planning, Lothian health board.

Dr. C. Grattan—Consultant dermatologist, Norfolk and Norwich hospital.

Dr. G. Hargreaves—Former GP with experience of the pharmaceutical industry.

Professor S. Holgate—Specialist in allergic disorders, Southampton university.

Mrs. S. Noyce—Pharmacist adviser to Sefton FHSA.

Hospital Patients

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in each of the last five years per regional health authority *(a)* as national health service patients and *(b)* as private patients within the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: The information that is available is set out in the table. The latest information on private patients is for 1989-90. Information for earlier years is not available.

Number of in-patients and day cases treated by RHA, all specialties, 1987-88—1991-92

Regional health authority	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*[1]1991-92*	*[2]1989-90*
Northern	546,101	587,167	600,986	628,583	655,287	3,998
Yorkshire	624,780	686,425	702,691	722,130	751,428	4,321
Trent	680,756	756,151	779,796	809,186	858,823	4,116
East Anglian	293,072	334,814	356,003	360,934	379,294	5,563
North West Thames	471,673	531,953	551,817	536,203	576,714	8,952
North East Thames	579,509	649,472	688,821	695,279	746,633	7,918
South East Thames	553,521	616,953	626,075	629,250	673,068	7,055
South West Thames	405,323	443,537	454,287	457,600	500,588	4,937
Wessex	436,368	492,741	510,516	526,284	562,571	2,215
Oxford	344,225	373,247	388,680	383,333	404,923	7,505
South Western	498,485	578,399	591,880	588,049	617,689	4,864
West Midlands	768,725	890,262	925,209	959,648	1,006,699	6,141
Mersey	425,392	455,411	479,831	487,107	523,515	2,594
North Western	764,908	844,152	868,505	887,029	927,034	6,401
SHAs	107,368	111,091	114,223	114,637	122,441	6,898
England	7,500,206	8,351,775	8,639,320	8,785,252	9,306,707	83,478

[1]Provisional.
[2]Private patients.

Source:
1987-88 form SH3. NB In-patients are discharges and deaths and are not comparable with finished consultant episodes.
1988-89 to 1991-92 In-patients and day cases form KP70. NB In-patient finished consultant episodes are not comparable with discharges and deaths.
Private Episodes from the Hospital Episode System.

1989-90

	NHS episodes	*Private episodes*
Northern	600,986	3,998
Yorkshire	702,691	4,321
Trent	779,796	4,116
East Anglia	356,003	5,563
North West Thames	551,817	8,952
North East Thames	688,821	7,918
South East Thames	626,075	7,055
South West Thames	454,287	4,937
Wessex	510,516	2,215
Oxford	388,680	7,505
South Western	591,880	4,864
West Midlands	925,209	6,141
Mersey	479,831	2,594
North Western	868,505	6,401
SHAs	114,223	6,898

Source: Hospital Episode System.

Schizophrenia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital admissions there were for patients with schizophrenia in each year since 1986; and how many of these in each year were re-admissions.

Mr. Yeo: The table gives the number of admissions and re-admissions in England where a diagnosis of schizophrenia was made. 1989-90 is the only year where the quality of information permits publication.

Number of hospital admissions in England for patients with schizophrenia and number of re-admissions (HES) 1989-90

	Number
Number of admissions	38,180
of which number of re-admissions	18,550

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being undertaken by her Department to ensure the financial security of short-stay residential projects after the introduction of community care arrangements.

Mr. Yeo: From April local authorities will be responsible for assessing individuals' needs and arranging care, including short-stay residential care if appropriate. The money that the Department of Social Security would otherwise have spent supporting people in residential care will be transferred to local authorities to enable them to meet these new responsibilities. Particular encouragement has been given to local authorities to make suitable arrangements for respite care. We will be monitoring carefully how authorities fulfil their new responsibilities.

London Hospitals

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy in coming to decisions in the Tomlinson proposals to establish schemes under which medical and nursing staff in London hospitals can be redeployed to *(a)* acute services outside London and *(b)* primary and community care services in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: We intend to announce our proposals for the future of the health service in London shortly. This statement will make clear the Government's response to Tomlinson's proposals and will set out how we wish to see the national health service in London evolve and improve.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring is undertaken and which statistics are kept by her Department to ensure a national consistency in decisions affecting extra-contractual referrals.

Mr. Sackville: None. Decisions about extra-contractual referrals should reflect "Guidance on Extra Contractual Referrals" (EL (92) 60) which should ensure national consistency. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued by her Department about the grounds on which an extra-contractual referral can be derived.

Mr. Sackville: An extra-contractual referral is a referral made to a provider unit outside an existing contract with the patient's district health authority. "Guidance on Extra Contractual Referrals" was issued under cover of EL(92)60, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications have been received from units or hospitals seeking trust status in Northumberland; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received three expressions of interest from units in Northumberland seeking trust status in the fourth wave. If all are successful it will bring the total number of national health service trusts in Northumberland to five.

Mental Health Review Tribunals

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hearings mental health review tribunals have had in each year since 1987;

(2) how many applications there have been to mental health review tribunals in each year since 1987.

Mr. Yeo: The number of applications for and hearings of mental health review tribunals in each year since 1987 is as follows:

	Applications	*Hearings*
1987	5,001	2,928
1988	5,581	3,168
1989	6,378	3,731
1990	7,293	4,378
1991	8,137	4,728
1992	9,073	4,935

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many mental health review tribunal hearings patients have had legal representation in each year since 1987.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times sections 2, 3 and 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 have been used in each year since 1987.

Mr. Yeo: The information is given in the table.

Mental Health Act 1983

	Section:		
Year and Source:	*2*	*3*	*37*
1987-88			
Admissions[1]	8,867	2,568	982
Changes to[2]	5,998	4,512	154
Total	14,865	7,080	1,136
1988-89			
Admissions[1]	9,517	2,889	883
Changes to[2]	6,484	5,070	218
Total	16,001	7,959	1,101
1989-90			
Admissions[1]	9,534	3,031	1,042
Changes to[2]	6,345	5,004	222
Total	15,879	8,035	1,264

[1] Admissions to special hospitals relate to calendar years.
[2] Patients in NHS facilities only.

Hospital Broadcasting

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy toward the use by hospital broadcasting organisations of a freely radiating FM frequency.

Mr. Sackville: Patient audio entertainment is readily available by using proven cabled (hard wire) systems delivered to the bedhead. The quality of properly designed systems is excellent, they afford privacy, and there is little risk of interference with sensitive equipment within the hospital. It should not be necessary for hospital entertainment to be broadcast on FM.

Dentists

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of dentists receiving national health service remuneration; and of these how many *(a)* hold regular Saturday surgeries for NHS registered patients, *(b)* undertake specialist services for children and *(c)* provide out-of-hours emergency services.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 30 September 1992 there were 15,411 general dental practitioners (GDPs) in England receiving remuneration for providing dental care and treatment under the national health service.

The other information requested is not held centrally. However, information based upon a sample of GDPs, used in conducting a workload survey in 1991, suggests that some 33 per cent. of GDPs held Saturday morning sessions in 1991. Very few held Saturday afternoon sessions, and most of those who did also held Saturday morning sessions.

The same survey shows that 78 per cent. of GDPs personally provided out-of-hours emergency cover. (All GDPs with continuing care or capitation patients are required to make reasonable arrangements to provide emergency cover for such patients, but need not necessarily provide the cover personally.)

Information on specialist services provided by GDPs for children is not collected centrally.

Wessex RHA (Computer)

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the money lost by the Wessex regional health authority in attempting to install a new computer system; and if she will make a statement on the current situation.

Mr. Sackville: The district auditor estimated that about £43 million has been spent by the Wessex regional health authority on the RISP computer project. The Wessex RHA's regional general manager has publicly stated that the RHA has derived no benefit from about £20 million of that expenditure.

Community Pharmacists

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much her Department owes to community pharmacists for periods of up to *(a)* 60 days and *(b)* 90 days;

(2) if she will set out her Department's policy towards the timing of payments to community pharmacists in respect of the NHS pharmaceutical services they provide; and what steps have been taken to implement the objective of ensuring that large companies or organisations pay their debts to small suppliers within a 30-day period;

(3) on how many occasions, and to what extent in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, community pharmacists received payment in respect of NHS pharmaceutical services within *(a)* 30 days, *(b)* 60 days or *(c)* 90 days of the provision of these services.

Dr. Mawhinney: Pharmacists receive some 80 per cent. of their national health service fees and payments within one month of submitting the prescriptions they have dispensed to the prescription pricing authority. The balance is paid a month later when the authority has calculated the exact payment due. In practice this means that, in any one month, pharmacists are receiving the equivalent of a full month's payment for their work.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the Royal College of Physicians' report commissioned by her Department which examines the recommendations for guidelines on hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health did not commission the report on hyperbaric medicine. The working party was set up by the faculty of occupational medicine. Publication of the report is a matter for the Royal College of Physicians.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider issuing a health notice giving guidelines on the value of hyperbaric oxygen as a treatment for gas gangrene and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mr. Sackville: I have no such plans at present.

Prison Mother and Baby Units

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the cost of the visits by the social services inspectorate to the mother and baby units in prisons in each year since 1990; and which budget bore the cost of the visits;

(2) what plans she has to transfer the inspection of mother and baby units in prisons from the social services inspectorate to the chief inspector of prisons; and if she will make a statement;

(3) how many times the social services inspectorate visited the mother and baby units in prisons during 1990, 1991 and 1992, respectively; how many members of the inspectorate made each inspection; and what was the duration of each visit.

Mr. Yeo: At the request of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, the Department of Health is conducting a programme of three inspections of the mother and baby units in prison at two-year intervals between 1990 and 1994. The first two inspections took place in 1990 and 1992 and a third is planned for 1994. The position will be reviewed after the 1994 inspection.

The Department set up a multi-disciplinary team led by a social services inspector to conduct the inspections. There were five members of the team; two social services inspectors, one nurse, one paediatrician and a psychiatrist. In 1990 the team allotted three days to inspect each unit and in 1992 four days.

The Department of Health met the costs of these inspections. The costs cannot be identified separately.

Child Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with representatives of voluntary organisations with regard to their taking over

wholly or partially the statutory child care functions of individual local authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Hospital Incinerators

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the hospital incinerators in England that *(a)* burn less than 25 kg of clinical waste per hour and *(b)* burn less than 1 tonne of clinical waste per hour.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 11 February 1993

ENVIRONMENT

Attercliffe Study

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative sources of funding are available for the initiation of the Attercliffe study, following the ending of the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Urban programme and urban development corporation resources have been used to fund the Attercliffe study. The study is now complete and the recommendations are being considered by Sheffield city council and its partners.

Derelict land grant, city grant—both to be absorbed into the proposed urban regeneration agency—urban development corporation and European regional development fund resources may be available for those schemes which meet the relevant grant criteria and also have sufficient priority when considered alongside other schemes.

In addition, the recent relaxations on use of capital receipts should enable Sheffield city council to assist such schemes from its own resources.

Deposit Bond Bank Schemes

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many deposit bond bank schemes are currently in operation in England and Wales; and what is their location.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held by the Department.

Refugees (London)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each London borough the latest actual and budget figures he has for expenditure on *(a)* housing, *(b)* education and *(c)* social services resulting from the acceptance by that borough of refugees to the United Kingdom; and if he will also list for each London borough the amount of specific grant allowed by his Department for this purpose.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information on actual and budgeted expenditure is not available centrally. Details of a special grant payable in 1992-93 to local authorities in respect of displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia are set out in the "Special Grant Report (No. 5)" which the House approved on 3 February.

Disabled People (Council Tax)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what estimate he has made of the number of disabled persons in each council tax band B to H inclusive who are likely to be eligible for a disabled person's discount; and what is the estimated cost of this discount for each band B to H, and in total for England;

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of disabled persons living in dwellings valued in council tax band A who would be eligible for a discount if their dwelling were valued in any other band.

Mr. Howard: Figures are not available for the number of dwellings in each band likely to benefit from the reductions for disabilities scheme.

Urban Priority Areas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *243*, if he will name the external researchers referred to in his answer; and if he will give a full timetable for consultations on the methodology to be used for the review of urban priority areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: The external researchers are the Centre for Urban Policy Studies, Manchester university. We will circulate shortly a paper by the researchers proposing a methodology to be used in analysing census data to the local authority associations and voluntary organisations. Given the technical complexity of the subject, we will seek to give as much time as possible for them to respond.

Special Needs Housing

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the funding of special needs projects currently funded by the Housing Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Expenditure plans for 1993-94 include provision of £96·6 million for the revenue funding of special needs projects by the Housing Corporation. Most of this provision relates to projects which are currently receiving funding from the corporation.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ring-fence the current financial regime governing special needs projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Revenue funding for special needs projects is provided by my Department through the special needs management allowance paid to housing associations by the Housing Corporation. Provision for this programme in 1992-93 is £95 million, specifically for supporting the housing management costs of associations operating in the field of special needs accommodation. Funding for 1993-94 will include provision for an additional 3,000 SNMA bedspaces, the majority of which will receive capital funding from the corporation's approved development programme. In addition, the ADP will provide funds for 1,500 units of special needs accommodation not requiring support from SNMA.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage special housing authorities being formed and run by disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to encourage the formation of such organisations.

The Housing Corporation currently supports about 250 housing associations which provide accommodation for a range of special needs, including the needs of disabled people.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the number of council tax payers eligible for a second homes discount in each band, and in total, for England; and what is the estimated cost of the discount for each band and in total.

Mr. Howard: The table shows the estimated number of dwellings which may be subject to two council tax discounts. The majority of these will be second homes. Local authorities will not be setting their council taxes until the spring; we have no estimate of the cost of the discounts that might apply to second homes.

Band	*Number of dwellings ('000s)*
A	126
B	78
C	88
D	59
E	40
F	25
G	25
H	9
Total for England	450

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he intends to adopt to allow local authorities continued borrowing during 1993-94 to cover the collection of outstanding arrears of 1990-91 and 1991-92 community charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: During this year community charge collection has improved significantly, and it is essential that authorities continue to make every effort to collect all outstanding unpaid community charges. To assist authorities we are prepared to consider, in response to an application by an authority, granting an increase in its aggregate credit limit for 1993-94 to cover those unpaid 1990-91 and 1991-92 community charges which it expects to collect during 1993-94. This will enable such an authority to continue to borrow to cover these debts pending their collection during the course of next year.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 16 local authorities he referred to on 3 February, *Official Report*, column 342 which will receive a special grant to compensate them since their standard spending assessment is more than 5 per cent. lower than under the old basis of estimating; and if he will quantify the money each of the 16 local authorities will receive.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The "Special Grant Report (No. 5)", which was laid before the House on 28 January 1993, sets out the authorities to which population loss grants are to be paid, and the amount of each grant. These are listed:

	£
Bracknell Forest	690,257
Richmondshire	426,440
Wokingham	321,846
Rutland	189,768
West Oxfordshire	160,569
Three Rivers	139,901
Colchester	135,501
Purbeck	131,493
North Kesteven	118,575
North Shropshire	80,988
Milton Keynes	69,099
Tendring	66,819
City of Oxford	48,818
East Yorkshire	38,250
Wealden	35,790
Surrey Heath	20,050

Local Authority Housing Investment

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further conclusions he has reached following his consultation exercise on the development of the local authority housing investment programme process.

Sir George Young: Last May, my Department launched a major consultation exercise on the further development of the local authority housing investment programme process. The consultation paper made proposals designed to improve the way in which housing resources are used and to stimulate the involvement of local people in this process. It was suggested that local authorities should prepare new strategies covering the full range of housing activities in their area. It was also proposed that decisions on the initial allocation of Housing Corporation funding should be co-ordinated with local authorities' housing strategies for each area and recent trends in the allocation of HIP resources, designed to promote better value for the money spent through housing capital programmes, should be developed.

Interim decisions on these matters, covering points which it was necessary to settle in time for the 1992 HIP round, were issued in July, *Official Report*, 10 July 1992, column *384*. We have now reached conclusions on the framework for the HIP process in 1993 and later years.

Our view is that the HIP process should develop progressively in a flexible manner, which allows scope for the differing circumstances of authorities and the developing housing policies of both local and central Government. To facilitate this, we intend to invite all housing authorities to draw up annual housing strategy statements in which each authority describes the needs and resources for housing in their area, and the plans and programmes which the authority has for addressing them. Housing strategies should be developed in consultation with the Housing Corporation, housing associations, the private housing sector, both rental and owner occupied, house builders, the voluntary sector, tenants groups and other interested parties. They should encompass all relevant functions and resources of the authority in a corporate approach.

Alongside this, we intend to build on this year's success in co-ordinating the arrangements for the HIP and the Housing Corporation's approved development programme processes. We have reaffirmed our view that there is a role for a significant element of discretion in the

allocation of HIP resources, including a primary allocation criterion based on the efficiency and effectiveness of authorities in meeting housing need. And in particular we have reached the view that the statistical index used in the allocation of HIP resources—the generalised needs index or GNI—should be comprehensively reviewed, with special reference to the year-on-year stability of the index.

In the spring, the Department will issue guidance to local authorities on the preparation of housing strategy statements and the submission of HIP bids for 1994-95.

I have now asked officials to take forward discussions on the practical implications of these decisions with the local authority associations, the Housing Corporation, the National Federation of Housing Associations and other interested parties, as appropriate.

I have placed in the Libraries of the House copies of a note which gives more detail of the decisions we have taken.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of his Department's consultation document to local housing authorities proposing the transfer of the care element of the warden service in sheltered housing from housing revenue accounts to social service budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* Last September my Department issued a consultation document proposing temporary legislation, to be included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill, enabling local housing authorities to provide welfare services for their tenants and to account for the costs in their housing revenue accounts if they wish. These powers would avoid disruption and uncertainty in the wake of the Ealing judgment. The consultation document explained that the powers were intended to be temporary because it is the Government's intention that the housing revenue account should be a landlord account, and that welfare services should be accounted for elsewhere.

My Department received approximately 130 representations widely welcoming these powers, but many suggested that welfare services should continue to be provided by housing authorities as part of the housing service, or at least until local government reorganisation was complete. We have made it clear that no decisions will be taken on whether or when to withdraw these powers until a further, full consultation exercise has taken place.

I am issuing this further consultation paper today, and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the House Libraries. The paper is being sent to all local authorities and other interested parties, setting out proposals for the longer-term funding and provision of welfare services for tenants of local housing authorities. The paper proposes that housing authorities should retain the temporary powers, at present being considered as part of the Housing and Urban Development Bill, to provide these services for their tenants, until the current review of local government is completed. It also sets out options on which services might be excluded from the housing revenue account and on timing. We will take no decisions until we have considered what consultees have to say. Whatever longer-term arrangements are then decided on, we will ensure that there will be no disruption to services for tenants.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will also be issuing a consultation paper on these issues shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Blepharospasm

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision his Department makes for sufferers of the condition blepharospasm; and of he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: A wide range of benefits is available to sick and disabled people, including sufferers of blepharospasm, provided that they meet the conditions of entitlement. Information about benefits is available from the Benefits Agency in leaflets and through confidential free telephone advice lines.

Pensions

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures estimating the cost of reintroducing earnings uprating for the retirement pension and other linked benefits beginning in April 1996, giving annual figures in 1992-93 prices over a 10-year period.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. However, a comparison between the cost of earnings uprating of benefits and that of prices uprating of benefits from 1990-91 to 2050-51 can be made by referring to tables 13 and 14 of the "National Insurance Fund Long Term Financial Estimates—Report of the Government Actuary on the Second Quinquennial review under Section 137 of the Social Security Act 1975" published in July 1990 as HC 582.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to ensure that the hon. Member for East Lothian receives a reply to his letter of 4 November 1992 about the case of Mr. Mark Moffat, which was subsequently referred by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. I understand that Mr. Bichard has already replied to the hon. Member about this case.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each housing authority, for the latest year for which figures are available, the number of housing benefit claimants who live in *(a)* council housing, *(b)* other public sector housing and *(c)* private rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. "Other public sector housing" is taken to refer to

accommodation provided by housing associations. The information relates to averages of the quarterly caseload counts, from the housing benefit management information system statistics for May and August 1992.

Claimants of Housing Benefit by type of accommodation.

Local authority	*Local authority tenants*	*Housing associations*	*Other private rented*
Aberconwy	1,733	95	1,331
Aberdeen	13,882	636	1,527
Adur	2,196	48	744
Allerdale	3,277	2,489	912
Alnwick	1,541	261	345
Alyn and Deeside	2,991	304	629
Amber Valley	4,024	312	1,202
Angus	5,402	158	1,055
Annandale and Eskdale	2,019	42	337
Arfon	3,253	41	1,478
Argyll-Bute	3,513	534	810
Arun	3,225	627	2,955
Ashfield	5,733	328	1,242
Ashford	4,606	170	995
Aylesbury Vale	4,998	4	1,387
Babergh	3,096	108	982
Badenoch	443	75	211
Banff and Buchan	4,597	151	506
Barking	14,118	41	1,075
Barnet	9,377	515	6,584
Barnsley	18,050	787	2,962
Barrow in Furness	2,957	6	1,713
Basildon	3,770	40	1,678
Basildon (DC)	6,928	0	0
Basingstoke	4,811	549	1,213
Bassetlaw	5,715	217	1,194
Bath	4,382	483	2,177
Bearsden and Milngavie	805	22	77
Berwickshire	970	144	195
Berwick-upun-Tweed	1,425	59	357
Beverley	2,618	221	831
Bexley	5,309	387	3,974
Birmingham	76,660	8,754	19,185
Blaby	1,244	197	420
Blackburn	8,661	1,345	1,422
Blackpool	5,039	626	6,293
Blaenau Gwent	6,696	741	787
Blyth Valley	5,390	1,124	697
Bolsover	4,226	168	1,075
Bolton	16,543	1,386	3,461
Boothferry	2,682	106	665
Boston	3,271	80	526
Bournemouth	4,635	119	8,751
Bracknell	3,974	496	864
Bradford	22,643	7,264	5,746
Braintree	6,283	122	1,219
Breckland	4,149	277	1,162
Brecknock	1,408	143	420
Brent	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brentwood	2,165	125	460
Bridgnorth	1,860	56	536
Brighton	8,194	1,385	7,451
Bristol	23,178	2,277	10,833
Broadland	12	2,237	1,138
Bromley	415	11,164	2,900
Bromsgrove	2,179	85	503
Broxbourne	2,780	218	692
Broxtowe	3,817	301	1,486
Burnley	4,654	536	1,752
Bury	6,897	883	1,818
Caithness	1,641	65	230
Calderdale	9,640	656	3,053
Cambridge	5,288	822	1,870
Camden	17,896	4,166	8,558
Cannock Chase	4,883	132	814
Canterbury	4,476	621	2,513
Caradon	2,557	81	1,293
Cardiff	14,232	3,343	7,464
Carlisle	5,728	196	1,538
Carmarthen	1,890	190	837
Carrick	3,050	27	2,023
Castle Morpeth	2,065	133	335
Castle Point	1,408	99	697
Ceredigion	1,759	143	1,443
Charnwood	4,321	366	1,233
Chelmsford	5,001	303	1,030
Cheltenham	4,209	447	2,043
Cherwell	3,981	345	1,581
Chester	4,926	53	2,102
Chester le Street	3,842	114	323
Chesterfield	7,218	407	1,392
Chichester	3,537	290	1,303
Chiltern	0	776	2,068
Chorley	2,396	1,350	782
Christchurch	0	1,191	619
City of London	994	0	101
Clackmannan	6,388	195	328
Cleethorpes	2,029	99	1,370
Clydebank	5,694	319	604
Clydesdale	4,101	100	194
Colchester	5,417	482	2,268
Colwyn	1,720	365	1,538
Congleton	2,502	80	422
Copeland	2,925	513	1,752
Corby	3,724	0	1,010
Cotswold	2,736	149	1,070
Coventry	16,214	3,065	6,212
Craven	1,194	63	703
Crawley	4,840	401	687
Crewe and Nantwich	4,343	201	1,238
Croydon	12,541	2,374	7,047
Cumbernauld	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cumbernauld (DC)	3,258	0	0
Cumnock & Doon	4,855	87	191
Cunninghame	11,320	145	1,384
Cynon Valley	3,649	600	1,074
Dacorum	6,168	769	648
Darlington	4,811	486	1,697
Dartford	3,174	182	878
Daventry	2,213	0	480
Delyn	3,050	223	727
Derby	11,077	2,225	4,331
Derbyshire Dales	1,931	19	624
Derwentside	7,737	471	832
Dinefwr	1,448	96	615
Doncaster	19,220	357	4,013
Dover	4,158	535	2,256
Dudley	20,713	1,477	1,487
Dumbarton	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dundee	18,557	1,591	2,613
Dunfermline	9,247	1	1,492
Durham	5,566	331	792
Dwyfor	843	77	591
Ealing	11,127	2,926	7,152
Easington	9,907	763	846
East Cambridgeshire	2,342	76	688
East Devon	3,079	217	1,914
East Dorset	15	1,514	987
East Hampshire	2,625	135	998
East Hertfordshire	3,696	91	757
East Kilbride	585	29	435
East Kilbride (DC)	5,230	0	0
East Lindsey	3,526	142	2,894
East Lothian	6,023	311	633
East Northampton	2,510	81	639
East Staffordshire	3,288	269	925
East Yorkshire	2,760	130	2,218
Eastbourne	3,333	740	2,801
Eastleigh	2,749	204	1,244
Eastwood	833	49	243
Eden	1,017	129	564
Edinburgh	25,236	922	13,432
Ellesmere Port	3,763	248	551
Elmbridge	2,985	79	1,557
Enfield	11,484	813	5,127
Epping Forest	4,903	295	872

Local authority	Local authority tenants	Housing associations	Other private rented
Epsom and Ewell	1,093	181	567
Erewash	4,549	290	1,398
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,494	417	263
Exeter	3,996	974	2,734
Falkirk	13,208	254	857
Fareham	2,035	125	829
Fenland	3,175	96	1,306
Forest Heath	1,965	138	532
Forest of Dean	2,675	276	503
Fylde	1,378	70	1,412
Gateshead	20,209	1,123	4,200
Gedling	2,744	312	1,690
Gillingham	2,442	234	1,608
Glanford	2,010	205	680
Glasgow	101,048	5,599	15,875
Glenrothes (DC)	3,253	0	0
Gloucester	4,209	581	2,048
Glyndwr	1,607	198	475
Gordon	2,104	109	368
Gosport	3,279	328	1,141
Gravesham	4,610	165	1,234
Great Yarmouth	4,574	333	2,011
Greenwich	16,658	1,916	4,107
Grimsby	5,386	591	2,299
Guildford	3,745	29	1,715
Hackney	23,875	2,365	8,914
Halton	5,491	1,963	4,532
Hambleton	2,293	1	755
Hamilton	10,602	268	324
Hammersmith	10,792	3,247	6,265
Harborough	1,637	27	459
Haringey	18,340	2,822	17,846
Harlow	6,644	263	731
Harrogate	3,209	461	2,280
Harrow	5,400	326	3,309
Hart	1,366	93	587
Hartlepool	7,272	1,165	1,712
Hastings	3,280	965	3,347
Havant	2,405	283	996
Havering	12,620	157	2,208
Hereford	2,645	281	1,163
Hertsmere	3,626	189	644
High Peak	3,091	271	1,060
Hillingdon	9,631	313	3,072
Hinckley and Bosworth	2,575	68	678
Holderness	1,385	21	637
Horsham	3,119	57	1,218
Hounslow	7,520	719	3,322
Hove	2,572	660	4,861
Huntingdon	4,243	91	1,491
Hyndburn	3,025	168	1,491
Inverclyde	9,796	362	840
Inverness	4,632	184	866
Ipswich	6,512	1,230	2,404
Irvine (DC)	1,904	0	0
Isles of Scilly	41	9	29
Islington	19,785	1,547	6,417
Islwyn	3,868	467	582
Kennet	2,623	86	738
Kensington and Chelsea	5,489	4,662	4,363
Kerrier	2,943	51	2,481
Kettering	3,196	100	1,045
Kilmarnock	7,927	186	648
Kincardine and Deeside	1,124	129	244
Kingston-upon-Hull	26,581	2,017	7,129
Kingston-upon-Thames	4,307	1,042	1,318
Kingswood	2,728	311	631
Kirkcaldy	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kirklees	19,804	1,305	4,745
Knowsley	18,373	503	3,234
Kyle and Carrick	8,145	61	1,180
Lambeth	23,729	3,852	8,773
Lancaster	3,365	300	4,396
Langbaurgh	9,905	1,015	1,985
Leeds	51,887	3,855	14,702
Leicester	20,671	547	7,270
Leominster	1,163	78	512
Lewes	2,481	338	1,465
Lewisham	20,435	3,654	8,324
Lichfield	2,917	184	615
Lincoln	6,342	202	2,230
Liverpool	40,991	13,086	17,041
Livingston (DC)	3,654	0	0
Llanelli	4,796	297	1,177
Lliw Valley	3,236	261	624
Lochaber	1,007	82	206
Luton	6,944	619	3,552
Macclesfield	4,007	327	1,447
Maidstsone	4,858	265	1,472
Maldon	1,460	92	646
Malvern Hills	2,937	27	883
Manchester	62,613	6,413	17,761
Mansfield	6,265	690	1,735
Medina	71	2,303	2,919
Meirionnydd	1,130	62	626
Melton	1,309	0	489
Mendip	3,310	201	1,668
Merthyr Tydfil	4,957	12	1,721
Merton	6,814	1,216	3,619
Mid Bedfordshire	3,467	72	672
Mid Devon	2,360	218	950
Mid Suffolk	2,523	151	612
Mid Sussex	52	2,438	1,308
Middlesbrough	12,793	1,574	3,096
Midlothian	3,645	254	893
Milton Keynes	8,220	1,460	2,154
Mole Valley	2,037	41	775
Monklands	12,986	0	319
Monmouth	2,820	235	594
Montgomery	1,426	348	622
Moray	4,181	261	803
Motherwell	16,944	193	654
Nairn	532	32	107
Neath	3,812	505	709
New Forest	4,560	849	1,654
Newark	4,238	283	1,446
Newbury	34	3,274	1,627
Newcastle under Lyme	5,681	144	1,193
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	28,697	4,064	5,927
Newham	18,921	3,149	12,328
Newport	9,317	963	2,797
Nithsdale	3,365	177	602
North Bedfordshire	0	5,585	1,850
North Cornwall	2,620	290	1,406
North Devon	2,330	474	2,310
North Dorset	1,688	177	516
North East Derby	5,803	88	629
North East Fife	2,927	118	594
North Hertfordshire	5,406	725	1,107
North Kesteven	2,875	0	769
North Norfolk	3,300	89	1,562
North Shropshire	1,750	148	613
North Tyneside	15,064	2,284	3,643
North Warwickshire	2,369	110	568
North West Leicester	2,954	392	679
North Wiltshire	3,850	92	1,042
Northampton	9,822	401	2,899
Northavon	3,335	274	940
Norwich	12,692	912	3,630
Nottingham	25,849	1,729	10,215
Nuneaton	5,460	285	1,454
Oadby and Wigston	920	69	437
Ogwr	6,825	653	1,843
Oldham	15,075	1,459	2,864
Orkney	571	60	240
Oswestry	1,423	9	584
Oxford	5,967	652	4,061
Pendle	3,317	190	1,385
Penwith	2,399	82	1,781
Perth and Kinross	5,938	299	1,745
Peterborough	8,176	1,930	3,700
Plymouth	12,231	1,841	7,948

Local authority	Local authority tenants	Housing associations	Other private rented
Poole	3,778	556	2,378
Port Talbot	3,664	325	632
Portsmouth	12,888	2,234	4,647
Preseli	3,413	227	953
Preston	7,071	2,017	1,650
Purbeck	1,181	178	639
Radnor	529	96	592
Reading	5,879	869	3,421
Redbridge	6,794	523	4,804
Redditch	4,837	193	506
Reigate and Banstead	3,447	287	1,050
Renfrew	17,606	578	1,223
Restormel	2,664	108	2,307
Rhondda	3,851	669	1,317
Rhuddlan	1,711	222	2,095
Rhymney Valley	8,101	852	1,081
Ribble Valley	863	66	360
Richmondshire	1,275	69	317
Richmond upon Thames	5,002	463	3,125
Rochdale	12,447	1,345	2,637
Rochester on Medway	18	0	8,803
Rochford	1,483	116	819
Ross and Cromarty	2,939	140	399
Rossendale	3,569	356	697
Rother	2,196	278	1,540
Rotherham	17,853	1,200	2,617
Roxburgh	2,308	536	239
Rugby	3,043	472	890
Runnymede	2,215	165	862
Rural Wales	468	0	0
Rushcliffe	2,257	190	1,382
Rushmoor	2,793	174	1,160
Rutland	881	12	256
Ryedale	0	2,006	888
Salford	23,735	2,628	4,967
Salisbury	3,924	68	1,835
Sandwell	31,516	2,037	2,248
Scarborough	4,139	24	2,785
Scottish Homes	36,448	0	0
Scunthorpe	4,763	133	1,177
Sedgefield	8,173	751	491
Sedgemoor	3,691	252	1,758
Sefton	11,286	3,053	5,965
Selby	2,520	181	850
Sevenoaks	27	3,348	1,196
Sheffield	51,877	4,835	6,278
Shepway	2,902	144	3,351
Shetland	882	50	72
Shrewsbury and Atcham	3,618	186	1,183
Skye and Lochalsh	518	49	184
Slough	5,552	234	2,014
Solihull	9,347	678	956
South Bedfordshire	4,175	323	1,045
South Bucks	60	2,005	378
South Cambridgeshire	3,477	173	816
South Derbyshire	2,492	33	718
South Hams	2,338	207	1,288
South Herefordshire	1,298	103	586
South Holland	2,678	11	563
South Kesteven	4,844	142	1,637
South Lakeland	2,498	64	1,363
South Norfolk	3,161	197	928
South Northants	1,911	40	450
South Oxfordshire	3,331	94	1,297
South Pembrokeshire	1,835	125	982
South Ribble	2,372	511	514
South Shropshire	1,122	134	554
South Somerset	n/a	n/a	n/a
South Staffordshire	3,720	331	523
South Tyneside	16,860	1,325	2,542
South Wight	48	1,717	1,371
Southampton	11,797	1,690	6,762
Southend on sea	5,901	945	4,647
Southwark	26,969	3,033	3,598
Spelthorne	2,343	7	1,092
St. Albans	3,688	238	1,283
St. Edmundsbury	3,629	168	986
St. Helens	12,507	2,002	1,240
Stafford	3,868	313	938
Staffs. Moorlands	2,031	141	477
Stevenage	6,174	288	936
Stewartry	1,084	67	225
Stirling	5,798	197	525
Stockport	9,702	1,944	2,645
Stockton on Tees	11,410	1,462	1,754
Stoke on Trent	16,299	905	3,708
Stratford-on-Avon	3,514	80	1,097
Strathkelvin	3,711	162	287
Stroud	3,947	21	1,442
Suffolk Coastal	23	2,480	1,843
Sunderland	27,591	2,703	3,620
Surrey Heath	1,703	83	531
Sutherland	794	63	61
Sutton	6,441	1,568	1,445
Swale	19	4,609	2,043
Swansea	11,682	1,074	4,162
Taff-Ely	4,969	264	1,078
Tameside	13,282	652	3,430
Tamworth	4,319	456	537
Tandridge	1,768	38	506
Taunton Deane	3,951	176	1,844
Teesdale	651	118	395
Teignbridge	2,644	126	2,302
Tendring	2,822	730	2,972
Test Valley	3,756	209	823
Tewkesbury	2,200	349	647
Thamesdown	7,405	701	2,427
Thanet	4,588	428	5,366
The Wrekin	9,500	787	1,472
Three Rivers	3,009	166	516
Thurrock	7,680	228	1,138
Tonbridge and Malling	25	3,728	1,010
Torbay	2,551	647	5,442
Torfaen	8,067	186	736
Torridge	1,303	128	1,387
Tower Hamlets	24,736	2,458	2,775
Trafford	7,437	1,390	2,712
Tunbridge Wells	45	3,206	1,353
Tweeddale	585	201	142
Tynedale	2,038	90	555
Uttlesford	2,049	26	631
Vale of Glamorgan	3,961	496	2,394
Vale of White Horse	2,896	64	1,045
Vale Royal	4,498	309	571
Wakefield	24,687	482	3,595
Walsall	21,471	1,653	1,792
Waltham Forest	12,188	1,211	6,378
Wandsworth	15,818	912	12,247
Wansbeck	5,227	267	834
Wansdyke	2,629	135	524
Warrington	7,803	0	3,646
Warwick	4,298	865	1,361
Watford	3,321	109	1,615
Waveney	3,812	239	3,807
Waverley	3,561	98	1,068
Wealden	2,492	210	1,351
Wear Valley	4,846	981	650
Wellingborough	3,405	37	1,126
Welwyn Hatfield	5,479	231	632
West Devon	1,023	160	951
West Dorset	3,054	171	1,136
West Lancashire	6,514	195	859
West Lindsey	2,722	125	1,002
West Lothian	8,372	536	497
West Norfolk	5,530	486	1,843
West Oxfordshire	2,459	137	1,124
West Somerset	1,295	142	805
West Wiltshire	3,654	55	1,729
Western Isles	1,406	54	183
Westminster	9,082	3,184	7,271
Weymouth and Portland	2,336	0	2,088
Wigan	20,183	1,097	2,122

Local authority	Local authority tenants	Housing associations	Other private rented
Wigtown	2,441	144	486
Winchester	3,392	325	1,051
Windsor and Maidenhead	3,778	123	1,169
Wirral	16,281	3,018	7,827
Woking	2,601	301	741
Wokingham	2,060	200	725
Wolverhampton	23,703	1,612	2,708
Woodspring	5,351	359	3,239
Worcester	3,773	607	1,317
Worthing	1,916	155	2,952
Wrexham Maelor	8,694	425	938
Wychavon	3,826	81	750
Wycombe	4,943	204	1,329
Wyre	2,127	133	1,373
Wyre Forest	4,379	175	957
Ynys Mon	3,893	380	1,203
York	5,803	495	2,023

N/a—No returns received from the authority.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rape (War Crime)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to place on the agenda at the human rights conference in Vienna and the G7 meeting in Tokyo the violation of women as a war crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Neither of these meetings would be the most appropriate forum in which to discuss the recognition of the violation of women as a war crime. The topic would be most suitably discussed under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross as guardians of the Geneva conventions. The ICRC plans to hold an international conference this summer which will review all aspects of the protection of victims of war.

Iraq (British Prisoners)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made recently towards the release of Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright from prison in Baghdad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to press for the release of Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright at every opportunity. The sentences imposed on the two men were grotesque. The Iraqi Government can be in no doubt that they stand to gain nothing from their continued detention.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the possible release of Michael Wainwright and Paul Ride.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have urged the Iraqis at every opportunity to release Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright without further delay. Their continued detention is a manifest injustice.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Governments have submitted evidence to the United Nations Secretary-General of war crimes in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government now have to submit evidence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To date Bosnia Herzegovina, USA, Venezuela, Australia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Russia, Colombia, Croatia, France, Turkey, Belgium, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Canada, Mauritania, Sweden, United Arab Emirates and Denmark have submitted. We propose to submit substantiated evidence in the near future.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the percentage change in *(a)* real terms and *(b)* cash terms of his Department's budget from 1992-93 to 1993-94 (i) in total and (ii) separately for the diplomatic and aid wings.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* The figures are as follows:

	£ billion
Aid wing	
1992-93	2·152
1993-94	2·267
difference in cash terms	+ 5·3 per cent.
difference in real terms	+ 2·5 per cent.
Diplomatic wing	
1992-93	1·159
1993-94	1·220
difference in cash terms	+ 5·3 per cent.
difference in real terms	+ 2·4 per cent.
Total for FCO	
1992-93	3·311
1993-94	3·487
difference in cash terms	+ 5·3 per cent.
difference in real terms	+ 2·5 per cent.

International Events

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the major international events in the United Kingdom and overseas in which Her Majesty's Government will participate in 1993; and which Minister will attend in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his reply 29 January 1993]:* I should like to add to the list of major international events in which Her Majesty's Government will participate, the world conference on human rights, attended by the Foreign Secretary or the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Debt (Developing Countries)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of developing country debt was scheduled to be cancelled at the outset of the Trinidad terms; and what proportion of total debt has been cancelled to date.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

At the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in September 1990, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, then Chancellor, proposed a reduction in the stock of eligible debt of two thirds. In December 1991, the Paris Club of creditor countries agreed to allow creditors to provide the equivalent of 50 per cent. cancellation of eligible debts consolidated under each agreement. These terms also include an undertaking by creditors to consider a reduction in the stock of eligible debt after a period of proven financial and economic responsibility of three to four years. For some of the most desperately indebted countries this may not prove sufficient, and we therefore take every opportunity to build consensus with our Paris Club colleagues to improve the terms on offer.

Specifically we are eager to see an increase in the amount of debt reduction available where necessary, and earlier action on the stock of eligible debt for debtors who already have a good track record.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the total amount of bilateral debt that has been cancelled to date under the Trinidad terms;

(2) if he will list the countries which have benefited to date from the cancelling of bilateral debt under the Trinidad terms, indicating the level of debt cancellation *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of each country's total level of foreign debt.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Fourteen countries have so far benefited from the Trinidad terms. The countries are Benin, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Republic, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia. *(a)* Trinidad terms involve the equivalent of cancellation of up to half the eligible debt consolidated under the agreements. We estimate that the agreements so far reached will result in the equivalent of the cancellation of about US$ 1½ billion of claims over the lives of the agreements. The agreements also commit creditors to take action on the whole stock of eligible debt after a period of three to four years financial and economic responsibility. The amount of debt cancelled will therefore increase as these agreements mature. Unfortunately, answering *(b)* would entail disclosing confidential details of debtor countries' obligations to their creditors, and is not in any event a useful comparison to make.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the value of the British output of unmanned aerial vehicles and the balance of payments for such products.

Mr. Sainsbury: Figures for unmanned aerial vehicles are not separately identifiable in official trade statistics.

Aviation Committee

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members of his Department's aviation committee and the number of times it has met since 10 April 1992.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Aviation Committee has met three times since 10 April 1992.

The current membership of the Aviation Committee is as follows:

Chairman
Professor J. L. Stollery
College of Aeronautics
Cranfield Institute of Technology

Members
N. V. Barber Esq.
Chairman
Aerospace and Defence Group
Smiths Industries Plc.

D. L. Bernstein Esq.
Joint Managing Director
Monarch Airlines

R. H. L. Clark Esq.
Managing Director
Flight Refuelling Ltd.

K. H. Coates Esq.
Executive Chairman
Meggitt Plc.

A. C. D. Cumming Esq.
Engineering Director
British Airways Plc.

C. C. Gustar Esq.
Managing Director
Westland Aerospace Ltd.

L. A. Edwards Esq.
Chief Executive, Dowty
TI Group Plc.

Professor K. Hayward
Senior Course Tutor
School of Social Sciences
Staffordshire University

Mrs. L. Lynn
Vice President
Airlines and Aerospace Department
Citibank, NA

R. M. McKinlay Esq.
Chairman
British Aerospace
Airbus Ltd.

R. W. R. McNulty Esq.
President
Short Brothers Plc.

J. E. V. Rose Esq.
Director—Corporate Development
Rolls-Royce Plc.

B. G. S. Tucker Esq.
Director of Programmes
GEC-Marconi Avionics Ltd.

F. Turner Esq.
Managing Director
Lucas Aerospace Ltd.

Cooker and Gas Fire Manufacturers

Mr. Turner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the sector of industry which makes cookers and gas fires; how many such companies are known to his Department in the west midlands; and how many people are employed in the sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: United Kingdom production of cookers and gas fires in 1991 was £355 million. Of this, about 9 per cent. was exported. Firms in these sub-sectors have been adversely affected by the downturn in the housing market and in consumer demand.

Twelve firms in the west midlands are known to make cookers or gas fires. These employ 3,700 people.

Ship Building

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the gross tonnage of new merchant ships built in *(a)* United Kingdom shipyards and *(b)* EC countries in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1992.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total gross tonnage of merchant ships of 100 gross tonnes and over constructed in the United Kingdom and EC countries in 1974, 1979 and 1991 is as follows:

Gross tonnage of merchant ships completed

	1974	*1979*	*1991*
United Kingdom	1,198,255	691,404	185,470
EC total	7,614,263	2,777,757	2,229,256

Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping.
Notes:
1. Only the EC members of 1974 have been included in the EC total, in order to provide a comparable series.
2. From 1990 gross tonnage statistics for the Federal Republic of Germany have included the former German Democratic Republic. Hence the former German Democratic Republic is also included in the 1991 EC total.
3. Figures for the gross tonnage of merchant ships in 1992 are not yet available. 1991 figures have been provided.

BS 5750

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will carry out an independent evaluation of the costs and benefits of BS 5750; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have no plans to carry out an independent evaluation of BS 5750. BS 5750 is a voluntary quality management standard drawn up by industry to meet its own requirements and published by the British Standards Institution. The BSI established last week a new policy committee for small businesses to address needs of small businesses in all areas of BSI's activities. In the light of recent press coverage of the costs to small firms of complying with BS 5750, this new committee will look, as an early priority, into the application and promotion of that particular standard.

Liaison with Industry

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what liaison he has created within his Department and other concerned bodies charged with supervision of areas of concern to industry.

Mr. Heseltine: I have established a number of new divisions in my Department with the task of developing a dialogue with individual sectors of industry. In addition, as I announced on 2 February, we intend to set up seven business task forces to review all regulations which affect business.

Small Businesses

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to modify the audit requirements of small companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Government are nearing the end of their review of audit and accounting requirements for very small companies and I hope to announce the outcome soon.

Regulators

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to review the powers and accountability of *(a)* Ofgas, *(b)* Oftel and *(c)* Offer;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the powers and accountability of Offer; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received concerning the powers and accountability of Oftel; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what representations he has received concerning the powers and accountability of Ofgas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department receives representations from time to time concerning Offer, Ofgas and Oftel.

The coal review has received a number of items of evidence which have a bearing on the working of Offer and Ofgas, and will take into account all the recommendations made regarding these bodies in the Trade and Industry Select Committee report.

With regard to Oftel, some argue that its powers should be reduced, and some that they are inadequate. I believe that Oftel's powers are broadly right and there are no current plans to amend them.

The regulators are accountable for the discharge of their statutory duties. Each presents an annual report to Parliament. Select Committees may—and do—call the regulators to give evidence. If a regulator's proposal for a licence modification is not agreed by the licensee, the issue may be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for its view on the public interest. Ultimately, regulators' decisions may be subject to judicial review.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to increase the transparency of *(a)* Ofgas, *(b)* Oftel and *(c)* Offer.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: With Government encouragement, the regulators already take great care to consult widely before reaching decisions on any issue, and to publicise their decisions and the reasoning behind them.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulators of the privatised utilities.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992 provided additional powers where

necessary to enable regulators to set and monitor standards of service. The regulators have used their powers effectively to promote competition, to secure fair prices, and to promote better service standards for customers.

Bicycles

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department is giving the British bicycle manufacturing industry; and what efforts have been made to promote the British bicycle abroad.

Mr. Sainsbury: British bicycle companies are entitled to make full use of the many services including export advice from overseas trade services offered to United Kingdom industry by my Department, and the DTI vehicles division is specifically responsible for sponsoring the industry.

The Bicycle Association of Great Britain is actively involved in British Overseas Trade Board activities and regularly sponsors a group of bicycle companies at a major overseas trade fair in Cologne.

Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been *(a)* the range of estimated annual costs and *(b)* his Department's estimate of the cost to a typical self-catering accommodation business made by the consultees to his draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 consultation document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* Consultees variously estimated the overall cost of purchasing new furniture to be in the range of £1,000 to £3,000, but gave no information on the basis of their estimates. The Department's estimate of the cost of purchasing new furniture to replace non-complying furniture is £850 for a self-catering unit accommodating four persons and is fully set out in the compliance cost assessment which was made available to all consultees.

Leyland DAF

Mr. Dover: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take the necessary action to ensure that all designs and patents for the Leyland DAF product lines currently operating within the United Kingdom form part of the assets being handled by the receiver appointed for these operations.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* All drawings and designs which are at the premises of the United Kingdom companies in receivership are under the day-to-day control of the receivers and are being examined with a view to ensuring that a complete set is available in respect of current products. The receivers' solicitors have been instructed to advise them upon the ownership of intellectual property used in the companies and are currently assessing the position.

Glass Curtain Walling

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of whether the criteria used to test the quality and strength of British glass curtain walling in France and Germany are discriminatory and a barrier to trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I have no information that the criteria being used to test the quality and strength of British glass curtain walling in France or Germany are discriminatory against products from other member states and a barrier to trade. If I receive evidence of any discrimination or barriers to trade, in consultation with DTI colleagues, I shall take appropriate action to safeguard United Kingdom interests.

Construction Projects

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what decisions he has made during the course of 1992 for or against major construction projects within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I will write to the hon. Member once the information is available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Loans

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the form taken by relief from repayment of old aid loans by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1979 we have consistently pursued a policy of commuting to grants through retrospective terms adjustment the outstanding aid loans of the poorest countries and rescheduling other aid loans for other debt-distressed countries. We consider eligible countries on a case-by-case basis.

The main criteria for RTA are poverty—the current threshold is countries with a per capita income of $545 or less—and firm evidence of commitment to IMF/IBRD-approved economic reform programmes. In the case of India, we provide equivalent measures, in the form of local cost aid to offset India's repayment of past aid loans.

Forestry Aid

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much forestry aid is currently paid in fees to *(a)* British consultants and *(b)* educational establishments within the United Kingdom; and if he will list each educational establishment in receipt of such funding, indicating the amount granted in each instance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not keep central records of fees paid to British consultants and educational institutions. Fees are negotiated contract by contract according to the tasks to be performed. The British institutions used in our forestry programmes include the University college of Wales (Bangor), the universities of Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Oxford and Reading and many other educational establishments and consultancy firms.

Commercial Bank Debt

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much United Kingdom commercial bank debt has been cancelled under the Brady plan; and what is the cancelled debt as a percentage of outstanding third-world debt.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Direct figures of United Kingdom commercial bank debt cancelled under the Brady plan are not available. However, in 1990 and 1991, United Kingdom banks' holdings of debt reduction instruments ("Brady bonds") rose by £2,930 million and £850 million respectively, or £3,780 million over the two years. It is estimated that these holdings replaced nearly £6 billion of loans outstanding, and therefore accounted for around £2 billion of write-offs. These £2 billion of write-offs may be considered as estimates for the amount of debt reduction, or cancellation, involved, and represent around 11 per cent. of all United Kingdom bank debt outstanding to developing countries as at end 1991. Total write-offs for 1989-91 are estimated to have been £4,160 million.

Debt (Developing Countries)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of debt repayments from developing countries received by the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years; and what was the level of new loans, investment, export credits and aid from Government and charities in each of those years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On the level of official debt repayments, I refer the hon. Member to the letter my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development wrote to him on 26 January, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Provision of information on debt repayment poses the same problem as does information on interest alone. The United Kingdom net official and private flows to developing countries 1989-91 as published in the "British Aid Statistics" are as follows:

	Official development assistance	*Official export credits*	*Project loans*[1]	*Voluntary agencies*
1989	1,584	209	71	150
1990	1,503	259	88	170
1991	1,814	192	101	215

[1] Project loans is the definition for loan money actually spent in any given year rather than loan money committed in that year.

Figures for the seven years prior to 1989 are not immediately available. My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member with this information in due course.

Debt Relief

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of British aid in 1991 was included as debt relief according to the new directives announced by the OECD.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The amount of United Kingdom debt forgiveness counting as bilateral official development assistance, in accordance with directives agreed by the OECD, was £31 million in 1991. This includes debt covered by the Paris club's Toronto terms, plus ODA retrospective terms adjustment—the converting of old aid debts into grants—and normal debt rescheduling. No debt relief was granted by the Government under Trinidad terms in 1991 as it was only in December 1991 that the first two countries received these terms. Thus the debt relief granted in this form amounted to 1·71 per cent. of Britain's total official development assistance, or £1,814 million.

EC Aid

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the impact on the United Kingdom aid programme of the increase in EC aid agreed at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our contributions to European Community aid programmes, both through the European development fund and through the EC budget, are part of our overall aid effort and are met from within the agreed PES provision for ODA's external assistance programmes.

The agreement reached at Edinburgh on future financing provides for considerable growth in the aid programme funded from the EC budget up to 1999. For the period up to 1995-96 covered in the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer it is expected that the proportion of the ODA's budget going through the EC will increase based on existing plans. Since we cannot anticipate decisions on the overall size of ODA's budget beyond 1995-96, we cannot anticipate the share which will go through the EC.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures have been established to monitor the effectiveness of the tropical forest action plan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We monitor the tropical forestry action programme through attendance at international meetings such as the tropical forestry advisers' group and through the national forestry planning processes in countries where we have significant aid programmes in the forestry sector.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if she will make a statement on the relationship between the commitment in the forest principles to unrestricted trade and the policy of limiting trade to sustainably produced timber.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no conflict between the forest principles agreed at UNCED and the International Tropical Timber Organisation's target of the year 2000 for all internationally traded tropical timber to come from sustainably managed sources. Both the UNCED principles and ITTO aim to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests and preclude unilateral and discriminatory restrictions contrary to internationally agreed rules.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom's tropical timber imports are derived from sustainable sources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no reliable way of determining whether or not timber entering the United Kingdom has come from a sustainable source.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the International Timber Trade Organisation concerning the report on threatened timber species produced in May 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in frequent contact with the International Tropical Timber Organisation about how best to develop and build upon the work to which the hon. Member refers. We have offered to help meet the costs of expanding this work and of hosting an ITTO workshop, due to be held in March, to consider and, if necessary, refine, the scientific methodologies used to assess the extent to which individual timber species may be put at risk by the international timber trade.

World Bank

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account has been taken of the report on *(a)* the Pelosi amendment and *(b)* the portfolio management task force on World bank projects in deciding future United Kingdom funding arrangements for the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The so-called Pelosi amendment, which affected the United States position on environmental issues in multilateral development banks, is a matter for the United States Government. In the recently completed negotiations on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association donors recommended to the bank's executive directors that once a borrower has made information on environmental assessments publicly available in the borrowing country, the same information should also be made publicly available at bank headquarters and in field offices in member countries.

IDA donors, including the United Kingdom, welcomed the report by the bank's task force on portfolio management aimed at improving the quality of project design and implementation and called on the bank to bring forward detailed proposals to make them effective. The bank's board of directors has subsequently discussed the report and asked the bank's management to prepare an action plan in the near future.

Deforestation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what studies have been made of the link between deforestation and population growth in the third world.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 4 December at column *427*.

Adjustment Lending

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what processes are employed by the Overseas Development Administration in seeking to assess and minimise the environmental impacts of adjustment lending.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the recognition that the multilateral institutions which are responsible for structural adjustment lending are giving to assessing the likely environmental consequences of such programmes and the assistance to developing countries to apply policies conducive to the protection of the environment. We support the World bank's position that more work needs to be done to identify the environmental impacts of adjustment lending. Where we are directly involved in adjustment programmes the processes set out in ODA's "Manual of Environmental Appraisal" apply, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to establish a permanent commission on the Welsh language;

(2) if he will make it his policy to develop a national Welsh language planning unit in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language Bill would establish a new, statutory Welsh language board. The board will have a very wide remit extending to all matters relating to the Welsh language.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to bring forward a comprehensive strategy for the maintenance and promotion of the Welsh language in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have a comprehensive strategy for the maintenance and promotion of the Welsh language of which the Welsh Language Bill is but the latest part. S4C has been a great success and remains one of the most visible and important manifestations of the Government's commitment to the language. The central place of the language in our education policies is demonstrated by the status of Welsh as a foundation subject under the national curriculum and, most recently, by our proposal to establish Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru. Many other Welsh organisations, both statutory and voluntary, also serve to promote the language through its use in their various activities.

This strategy can only be enhanced by our proposal to establish a statutory Welsh language board.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local authorities in Wales encouraging the establishment of Welsh language learning centres in each local authority area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the needs of Welsh language learners in their areas. The Department has helped to fund the centres at Nant Gwrtheyrn and Canolfan Iaith Clwyd and also local authority Welsh for adults courses.

Variable Message Signs

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many variable message signs there are on each motorway and key trunk roads in Wales; and how many signs on each road have been placed within the last two years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Excluding lane control and matrix signs there are 11 electrically operated variable message signs on the motorway, 27 on the A55 and 14 on the A5 and Menai bridge; of these one, seven and zero respectively have been put in place in the last two years.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the recommendations relating to opencast mining made by the Trade and Industry Committee in its first report on British energy policy and the market for coal, HC (1992-93) 237, in relation to opencast mining in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have stated that they will take account of the Trade and Industry Committee's report before coming forward with their coal review White Paper which will be published shortly.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he approved offers of regional selective assistance to *(a)* Hoya Lens UK Ltd., *(b)* Ringshore Ltd., *(c)* W. A. Turner Ltd. and *(d)* Chartered Trust Ltd; what public statements he has made on each of those approvals; and whether each of the grants has now been paid in full as offered.

Mr. David Hunt: Information about RSA offers to the companies concerned together with the current position on grant payments is as follows:

Company	*RSA assistance offered £ million*	*Public statement*
Hoya Lens UK Ltd.	0·950	7 October 1988
Ringshare Ltd.	3·4	[1]July 1992
W. A. Turner Ltd.	2·0	28 February 1991
Chartered Trust Plc	0·990	14 February 1990
	0·250	13 June 1990

[1] Employment Gazette

Note:

None of the grants have yet been paid in full. Other details about projects are matters of commercial confidentiality.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Three different consultancies have been engaged to help the Department both in drawing up and undertaking its current market testing programme. They are Coopers and Lybrand, Touche Ross and Price Waterhouse. The total cost to date is £25,000.

Potatoes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many potato producers there are in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Potatoes were grown on 1,519 main agricultural holdings in Wales in 1992 according to the June agricultural census.

Nicotine Patches

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he is making for nicotine patches to be prescribable in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Generally a doctor may prescribe under the national health service any medicines which are needed for the treatment of his or her patients. The exceptions are those drugs and other substances which have been listed in schedule 10 of the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992 on the advice of the Advisory Committee on Drugs or the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS). These items may not be prescribed by GPs for supply under NHS pharmaceutical services, but may be prescribed privately and in some cases may be purchased without a prescription.

One patch has been included in schedule 10 on the advice of the ACBS, but the product is available on private prescription or over-the-counter from pharmacies. It is open to the committee to review the availability on GP prescription of any similar products.

Tourism

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential" as it applies to his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Issues relating to tourism in Wales highlighted in the document "Tourism in the UK—Realising the Potential" are subject to continuing review. In particular:

a. The Wales tourist board was granted powers on 16 March 1992 under the Overseas Promotion (Wales) Act 1992 to market the Principality independently abroad. I approved the WTB's overseas marketing plan on 5 February 1993 following consultation with the British Tourist Authority.

b. The board has committed itself to the principles of the citizens charter which are fully represented in its current 1992-93 corporate plan.

More generally, the WTB is at present developing a new tourism strategy which will address other issues raised within the document.

Radioactive Contamination

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites within North Wales where his Department undertakes official radiation monitoring of coast contamination levels.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On behalf of the Welsh Office, the directorate of fisheries research of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes regular monitoring of radioactivity in the surface and coastal waters of Wales. Details of this monitoring, including the sampling locations, are given in the annual aquatic environment monitoring reports, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales which have launched a review of private sector housing provision in their area as a result of the publication of "Agenda for Action on Housing in Wales".

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Against the background of the "Agenda for Action", all Welsh housing authorities have reviewed private sector housing provision in the context of their annual housing strategies and operational plans.

Female Appointees

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of appointees to all of his quangos is female; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: At present 18 per cent. of appointees to the public bodies in Wales are female.

I am seeking to increase the number of women holding public appointment in Wales and I am taking every opportunity to do this. My target is that by September 1996, 30 per cent. of public appointments in Wales will be held by women.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to appoint some female members to the Welsh Economic Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I will announce my decision on the composition of the Welsh Economic Council in due course.

Pharmacists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the fees paid to pharmacists for dispensing expensive items; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Discussions with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee are taking place as part of the 1993-94 pay negotiations.

EDUCATION

Conductive Education

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish the Birmingham university report on the effectiveness of treatment at the Institute for Conductive Education in Birmingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is intended that the full report, containing a description of the methodology of the research by Birmingham university and details of all its findings, will be published by HMSO on behalf of the Department in May 1993.

Special Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he plans to publish specified assessment and statementing timetables for special education needs applications to local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: Statutory timescales for the making of assessments and statements by LEAs would be embodied in regulations under the Education Bill. We propose to consult on a draft of those regulations later this year.

Primary School Classes

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority the number of primary school pupils in class sizes of *(a)* 1 to 30, *(b)* 31 to 35, *(c)* 36 to 40 and *(d)* 41 and over in January 1992.

Mr. Forth: The information requested for single-teacher classes in maintained primary schools in England is given in the table.

Numbers of pupils in classes taught by one teacher: Maintained primary schools in England
January 1992

Local education authority	*Classes of size 1 to 30*	*Classes of size 31 to 35*	*Classes of size 36 to 40*	*Classes of size 41 and over*
City	107	—	—	—
Camden	7,786	541	—	—
Greenwich	15,405	1,305	—	—
Hackney	11,483	219	—	—
Hammersmith	6,289	565	36	48
Islington	10,691	756	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	4,761	130	—	—
Lambeth	15,237	630	—	—
Lewisham	15,632	1,943	74	—
Southwark	15,363	1,326	77	—
Tower Hamlets	11,483	475	77	44
Wandsworth	12,530	697	38	83
Westminster	6,459	252	40	—
Barking	12,234	1,297	234	—
Barnet	17,665	1,806	79	101
Bexley	11,836	4,913	108	—
Brent	15,930	1,375	75	—
Bromley	12,941	6,381	36	—
Croydon	18,159	3,264	36	253
Ealing	18,672	3,219	110	41
Enfield	13,684	5,147	38	—
Haringey	16,060	441	40	—
Harrow	11,162	4,140	—	—
Havering	15,207	2,585	—	—
Hillingdon	12,302	4,306	439	—
Hounslow	9,966	4,894	450	90

Local education authority	Classes of size 1 to 30	Classes of size 31 to 35	Classes of size 36 to 40	Classes of size 41 and over
Kingston upon Thames	3,985	4,486	219	—
Merton	9,669	1,726	113	43
Newham	19,159	1,000	38	256
Redbridge	6,512	8,331	145	—
Richmond upon Thames	7,773	1,316	37	—
Sutton	7,102	3,359	181	—
Waltham Forest	13,450	2,763	154	41
Birmingham	71,712	22,873	868	—
Coventry	20,086	5,253	505	—
Dudley	16,571	3,852	116	479
Sandwell	17,176	7,549	917	105
Solihull	11,951	4,637	396	44
Walsall	16,548	3,606	561	146
Wolverhampton	17,206	2,491	192	82
Knowsley	11,606	3,568	301	238
Liverpool	35,624	9,939	511	155
St. Helens	9,717	4,467	633	—
Sefton	16,343	7,586	441	—
Wirral	23,840	3,170	144	—
Bolton	13,381	6,879	992	398
Bury	9,606	4,792	521	—
Manchester	31,572	6,933	678	750
Oldham	11,617	7,136	667	135
Rochdale	10,848	5,969	402	—
Salford	16,199	4,470	191	277
Stockport	16,815	5,722	930	83
Tameside	12,096	7,702	365	—
Trafford	9,179	6,661	987	681
Wigan	16,198	6,905	1,692	87
Barnsley	16,099	3,099	258	125
Doncaster	19,539	5,611	799	47
Rotherham	19,272	2,362	197	411
Sheffield	33,145	4,412	1,497	—
Bradford	25,451	3,506	73	—
Calderdale	12,854	3,763	151	—
Kirklees	22,097	6,648	613	172
Leeds	31,747	8,962	2,179	476
Wakefield	16,622	7,130	1,192	—
Gateshead	14,919	963	77	54
Newcastle upon Tyne	14,379	4,593	535	112
North Tyneside	11,550	2,478	115	335
South Tyneside	11,972	1,940	146	53
Sunderland	21,534	4,260	72	44
Isles of Scilly	134	31	—	—
Avon	51,121	19,247	1,050	—
Bedfordshire	26,717	5,993	1,235	239
Berkshire	39,284	13,063	926	100
Buckinghamshire	38,580	15,001	1,690	450
Cambridgeshire	38,675	12,993	734	41
Cheshire	50,103	27,427	3,725	134
Cleveland	43,169	10,344	2,843	47
Cornwall	23,833	12,138	1,212	152
Cumbria	28,902	7,164	628	102
Derbyshire	47,649	22,117	2,376	86
Devon	52,754	18,191	1,887	152
Dorset	23,516	13,384	1,069	100
Durham	38,020	11,146	636	185
East Sussex	28,550	16,200	182	—
Essex	88,141	27,344	330	—
Gloucestershire	30,707	8,696	146	41
Hampshire	83,956	33,788	1,174	181
Hereford and Worcester	36,571	7,886	551	—
Hertfordshire	53,524	17,985	437	—
Humberside	56,244	13,976	2,368	260
Isle of Wight	5,281	1,251	74	152
Kent	79,897	35,803	887	227
Lancashire	67,412	38,148	6,256	244
Leicestershire	56,514	12,631	788	637
Lincolnshire	34,244	9,839	932	—
Norfolk	46,131	9,902	225	41
North Yorkshire	41,502	10,693	553	—
Northamptonshire	35,474	8,260	294	—
Northumberland	11,964	5,565	1,051	94
Nottinghamshire	62,957	12,826	2,660	170
Oxfordshire	30,860	4,828	306	168
Shropshire	26,140	5,256	400	153
Somerset	22,436	9,290	365	—

Local education authority	Classes of size 1 to 30	Classes of size 31 to 35	Classes of size 36 to 40	Classes of size 41 and over
Staffordshire	61,668	18,441	1,938	446
Suffolk	33,850	4,712	116	50
Surrey	54,057	12,387	671	50
Warwickshire	26,308	11,817	1,005	—
West Sussex	37,320	11,250	218	95
Wiltshire	32,664	7,993	405	—
ENGLAND	2,720,594	822,481	68,133	11,286

Technical Qualifications

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to improve awareness among employers of the value of technical qualifications as compared with A-levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend is working closely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and the awarding bodies to explain our reforms of vocational qualifications to young people, their parents, schools, colleges, employers and higher education institutions.

The new general national vocational qualifications and national vocational qualifications are designed to exacting criteria and will offer routes to employment or higher level study, alongside A-levels and AS examinations. We intend that many young people will consider GNVQs in particular as an alternative or an addition to A-level study.

Central Administrative Staff

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of the current administrative staff at the Department for Education and Office for Standards in Education of principal level and above have had experience in schools, colleges, universities or local government education administration; and what proportion this is of the total for each grade.

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* According to the information currently available to the Department, the approximate proportions of current administrative staff at the Department for Education at these grades who have had previous experience as teachers in schools, further education, universities or in local government education administration are as follows:

	Total staff in grade
Grade 3—17 per cent.	12
Grade 5—28 per cent.	43
Grade 6—33 per cent.	9
Grade 7—25 per cent.	131
The figure for OFSTED is:	
Grade 7—38 per cent.	8

PRIME MINISTER

Definition of Regions

Mr. Radice: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has to co-ordinate the definitions of regions used by Government Departments.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are being taken by his Government to ensure that Government Departments use a standard definition of the English regions.

The Prime Minister: There is a standard definition of the regions which many Departments use, particularly for statistical purposes. The structures they use for administrative purposes are often based on that definition, while also taking account of the regional pattern which is best suited to managing the services for which each is responsible.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set up arrangements for *(a)* the targeted non means-tested retirement pensions and the child cash allowances and *(b)* the income support measures to be considered in a new department subordinate to the Chancellor of the Exchequer equivalent to the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise systems.

The Prime Minister: No.

Trident

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Prime Minister what conclusions he has reached on the decision for the Trident refitting contract.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the replies given on 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *571-72*, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Members for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) respectively.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Expenditure Scrutiny

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the oral statement by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury of 8 February, *Official Report*, column 681, at what stage in the process of scrutiny of public expenditure the expenditure of the Northern Ireland Office will be examined.

Mr. Mates: The process of scrutiny to which the Chief Secretary referred will cover the activities of range of Great Britain programmes which, in Northern Ireland, are covered by the regional block. While my right hon. and learned Friend has a measure of discretion in the allocation of resources within the block, territorial expenditure is also subject to Treasury scrutiny and the implications of the Great Britain reviews will be taken into account.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Allason: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions more than one public interest immunity certificate has been issued in criminal proceedings.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *17-18*. In none of those criminal proceedings was more than one public interest immunity certificate issued.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research Funding

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much in cash terms, in real terms and as a percentage of the science budget and that of the Universities Funding Council has been spent *(a)* by Government and *(b)* by the private sector on university research funding in each year since 1981; and what proportion of the gross domestic product those budgets amounted to in each of those years.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is as follows:

	Government spend[1]		*Private sector spend*[2]		*Science base*[3]	*Government spend/Private sector spend*	*Private sector spend/ Science base*	*Government spend/GDP*	*Private sector spend/GDP*
	Cash £ million	*Real terms*[4] *£ million*	*Cash £ million*	*Real terms*[4] *£ million*	*Cash £ million*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1981-82	639·6	1,067·9	77·6	129·6	923·4	69·3	8·4	0·25	0·03
1982-83	697·8	1,087·6	92·1	143·5	1,003·7	69·5	9·2	0·25	0·03
1983-84	730·0	1,087·4	112·1	167·0	1,054·2	69·2	10·6	0·24	0·04
1984-85	774·4	1,097·9	141·8	201·0	1,099·4	70·4	12·9	0·24	0·04
1985-86	839·7	1,128·9	177·9	239·2	1,180·0	71·2	15·1	0·23	0·05
1986-87	938·9	1,222·9	217·9	283·8	1,257·7	74·7	17·3	0·24	0·06
1987-88	1,055·9	1,303·6	257·1	317·4	1,353·2	78·0	19·0	0·25	0·06
1988-89	1,107·9	1,275·2	317·8	365·7	1,431·3	77·4	22·2	0·23	0·07
1989-90	1,149·6	1,241·4	392·4	423·7	1,544·4	74·4	25·4	0·22	0·08
1990-91	1,230·8	1,230·8	466·1	466·1	1,665·0	73·9	28·0	0·22	0·08

[1] Figures derived from Cabinet Office "Government Spend on Research and Development" and include research funded in Universities by Government Departments and the Research Councils and the Universities Funding Council. The latter figure is an estimate by Universities Funding Council of universities' spend on research from their block grants and fee income, to an accuracy of plus or minus 10 per cent. *N.B.* The method of estimating research expenditure incurred by universities changed from 1989-90 onwards.

[2] Figures taken from Universities Statistics—Volume 3 and include funding for research contracts from industry, charities, overseas and other sources.

[3] Total spend on the Science Budget and the Universities Funding Council estimates of spend on research from universities' block grant and fee income.

[4] 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the proportion of research and development expenditure on fundamental science and technology as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1981; and what is the Government's share of that expenditure for each given year;

(2) what was the proportion of research and development expenditure on fundamental science and technology as a percentage of gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany in each year since 1981.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available in the terms requested. Government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product on basic research, as defined by the OECD, from 1984-85 to 1991-92 is listed in the table, together with available comparable information for France and Germany.

Year	*United Kingdom*	*France*	*Germany*
1984-85	0·24	—	—
1985-86	0·21	—	0·46
1986-87	0·20	0·24	—
1987-88	0·19	0·24	—
1988-89	0·20	—	0·46
1989-90	0·24	—	—
1990-91	0·23	—	—
1991-92	0·26	—	—

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultants used by my Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 are:

Chris Goodall Associates
DMW
Ernst and Young
PA Consulting
Price Waterhouse
Shreeveport
Symonds Facilities Management
Touche Ross

The total cost of consultancy support is £323,477.

International Organisations (Funding)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what account he has taken of changes in the exchange rate in the resource allocations of research councils that contribute to international agencies; and what effect he expects changes in the exchange rate to have on resources available within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The distribution of the science budget to the research councils which I announced on 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *630-31*, was based on the advice received from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, which took full account of the changes in the relevant exchange rates.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the international organisations and agencies whose subscriptions are funded from research council resources; and if he will give the value of these subscriptions in pounds sterling for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of the expected expenditure by research councils on international subscriptions of over £100,000 in the financial years in question are as follows:

£ million

	1992-93	*1993-94*
Science and Engineering Research Council		
European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN)	55·613	54·685
European Space Agency	28·080	31·998
Institute Laue-Langevin	9·690	10·860
European Synchrotron Radiation Facility	5·637	6·780
Anglo Australian Telescope	1·512	1·398
European Incoherent Scatter Facility	0·578	0·655
European Science Foundation (For all the Research Councils)	0·324	0·372
Medical Research Council		
European Molecular Biology Laboratory	3·000	3·800
European Molecular Biology Conference	0·700	0·900
International Agency for Research on Cancer	0·700	0·700
Natural Environment Research Council		
Ocean Drilling Program	1·925	2·010

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Distribution

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information given in his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *123-24*, on income distribution.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates are given in the tables. Estimates of income are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source. For years up to and including 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990-91 onwards, husbands and wives are counted separately. Estimates are based on the surveys of personal incomes for years up to 1990-91 and projections of the 1990-91 survey for subsequent years; the latter are therefore provisional.

Group of taxpayers[1]

Year	*Top 1 per cent.*		*Top 5 per cent.*		*Top 10 per cent.*		*Top 25 per cent.*		*Bottom 70 per cent.*		*All taxpayers*
	Amount £ billion	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*
Gross Incomes before tax											
1978-79	5·0	5	14·9	15	24·3	24	45·9	45	51·0	50	102·8
1983-84	9·7	6	28·3	16	45·0	26	81·7	47	82·0	47	173·7
1984-85	10·9	6	31·4	17	49·6	26	89·3	47	88·8	47	188·8
1985-86	12·9	6	35·7	17	55·9	26	100·5	47	100·0	47	212·6
1986-87	14·6	6	40·3	17	62·8	27	112·2	48	108·2	46	233·5
1987-88	16·4	6	45·3	18	70·1	28	124·2	49	116·2	46	255·1
1988-89	21·2	7	53·8	18	82·2	28	142·4	49	129·3	45	288·0
1989-90	24·2	7	61·7	19	93·4	29	160·8	50	145·1	45	323·4
1990-91	28·3	8	68·7	19	102·8	29	177·0	49	161·4	45	358·3
1991-92[2]	29·2	8	71·2	19	106·6	29	183·7	50	165·2	45	369·7
1992-93[2]	28·6	8	70·1	19	105·2	29	182·6	50	164·0	45	367·4
Income tax liabilities											
1978-79	2·3	11	4·9	24	7·0	34	11·5	57	7·6	38	20·2
1983-84	2·8	11	8·5	26	12·2	36	19·5	58	12·5	38	33·4
1984-85	4·2	12	9·3	26	13·3	38	21·1	60	12·4	35	35·4
1985-86	5·0	13	10·6	27	14·8	38	23·2	60	13·6	35	38·8

Year	Group of taxpayers[1]										
	Top 1 per cent.		Top 5 per cent.		Top 10 per cent.		Top 25 per cent.		Bottom 70 per cent.		All taxpayers
	Amount £ billion	Share per cent.	Amount £ billion	Share per cent.	Amount £ billion	Share per cent.	Amount £ billion	Share per cent.	Amount £ billion	Share per cent.	Amount £ billion
1986-87	5·8	14	12·3	29	16·9	39	26·0	61	14·5	34	42·8
1987-88	6·6	15	13·7	30	18·5	41	28·0	62	14·9	33	45·4
1988-89	6·8	15	14·3	31	19·4	42	29·1	63	14·9	32	46·5
1989-90	7·8	15	16·6	31	22·6	42	34·0	64	16·7	31	53·4
1990-91	9·2	15	18·9	31	25·4	42	38·6	64	18·7	31	60·4
1991-92[2]	9·6	15	19·8	31	26·6	42	40·3	64	19·4	31	63·1
1992-93[2]	9·3	15	19·3	32	26·1	43	39·5	65	17·9	30	60·6

[1] Married couples and single people for years prior to 1990-91.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the amount and share of income going to *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the next 2 to 5 per cent., *(c)* the next 6 to 10 per cent. and *(d)* the next 10 to 20 per cent. and subsequent deciles; of tax units for each year since 1978-79, revalued at 1978-79 prices;

(2) if he will list the tax take for *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the next 2 to 5 per cent., *(c)* the next 6 to 10 per cent. and *(d)* the next 10 to 20 per cent. and subsequent deciles; of income groups for each year since 1978-79, revalued at 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Readily available estimates are in the table. For 1978-79 and 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990-91 onwards, husbands and wives are counted separately. The estimates of total income relate to income subject to income tax and excludes non-taxable income such as certain social security benefits.

1978-79

Quantile group of taxpayers[1] Per cent.	Tax liability £ million	Total income £ million	Percentage of total income
Top 1	2,300	500	5
1-5	2,600	9,900	10
5-10	2,100	9,300	9
10-20	3,200	15,000	15
20-30	2,500	12,600	12
30-40	2,100	11,000	11
40-50	1,700	9,600	9
50-60	1,400	8,500	8
60-70	1,100	7,300	7
70-80	780	6,000	6
80-90	430	4,900	5
Bottom 10	130	3,700	4
All taxpayers	20,300	102,800	100

1989-90[2]

Quantile group of taxpayers[1] (per cent.)	Tax liability (£ million)	Total income (£ million)	Percentage of total income
Top 1	3,400	10,500	8
1-5	3,800	16,300	12
5-10	2,600	13,800	9
10-20	3,600	20,900	15
20-30	2,600	16,000	11
30-40	2,000	13,700	10
40-50	1,600	11,800	8
50-60	1,300	10,200	7
60-70	1,000	8,800	6
70-80	760	7,700	5
80-90	470	6,200	4
Bottom 10	170	4,800	3
All taxpayers	23,300	140,800	100

1990-91[2]

Quantitle group of taxpayers[1] Per cent.	Tax liability £ million	Total income £ million	Percentage of total income
Top 1	3,700	11,300	8
1-5	3,800	16,000	11
5-10	2,600	13,500	10
10-20	3,800	20,900	15
20-30	2,700	16,500	12
30-40	2,100	14,100	10
40-50	1,700	12,000	9
50-60	1,300	10,400	7
60-70	1,000	9,000	6
70-80	710	7,600	5
80-90	410	6,100	4
Bottom 10	130	4,800	3
All taxpayers	24,000	142,300	100

1991-92[2]

Quantile group of taxpayers[1] Percentage	Tax liability £ million	Total income £ million	Percentage of total income
top 1	3,600	11,100	8
1-5	3,900	15,900	11
5-10	2,600	13,400	10
10-20	3,700	20,600	15
20-30	2,700	16,500	12
30-40	2,100	13,900	10
40-50	1,700	11,800	9
50-60	1,300	10,200	7
60-70	1,000	8,700	6
70-80	700	7,300	5
80-90	400	5,900	4
Bottom 10	130	4,700	3
All taxpayers	23,900	140,000	100

[1] Tax units for years prior to 1990-91.
[2] In 78-79 prices.

1992-93[2]

Quantile group of taxpayers[1]	*Tax liability*	*Total income*	*Percentage of total income*
Per cent.	*£ million*	*£ million*	
Top 1	3,400	10,500	8
1-5	3,700	15,200	11
5-10	2,500	12,900	10
10-20	3,600	20,900	15
20-30	2,600	16,000	12
30-40	2,000	13,500	10
40-50	1,500	11,400	9
50-60	1,200	9,800	7
60-70	870	8,400	6
70-80	580	7,000	5
80-90	300	5,600	4
Bottom 10	100	4,500	3
All taxpayers	22,200	134,800	100

[1]Tax units for years prior to 1990-91.
[2]In 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage shares of income tax paid for each year since 1977-78, by *(a)* the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers, *(b)* the next 2 to 5 per cent., *(c)* the next 6 to 10 per cent. and *(d)* the next 10 to 20 per cent. and subsequent deciles.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates are given in the table. For years up to and including 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990-91 onwards, husbands and wives are counted separately. The figures in the table have been rounded to the nearest one per cent. and may not sum to 100 for each year.

Percentage of total tax liability
Quantile group of taxpayers[1]

Year	*Top 1* *Per cent.*	*1–5* *Per cent.*	*5–10* *Per cent.*	*10–20* *Per cent.*	*20–30* *Per cent.*	*30–40* *Per cent.*	*40–50* *Per cent.*	*50–60* *Per cent.*	*60–70* *Per cent*	*70–80* *Per cent.*	*80–90* *Per cent.*	*Bottom 10* *Per cent.*
1977-78	12	13	10	15	12	10	8	7	6	4	3	1
1978-79	11	13	11	16	12	10	9	7	5	4	2	1
1979-80	10	13	10	16	12	10	9	7	6	4	2	1
1980-81	11	14	10	16	12	10	9	7	5	3	2	1
1981-82	11	14	11	16	12	10	8	7	5	4	2	1
1982-83	12	14	11	16	12	10	8	7	5	4	2	1
1983-84	11	14	11	16	13	10	8	6	5	4	2	1
1984-85	12	15	11	16	12	10	8	6	5	4	2	1
1985-86	13	14	11	15	12	10	8	6	5	4	2	1
1986-87	14	15	11	15	12	9	8	6	5	3	2	1
1987-88	15	16	10	15	11	9	7	6	5	3	2	1
1988-89	15	16	11	15	11	9	7	6	5	3	2	1
1989-90	15	17	11	15	11	9	7	6	4	3	2	1
1990-91	15	16	11	16	11	9	7	6	4	3	2	1
[2]1991-92	15	16	11	16	11	9	7	6	4	3	2	1
[2]1992-93	15	17	11	16	12	9	7	5	4	3	1	0

[1] Tax units for years prior to 1990-91.
[2] Provisional.

Concessionary Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column 869, from the Secretary of State for Transport, how many persons in each of those categories are subject to taxation of the concessionary benefits; and what was the total income received from the taxation of this benefit for each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: Pensioners of British Rail and British transport police are not liable to tax on their travel concessions.

Employees are generally liable to tax on the expense incurred in providing benefits for them, their families and dependants. However, the case known as Pepper v. Hart established that the relevant expense for in-house benefit is the marginal, or direct additional cost. This is nil or negligible for British Rail employees, the British Transport police, and former employees of the British Transport Docks Board, Sealink and Wightlink. The Inland Revenue is repaying any excess tax collected in the current and past years, estimated to be around £4 million a year, on request from employees and as tax offices identify the need to do so.

Former employees of British Transport hotels who are still in employment and whose employers pay for their travel concessions are liable to tax on the cost to their employer. The total tax received in respect of these employees is not readily available.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's 1992-93 market testing programme was set out in "The Citizens Charter, First report: 1992 (Cm. 2101)". It comprises nine services: economic model building and development; internal audit; the Library; recruitment; training; reprographics; stationery; consultancy inspection services activities; and Treasury security guard. The inclusion of the Treasury security guard is dependant upon the completion of a review currently being undertaken by Cabinet Office. The programme is due to be completed by September 1993. Work has started on a number of areas but none has yet reached the stage of competitive tender.

Public Transport (Tax Relief)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received suggesting that there should be tax reliefs available to those who use public transport as a means of getting to and from work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I am not aware of any such representations.

Charities (VAT)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much value added tax was paid by charities in the latest financial year for which figures are available; and to how much this amount is equivalent in terms of *(a)* an increase in the standard rate of income tax and *(b)* an increase in the current rate of value added tax.

Sir John Cope: Information about the amount of VAT borne by charities is not collated centrally, but it has been recently estimated that charities pay up to £300 million in VAT each year. This amount is equivalent to approximately 0·2p on the basic rate of income tax or a change of 0·1 percentage point in the standard rate of VAT.

Public Expenditure Review

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy for any new proposals arising from the public expenditure review, announced on 8 February, relating to *(a)* entitlement to pensions or *(b)* entitlement to benefit not to be implemented within the current Parliament.

Mr. Portillo: It would be premature to comment on the outcome of the review before it has started. The hon. Member will be aware of the commitments contained in the Conservative party's election manifesto.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the oral statement by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury of 8 February, *Official Report*, column 681, when he expects the public expenditure review to be completed.

Mr. Portillo: The full programme of reviews is expected to be completed by the end of this Parliament, although preliminary conclusions from the four reviews started this year should help to inform the next spending round that begins in the summer.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the value of mortgage interest relief at the standard rate *(a)* currently and *(b)* at the time in the last five years at which interest rates were at their peak level.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest relief at the basic rate is about £5·2 billion for 1992-93 compared with £7·2 billion for the basic rate component of the relief in 1990-91.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue forgone by the Exchequer in respect of each main tax allowance.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in appendix D of the "Autumn Statement Statistical Supplement" (Cm 2219) published in January 1993.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the extra revenue if personal allowances relieved tax at *(a)* 20 per cent. and *(b)* 25 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates are in the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 13 January 1993, at columns *746-47*.

Statutory Instruments

Ms. Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many statutory instruments were laid before Parliament by his Department in each year since 1980.

Mr. Nelson: The number of statutory instruments laid before Parliament by the Treasury for Departments responsible to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is given in the table.

	Number
1980	86
1981	64
1982	73
1983	69
1984	98
1985	83
1986	84
1987	97
1988	96
1989	52
1990	43
1991	77
1992	98

Banks (Customers' Personal Data)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call for a report from the Governor of the Bank of England on the circumstances in which banks are requiring from new customers an agreement for their personal financial data being disclosed to third parties; and on whether such information has been discolosed without the knowledge or consent of the customer.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* No. Alleged breaches of the Data Protection Act 1984 are for the Data Protection Registrar, not the Governor of the Bank of England to investigate. Nor has the governor any specific responsibility for monitoring compliance with the common law duty of confidence which banks owe their customers. If proceedings are brought by customers, the courts will adjudicate on any alleged breach of duty.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the Banking Act 1987 to ensure that personal financial data relating to bank and other financial institution customers cannot be disclosed to third parties without the customer's express consent.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* None. Banks owe their customers a duty of confidence under the common law in respect of all personal information, and

the confidentiality of computerised personal information held by banks is covered by the Data Protection Act 1984. The common law duty is set out in the code of banking practice—"Good Banking"—issued by the banks and building societies. Customers who believe that the code has been breached can take this up with the banking ombudsman. An independent code of banking practice review committee is responsible for reviewing the code. The enforcement of the 1984 Act is the responsibility of the Data Protection Registrar.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to ensure that the Bank of England requires banks regulated by it to take adequate precautions to prevent unauthorised disclosure of personal financial data to third parties.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The Bank of England has no specific responsibility for this matter, which falls to the banks themselves, the banking ombudsman and the Data Protection Registrar. If proceedings are brought by customers, the courts will adjudicate on any alleged breach of duty.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will discuss with the Governor of the Bank of England and the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board means of ensuring that banks and financial institutions regulated and supervised by them do not disclose personal financial data to third parties without their express consent.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* I see no need to do so. The Governor of the Bank of England does not have any specific responsibility for the protection of personal financial data. This is the responsibility of the banks themselves, the banking ombudsman and the Data Protection Registrar. The Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulating organisations are already able to deal with complaints made to them about breach of fiduciary obligations owed to investment business customers.

Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the cost to the Exchequer of offsets against petroleum revenue tax, in each sector of the United Kingdom continental shelf, in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* The figures required for the United Kingdom and United Kingdom continental shelf are included in the table. A breakdown by sector of the continental shelf is not available.

Deductions	*Exchequer cost*[1]*, £ million*									
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Expenditure[2]	1,800	2,600	3,200	3,100	2,800	2,700	2,400	3,100	3,900	3,400
of which:										
—Uplift on qualifying capital expenditure	440	330	530	720	850	550	60	85	75	neg
—Relief for exploration and appraisal expenditure	110	420	430	370	300	360	500	600	750	700
—Relief for research expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	20	20
—Cross field allowance for 10 per cent. of development expenditure on certain new fields	—	—	—	—	5	5	10	25	65	75
Other deductions										
Oil allowance	180	340	390	170	280	230	220	230	170	280
Oil allowance for advance petroleum revenue tax	320	310	180	50	—	—	—	—	—	—
Safeguard: a protection for return on capital cost	280	400	380	500	840	575	55	45	45	95
Tariff receipts allowance	5	20	40	40	80	70	70	70	60	80
Exemption for gas sold to British Gas under pre-July 1975 contracts	130	150	200	200	200	170	150	140	170	190

[1] For each deduction the marginal cost is shown and therefore the costs are not additive.
[2] Including operating and capital expenditure.

Government Shareholdings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the quoted shareholdings together with their value, and the percentage of the issued share capital, owned by Her Majesty's Government; whether in each case the holding is associated with the right to appoint directors, or a golden share; and which Department has the power of appointment or of the powers of the golden share.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* The table shows the ordinary shares held by the Government, their market valuation and the percentage of the issued share capital that they represent. Where a special ("golden") share is held, this is shown together with the department exercising the rights attached and the expiry date, if applicable, on or before which the special share may be redeemed. Where the powers attached to a special share include the appointment of directors, this is shown.

Government ordinary shareholders in private sector companies

Company	*Number of shares (millions)*	*Market valuation (£ million)*[1]	*Proportion of issued capital per cent.*	*Special share*	*Expiry date*	*Department*
BAA	14·7	115·7	3·0	Yes		DTp
British Airways	3·2	9·5	0·4	No		
British Gas	0·1	0·2	[2]—	Yes		DTI
British Petroleum	101·2	270·3	1·9	No		
British Steel	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	Yes	31 December 1993	DTI
BT	1,352·6	5,627·0	21·9	[3]Yes		DTI
Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.	12·4	35·0	20·7	No		
Anglian Water	2·6	12·8	0·9	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Northumbrian Water	0·3	1·5	0·4	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
North West Water	2·7	13·4	0·8	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Severn Trent	3·6	17·2	1·0	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Southern Water	1·2	5·9	0·7	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
South West Water	0·1	0·6	0·1	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Thames Water	3·6	18·2	0·9	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Welsh Water	1·1	5·7	0·7	Yes	31 December 1994	WO
Wessex Water	0·6	3·7	0·5	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Yorkshire Water	1·6	8·3	0·8	Yes	31 December 1994	DOE
Eastern Electricity	4·8	20·6	1·8	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
East Midlands Electricity	2·5	10·6	1·1	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
London Electricity	2·5	11·0	1·1	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Manweb	2·2	10·8	1·8	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Midlands Electricity	3·1	14·6	1·5	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Northern Electric	2·0	9·9	1·7	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Norweb	2·7	13·1	1·6	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Seeboard	2·6	12·1	2·0	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Southern Electric	3·4	14·7	1·2	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
South Wales Electricity	1·4	7·1	1·4	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
South Western Electricity	2·5	11·7	2·0	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
Yorkshire Electricity	2·7	13·5	1·3	Yes	31 March 1995	DTI
National Power	500·2	1,495·7	39·2	Yes		DTI
PowerGen	317·9	963·3	40·7	Yes		DTI
Scottish Hydro-Electric	13·3	41·7	3·5	Yes		SO
Scottish Power	29·4	87·1	3·6	Yes		SO
		8,882·7				

[1] Close, 8 February
[2] Negligible
[3] Powers include the appointment of a director or directors

British Telecom

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how long the Government intend to retain part of their equity stake in British Telecom; and in which financial years he plans to make any further disposals of BT shares.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* On the 18 November 1992 my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's intention to sell part of their residual holding of shares in British Telecommunications plc in 1993-94. No decisions have been taken on the size, timing or structure of the sale.

Written Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the advisory cost limit for answering written parliamentary questions in each year since 1980; what was the percentage increase in *(a)* constant and *(b)* actual terms in each year; when he next plans to uprate the limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to his reply,* 22 January 1993, cols. *437-38]:* The percentage increases shown at constant prices were incorrect. For completeness the amended answer is restated as follows:

Year	*Advisory cost limit for answering written parliamentary questions*	*Percentage increase since preceding change*	
		(a) At constant prices (indexed by GDP deflator)	*(b) Actual*
	£		
[1]1980	50	—	—
1981	50	—	—
1982	200	−32	+300
1983	200	—	—
1984	200	—	—
1985	200	—	—
1986	200	—	—
1987	200	—	—
1988	250	−1	+25
1989	250	—	—
1990	250	—	—
1991	250	—	—
1992	400	+21	+60

[1] (Unchanged since 1965).

The advisory cost limit was last increased on 1992 and this followed a major review of costs in 1991.

The current level of £400 was fixed as a multiple of eight times the average marginal cost so that only cases of exceptional high cost might be affected and to avoid the need for frequent small increases.

The limit may be increased from time to time in future when costs or policy suggest the need for a change.

HEALTH

Schizophrenia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients with schizophrenia were discharged from hospital in each year since 1986; and how many of these in each year were discharged *(a)* in less than one month, *(b)* in less than three months, *(c)* in less than six months and *(d)* in less than 12 months.

Mr. Yeo: The table gives the number of discharges from hospitals in England where a diagnosis of schizophrenia was made. 1989-90 is the only year where the quality of the information permits publication.

Discharges with a diagnosis of schizophrenia from hospitals in England for 1989-90 (HES)

	Number
Less than 1 month	19,205
Less than 3 months	27,822
Less than 6 months	30,459
Less than 12 months	32,118
Total for year	38,047

Hospital Beds

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of beds available in each Thames regional health authority in each of the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: More important than the number of beds is the number of patients treated each year; this has increased by over a third since 1979. The information available is given in the tables.

Thames Regional Health Authorities
Ordinary admissions (in-patients and day cases) and total number of average daily available beds: 1981—1990-91

	North West Thames RHA	*activity beds*	*North East Thames RHA*	*activity beds*	*South East Thames RHA*	*activity beds*	*South West Thames RHA*	*activity beds*
1981	462,363	26,947	521,966	28,357	507,356	27,217	362,550	25,267
1982	437,745	25,852	561,399	29,298	511,111	26,816	348,046	24,021
1983	457,968	25,342	578,123	28,741	537,266	26,356	363,010	23,719
1984	474,117	24,529	592,610	27,951	560,674	25,260	378,200	22,994
1985	481,923	23,816	608,552	26,854	567,880	24,297	389,825	22,210
1986	486,774	22,905	600,676	25,982	566,569	23,096	403,538	21,141
1987-88	471,673	21,119	579,509	24,369	553,521	21,250	405,323	20,140
1988-89	485,567	20,145	581,780	23,290	558,721	19,552	392,936	19,073
1989-90	531,953	—	649,472	—	616,953	—	443,537	—
1989-90	551,817	19,221	688,821	22,199	626,075	18,461	454,287	17,888
1990-91	536,203	18,105	695,279	20,608	629,250	17,333	457,600	16,596

Notes:
1. From 1981 to 1988-89 Activity figures are for in-patients (discharges and deaths) plus day cases.
2. From 1988-89 to date Activity figures are for in-patients (finished consultant episodes) plus day cases.

Source: SH3 return 1981-86: KP70 return 1987-88—1990-91.

Thames regional health authorities
Total number of average daily available beds—1981 to 1990-91

	North West Thames RHA	*North East Thames RHA*	*South East Thames RHA*	*South West Thames RHA*
1981	26,947	28,357	27,217	25,267
1982	25,852	29,298	26,816	24,021
1983	25,342	28,741	26,356	23,719
1984	24,529	27,951	25,260	22,994
1985	23,816	26,854	24,297	22,210
1986	22,905	25,982	23,096	21,141
1987-88	21,119	24,369	21,250	20,140
1988-89	20,145	23,290	19,552	19,073
1989-90	19,221	22,199	18,461	17,888
1990-91	18,105	20,608	17,333	16,596

Source: KH03.

NHS Staff Statistics

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many community psychiatric nurses, psychiatric social workers, health visitors, district nurses and practice nurses were employed by the national health service in the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The figures for psychiatric social workers are not centrally collected. The other information requested is in the table.

Whole-time Equivalents for Community Psychiatric Nurses, Health Visitors, District Nurses and Practice Nurses in England 1987 to 1991

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Community Psychiatric Nurses	2,770	3,080	3,380	3,600	3,760
Health Visitors	10,730	10,680	10,050	10,480	10,380
District Nurses	9,500	9,390	10,160	10,380	9,900
Practice Nurses	2,770	3,480	4,630	7,700	8,780

Source: Non Medical Manpower Census, form ANC4.
Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will review her Department's guidelines on the prevention of queue-jumping by general practitioner fund holders

Dr. Mawhinney: The joint guidance issued to hospital consultants on general practitioner fund holding on 11

June 1991 by the Department of Health and the Joint Consultants Committee, (Circular EL (91)84), is still valid and a review is not required. It states that:

(i) common waiting lists should be used by provider units for urgent and seriously ill patients, and for highly specialised diagnosis and treatment;
(ii) contract portfolios should be flexible and be worked out in close consultation with the hospital clinicians who have to deliver them;
(iii) provider units should not offer contracts subject to (i) and (ii) which would disadvantage the patients of other purchasers.

Copies of the circular EL(91)84 are available in the Library.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients registered with fund-holding practices are over pensionable age; and what is the corresponding proportion in the general population.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional figures for England in 1991, the latest available, from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys show that 13·08 per cent. of males and 23·55 per cent. of females in the general population are over pension age. Comparable figures for fund-holding practices are not available centrally.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she has made to monitor the financial procedures and health care quality of fund-holding general practitioner practices; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, regional health authorities have primary responsibility for the management and monitoring of the scheme. Regulations require fund holders to manage the fund efficiently and effectively and to submit income and expenditure returns regularly to family health service authorities. Their accounts are subject to external audit by the Audit Commission.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fund-holding general practitioner practices *(a)* are running and *(b)* have approval from her Department in (i) Cheltenham and (ii) Gloucestershire; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The South Western regional health authority is responsible for the management of the general practitioner fundholding scheme in these areas. The hon. Member may wish to contact Ms. Rennie Fritchie, the RHA chairman, for details.

Public Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what public appointments she has made since 1 November 1992; and what information she has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 1 November 1992, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have made the following appointments.

Executive Bodies

English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting—1 appointment *(Chairmen)*

Tribunals

Mental Health Review Tribunals—2 appointments
Registered Homes Tribunal—3 appointments *(Chairmen)*

Advisory Bodies

Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials—6 appointments
Committee on the Safety of Medicines—13 appointments
Expert Advisory Group on Aids—6 appointments
Standing Medical Advisory Committee—1 appointment
Committee on the Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food—1 appointment
Committee on the Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food—1 appointment
Joint Planning Advisory Committee—2 appointments
Joint Action for Implementation group—3 appointments
Advisory Group on Rehabilitation—6 appointments
National Disability Information Project Steering Group—1 appointment

NHS Authorities

Dental Practice Board—1 appointment *(Chairman)*
Health Education Authority—2 appointments
Prescription Pricing Authority—3 appointments

Regional Health Authorities

West Midlands RHA—1 appointment *(Chairman)*
Yorkshire RHA—2 appointments
North East Thames RHA—1 appointment *(Chairman)*, 4 appointments *(Members)*
Mersey RHA—1 appointment *(Chairman)*
South Western RHA—5 appointments

District Health Authorities—All appointments as chairpersons

Northumberland DHA
North Yorkshire DHA
Bradford DHA
Rotherham DHA
Harrow DHA
Hounslow and Spelthorne DHA
North Bedfordshire DHA
Bloomsbury and Islington DHA
West Berkshire DHA
Isle of Wight DHA
Liverpool DHA
Macclesfield DHA

NHS Trusts

NORTHERN REGION

Newcastle Mental Health—2 appointments
Northumbria Ambulance Service 1 appointment *(Chairman)*, 1 appointment (Member)
Freeman Group of Hospitals—2 appointments

YORKSHIRE REGION

St. James' University Hospital—1 appointment
Bradford Hospitals—1 appointment
Leeds General Infirmary—1 appointment

TRENT REGION

Northern General—3 appointments
Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport Service—3 appointments
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and the Montague Hospital—3 appointments

EAST ANGLIAN REGION

Norfolk Ambulance—2 appointments
Anglian Harbours—2 appointments

NORTH WEST THAMES REGION

Central Middlesex Hospital—1 appointment
Mount Vernon Hospital—1 appointment
Hillingdon Hospital—2 appointments
North Hertfordshire—2 appointments

NORTH EAST THAMES REGION

Royal London Hospital—1 appointment *(Chairman)*, 1 appointment (Non-Executive Director)
Royal Free Hospital—1 appointment
Southend Health Care—1 appointment
North Middlesex Hospital—1 appointment
Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital—2 appointments

SOUTH EAST THAMES REGION
Guys and Lewisham Hospital—1 appointment
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital—1 appointment

SOUTH WEST THAMES REGION
Homewood—2 appointments
Lifecare—2 appointments
St. Helier—2 appointments
Royal Surrey County and St. Luke's Hospital—1 appointment
Croydon Community—3 appointments
Kingston Hospital—1 appointment

WESSEX REGION
West Dorset Mental Health—1 appointment *(Chairman)*; 2 appointments *(Non-Executive Directors)*
West Dorset Community—1 appointment *(Chairman)*
Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases—2 appointments
West Dorset General Hospitals—2 appointments

OXFORD REGION
Nuffield Orthopaedic—2 appointments

SOUTH WESTERN REGION
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Mental Handicap—1 appointment
East Gloucestershire—1 appointment
Weston Area—1 appointment
Taunton and Somerset—1 appointment

WEST MIDLANDS REGION
First Community Health—1 appointment
Mental Health Foundation of Mid-Staffordshire—2 appointments
Rugby—2 appointments
Walsall Hospitals—3 appointments

MERSEY REGION
Wirral Hospital—1 appointment *(Chairman)*
St. Helen's and Knowsley Hospital—1 appointment *(Chairman)*; 2 appointments *(Non-Executive Directors)*
Royal Liverpool University Hospital—1 appointment *(Chairman)*; 1 appointment *(Non-Executive Director)*
Aintree Hospital—1 appointment
Wrightlington Hospital—1 appointment

NORTH WESTERN REGION
Mid Cheshire Hospitals—1 appointment
Christie Hospital—1 appointment *(Chairman)*; 1 appointment *(Non-Executive Director)*
Manchester Central Hospitals and Community Care—1 appointment *(Chairman)*; 2 appointments *(Non-Executive Directors)*

For information on third wave trusts I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 2 February at column *153*. Information on the political affiliation of appointees is not collected.

Nurses

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many bank nurses are currently employed, by regional health authority area, in the national health service; and what this number represents as a percentage of the total number of qualified nurses employed in the national health service in each regional health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

NHS qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency) and bank staff, by RHA at September 1991

	Qualified nursing and midwifery staff[2]	*Bank nurses*[2]	*Percentage*
Northern	16,880	410	2·4
Yorkshire	18,480	270	1·4
Trent	23,290	490	2·1
East Anglia	9,810	490	5·0
North West Thames	16,280	590	3·6
North East Thames	20,050	950	4·7
South East Thames	16,620	720	4·3
South West Thames	14,120	1,050	7·4
Wessex	14,130	560	3·9
Oxford	11,320	730	6·5
South Western	16,130	780	4·9
West Midlands	25,210	500	2·0
Mersey	12,620	480	3·8
North Western	23,230	470	2·0
Special Health Authorities	5,050	50	0·9
England[1]	243,250	8,540	3·5

Source: Non Medical Manpower Census, HAP(STATS)B, NHSME.

[1] England total includes figures for family health service authorities and other statutory authorities.
[2] Figures are whole time equivalents and rounded to the nearest ten.

NHS Monitoring

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor standards and service delivery in the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Patients charter and general standards of service are monitored at local level by district health authorities, general practitioner fund holders and family health service authorities. Regional health authorities take an overview of services in their regions and are accountable to the national health service management executive.

All regional health authorities have established programmes of medical audit—covering both primary and secondary care—and are now extending this into wider areas including nursing audit. In addition, the clinical standards advisory group has been set up under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to advise United Kingdom Health Ministers on specific issues.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the firms of consultants used by her Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has used a number of consultants to assist in preparing the market testing programme, to support in-house bids, to advise market test managers and prepare specification. Between November 1991 and the end of March 1993 the Department has spent or is committed to spend about £375,000. The following consultants have been used:
Coopers and Lybrand
CSL
Doctus Consulting Europe

Ernst and Young
Kermon Ltd
KPMG
PE International Plc
Procord Ltd
Shreeveport Ltd
Symonds Facilities Management Plc
Touche Ross

Community Care

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the representations she has received in respect of the Government's proposals for community care; and how many of those opposed, and how many were in favour of, the Government's proposals.

Mr. Yeo: The aims of the Government's community care policy enjoy wide cross-party support. The details of its implementation have been the subject of wide consultation and we have received many representations.

Children (Secure Accommodation)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the weekly charges to local authorities for the use of secure accommodation for children in the last three years and the number of children placed in such accommodation by each local social services authority in the last three years.

Mr. Yeo: Information about charges in the form requested is not collected centrally. Information about the number of admissions to secure units in England for the last three years is published in "Children Accommodated in Secure Units During the Year Ending 31 March 1991 England". A copy is available in the Library.

Oral Contraceptives

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to limit the prescription of oral contraceptives.

Mr. Sackville: I have asked the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs to review the range of contraceptives available on national health service prescription. They will ensure that all clinical need continues to be met.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will publish a list showing the prescribed brands of oral contraceptive, their dose of hormones, and the price of a month's supply.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The information requested is as follows.

Brand and Active Constituents	*Price per month*
Combined oral contraceptives	
Binovum 7 tablets of norethisterone 500 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms; 14 tablets of norethisterone 1mg and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	74·7p
Brevinor norethisterone 500 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	57·3p
Cilest norgestimate 250 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	£1·90
Conova 30 ethynodiol diacetate 2mg, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	80p
Eugynon 30 levonorgestrel 250 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	69p
Femodene gestodene 75 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£1·90
Femodene ED (as for Femodene but with 7 additional placebo tablets)	£1·90
Loestrin 20 norethisterone acetate 1mg, ethinyloestradiol 20 micrograms	86p
Loestrin 30 norethisterone acetate 1·5mg, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£1·26
Logynon 6 tablets of levonorgestrel 50 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms; 5 tablets of levonorgestrel 75 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 40 micrograms; 10 tablets of levonorgestrel 125 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	95p
Logynon ED (as for Logynon but with 7 additional placebo tablets)	—
Marvelon desogestrel 150 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£1·48
Mercilon desogestrel 150 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 20 micrograms	£2·40
Microgynon 30 levonorgestrel 150 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	60p
Minulet gestodene 75 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£1·90
Neocon 1/35 norethisterone 1 mg, ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms Norimin norethisterone 1 mg, ethnyloestradiol 35 micrograms	65p
Norinyl-1 norethisterone 1 mg, mestranol 50 micrograme	63p
Ortho-Novin 1/50 norethisterone 1 mg, mestranol 50 micrograms	78p
Ovran levonorgestrel 250 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 50 micrograms	37p
Ovran 30 levonorgestrel 250 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	57p
Ovranette levonorgestrel 150 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	62p
Ovysmen norethisterone 500 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	57p
Synphase 7 tablets of norethisterone 500 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms; 9 tablets of norethisterone 1 milligram and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms; 5 tablets of norethisterone 500 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	£1·11
Triadene 6 tablets of gestodene 50 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms; 5 tablets of gestodene 70 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 40 micrograms; 10 tablets of gestodene 100 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£2·65

Brand and Active Constituents	Price per month
Tri-Minulet 6 tablets of gestodene 50 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms; 5 tablets of gestodene 70 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 40 micrograms; 10 tablets of gestodene 100 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£2·65
Trinordiol 6 tablets of levonorgestrel 50 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms; 5 tablets of levonorgestrel 75 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 40 micrograms; 10 tablets of levonorgestrel 125 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 30 micrograms	£1·09
TriNovum 7 tablets of norethisterone 500 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms; 7 tablets of norethisterone 750 micrograms and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms; 7 tablets of norethisterone 1 milligram and ethinyloestradiol 35 micrograms	94p
TriNovum ED (as for TriNovum but with 7 additional placebo tablets)	98p
Emergency contraception Schering PC4 levonorgestrel 250 micrograms, ethinyloestradiol 50 micrograms	[1]£1·40
Preogesterone-only contraceptives Femulen ethynodiol diacetate 500 micrograms	94p
Micronor norethisterone 350 micrograms	63p
Microval levonorgestrel 30 micrograms	£1·00
Neogest norgestrel 75 micrograms	78p
Norgeston levonorgestrel 30 micrograms	78p
Noriday norethisterone 350 micrograms	60p

[1] (for 4 tablets, ie one course)
Source: British National Formulary no. 24 (1992)

Funding

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent her Department takes account of *(a)* activity levels and *(b)* information on outcomes in assessing its funding requirements.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account she takes in determining the total expenditure on health care of international comparisons of health care spending as a proportion of gross domestic product; and what guidance she gives on the appropriate percentage that should be spent on medical and nursing salaries, administration salaries and costs, building maintenance and pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Sackville: A number of factors are taken into account in setting the overall level of funding available to the national health service, including the health benefits of increased activity, other developments and affordability. We will continue to achieve the best possible value from the record sums of money now spent in the NHS; spending in other countries with different health care systems is not relevant to decisions on funding the NHS.

It is the responsibility of health care providers within the NHS to determine how best to deploy the resources which they earn from NHS contracts, to meet the requirements of purchasers and to achieve the maximum benefit for patients.

Dentistry

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the women's organisations that were consulted by her Department or Sir Kenneth Bloomfield in respect of the Bloomfield report proposals to remove pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of one year from the exempt category for NHS dental charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Kenneth conducted his review independently.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of salaried dentists, orthodontists, dental nurses and dental hygenists for each district health authority, family health service authority and trust in England for each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of salaried dentists employed by family health services authorities in England during the last five years is shown in the table. The information is not recorded for district health authorities or trusts.

	Total number of salaried dentists as at 30 September				
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northumberland	1	1	1	1	0
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	1
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	2	3	3	3	5
Essex	3	2	1	2	2
Camden and Islington	1	0	0	0	0
City and East London	7	7	6	6	7
Kent	3	2	1	0	3
Greenwich and Bexley	8	8	7	7	7
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	2	2	2	2	29
West Sussex	1	1	1	1	1
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	1	1	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire	0	0	0	0	1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1	1	1	1	1
Somerset	0	0	0	0	4
Sandwell	5	5	5	1	0
Liverpool	2	2	4	2	2
Salford	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	38	36	33	27	65

No separate record is maintained of dentists who specialise in orthodontics. It is estimated that there are some 28,000 dental nurses.

The number of salaried dental hygienists for each of the last five years is set out in the table. Figures are not yet

available for the year ended December 1992. This information is not collected centrally for district health authorities, family health services authorities or trusts.

Year ended 31 December

	Number
1987	2,330
1988	2,450
1989	2,648
1990	2,808
1991	2,953

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health services authorities have used their capital reserves to maintain dental services since July 1992; and if she will publish the amounts in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 9 February at column *619*.

Family Planning Clinics

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the number of first contacts with people using family planning clinics and *(b)* the percentage of the female population seen at family planning clinics for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1991-92 is not yet available. For other years the information for England is as follows:

	First contacts at family planning clinics (thousands)			*Female contacts seen[1] as percentage of population aged 15 to 49*
	Total	*Male*	*Female[1]*	
1988-89	1,147·6	32·4	1,115·2	9·5
1989-90	1,148·2	32·7	1,115·5	9·5
1990-91	1,091·6	31·9	1,059·8	9·0

[1] Whilst the great majority of first contacts will fall within the ages 15 to 49, there may be some above or below those ages.

NHS Administration Costs

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what management studies by outside consultants are planned by her Department to make recommendations on how administration costs can be saved and redirected to more effective provision of patient care within the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. It is the responsibility of health authorities and national health service trusts to ensure that administrative costs are kept to the minimum consistent with good management.

Computer Services

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will remove Sir Robin Buchanan from the posts of chairman of Wessex regional health authority and chairman of the NHS Supplies Authority during investigations into the privatisation of computer services.

Mr. Sackville: No. I have every confidence in Sir Robin Buchanan as chairman of the Wessex regional health authority and of the National Health Service Supplies Authority. He has fully encouraged and supported the extensive action taken by management of the Wessex RHA to rectify the organisational problems associated with RISP.

The district auditor commended the actions of the RHA in his report on the RISP project.

Sir Robin was selected as the most appropriate chairman for the NHS Supplies Authority because of his wide knowledge and experience of supplies issues. Under his chairmanship, NHS Supplies is already demonstrating the savings that it can make in purchasing goods and services for the NHS, which leaves the NHS with more money for direct patient care.

Acute Beds

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many bed days were available on wards classified as acute, in each of the districts in the four Thames regions and special health authorities *(a)* during the financial year which ended 31 March 1992 and *(b)* during the first six months of the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1991-92 is given in the table. Information for 1992-93 is not yet centrally available.

Available bed days on acute wards in the four Thames regions and special health authorities, 1991-92

District Health Authority		*Wards open night and day (ie 24 hours)*		*Wards open day only*		*Total*	
		Bed days	*Daily average*	*Bed days*	*Daily average*	*Bed days*	*Daily average*
North West Thames Regional Health Authority		2,542,148	6,946	87,091	238	2,629,239	7,184
E01	North Bedfordshire	117,914	322	1,620	4	119,534	327
E02	South Bedfordshire	144,378	394	6,520	18	160,898	412
E04	East Hertfordshire	110,050	301	4,364	12	114,414	313
E05	North West Hertfordshire	135,842	371	0	0	135,842	371
E06	South West Hertfordshire	108,095	295	6,155	14	113,250	309
E07	Barnet	233,596	638	7,434	20	241,030	659
E08	Harrow	162,205	443	11,500	31	173,705	475
E09	Hillingdon	48,390	132	0	0	48,390	132
E10	Hounslow and Spelthorne	229,613	627	7,502	20	237,115	648
E11	Ealing	114,447	313	4,680	13	119,127	325
E14	Riverside	394,248	1,077	9,330	25	403,578	1,103
E17	Parkside	242,654	663	13,407	37	256,061	700
RAQ	North Hertfordshire NHS Trust	151,481	414	4,160	11	155,641	425
RAR	Mount Vernon Hospital NHS Trust	132,106	361	0	0	132,106	361
RAS	The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust	107,826	295	4,465	12	112,291	307
RAU	Central Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust	109,303	299	6,954	19	116,257	318

District Health Authority		Wards open night and day (ie 24 hours) Bed days	Wards open night and day (ie 24 hours) Daily average	Wards open day only Bed days	Wards open day only Daily average	Total Bed days	Total Daily average
North East Thames Regional Health Authority		3,388,769	9,259	125,125	342	3,513,894	9,601
F01	Basildon and Thurrock	213,055	582	4,800	13	217,855	595
F02	Mid Essex	210,011	574	8,580	23	218,591	597
F03	North East Essex	171,928	470	8,317	23	180,245	492
F04	West Essex	190,390	520	3,528	10	183,916	530
F05	Southend	0	0	0	0	0	0
F06	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	385,787	1,054	13,265	36	399,052	1,090
F07	Hampstead	0	0	0	0	0	0
F10	City and Hackney	293,166	801	16,470	45	309,636	846
F11	Newham	133,816	366	4,750	13	138,566	376
F13	Enfield	137,525	376	3,978	11	141,503	387
F14	Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0
F15	Redbridge	113,577	310	4,771	13	118,348	323
F16	Waltham Forest	198,369	544	0	0	198,969	544
F22	Bloomsbury and Islington	447,997	1,224	14,298	39	462,296	1,263
RAJ	Southend Health Care NHS Trust	190,991	522	14,740	40	205,731	562
RAK	Royal London Hospital and Ass. Community Services NHS Trust	239,794	655	7,784	21	247,578	676
RAL	Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust	232,601	636	12,538	34	245,139	670
RAM	Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust	16,892	46	0	0	16,892	46
RAN	Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust	75,948	208	1,116	3	77,062	211
RAP	North Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust	136,324	372	6,192	17	142,516	389
South East Thames Regional Health Authority		3,112,041	8,503	93,842	256	3,206,883	8,759
G01	Brighton	262,706	718	12,681	35	275,387	752
G02	Eastbourne	163,953	448	0	0	163,953	448
G03	Hastings	124,262	340	3,177	9	127,439	348
G04	South East Kent	197,856	541	6,390	17	204,346	558
G05	Canterbury and Thanet	273,734	748	6,144	17	279,878	765
G06	Dartford and Gravesham	168,504	455	6,682	18	173,186	473
G07	Maidstone	113,996	311	3,715	10	117,711	322
G08	Medway	196,547	537	2,072	6	198,619	543
G09	Tunbridge Wells	258,167	705	7,338	20	265,505	725
G10	Bexley	89,232	244	1,976	5	91,208	249
G11	Greenwich	274,000	748	7,531	21	281,731	770
G12	Bromley	182,110	498	8,180	22	190,290	520
G13	West Lambeth	276,298	618	0	0	226,298	618
G14	Camberwell	230,567	630	11,670	32	242,237	662
G15	Lewisham and North Southwark	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAV	Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust	351,809	961	16,286	44	368,095	1,006
South West Thames Regional Health Authority		2,237,531	6,113	44,743	122	2,282,274	6,236
H01	North West Surrey	141,279	386	0	0	141,279	386
H02	West Surrey and North East Hampshire	177,883	486	325	1	178,208	487
H03	South West Surrey	29,811	81	0	0	29,811	81
H04	Mid Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0
H05	East Surrey	142,428	389	4,398	12	146,826	401
H06	Chichester	142,960	391	1	0	142,961	381
H07	Mid Downs	190,516	521	806	2	191,322	523
H08	Worthing	177,465	485	2,797	8	180,262	493
H09	Croydon	205,756	562	906	2	206,662	565
H10	Kingston and Esher	840	2	0	0	840	2
H11	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	115,440	315	10,212	28	125,652	343
H12	Wandsworth	311,543	851	2,078	6	313,622	857
H13	Merton and Sutton	28,057	77	552	2	28,609	78
RA1	Epsom Health Care NHS Trust	131,640	360	1,783	5	133,433	365
RA2	Royal Surrey County & St. Lukes Hospital NHS Trust	145,001	396	6,120	17	151,121	413
RAW	Lifecare NHS Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAX	Kingston Hospital NHS Trust	136,518	373	5,856	16	142,374	389
RAY	Homewood NHS Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAZ	St. Helier NHS Trust	160,394	438	8,898	24	169,292	463
Special Health Authorities							
T01	The Hospital for Sick Children	129,109	353	4,570	12	133,679	365
T02	The National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery	92,857	254	0	0	92,857	254
T03	Moorfields Eye Hospital	38,742	106	2,940	8	41,682	114
T04	The Bethlem Royal Hospital & Maudsley Hospital	17,666	48	0	0	17,665	48
T05	Royal Brompton National Heart & Lung Hospital	113,693	311	5,856	16	119,549	327

District Health Authority		Wards open night and day (ie 24 hours) Bed days	Wards open night and day (ie 24 hours) Daily average	Wards open day only Bed days	Wards open day only Daily average	Total Bed days	Total Daily average
T06	The Royal Marsden Hospital	111,979	306	0	0	111,979	306
T07	Hammersmith & Queen Charlotte Hospital	161,575	441	10,138	28	171,713	469
T09	The Eastman Dental Hospital	0	0	2,560	7	2,560	7

Source: KH03

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what directions she has given to regional health authorities, in respect of the release of information already collected by them in relation to the operation of the health service; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidance she has given on which tier of management should take responsibility for decisions on the release of information to hon. Members within regional and district health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have issued no directions or formal guidance to health authorities on the release of information to hon. Members. The patients charter however has set out important new commitments to publishing information. Beyond that, national health service authorities are responsible for deciding whether any further information should be made public.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her statement in respect of access to information by hon. Members of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *903*, what directions she has given to the Yorkshire regional health authority to provide information already collected by that region in respect of statistical data relating to the normal operation of the health service within the Yorkshire region; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Provisional waiting time information is collected for management purposes and is published on a quarterly basis. Provisional waiting list figures for 31 December 1992 were published on 9 February in press release H93/547 a copy of which is available in the Library.

St. Thomas's Hospital

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the claim for central funding of the soft tissue tumour unit based at St. Thomas's hospital, London.

Mr. Sackville: The charitable moneys which currently are used to fund this service are to be withdrawn on 31 March 1993. From 1 April 1993 the unit will be brought into the national health service internal market. St. Thomas's hospital is working with the staff of the unit to help cost its work and charge referring hospitals for its services. The position of the unit will be kept under review as part of the national review of specialist services which is being carried out by the NHS management executive.

GDP (Health Care)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of gross domestic product was spent on health in each year since 1984 in each European Community member state; and if she will give the percentage change in each case since *(a)* 1963, *(b)* 1970 and *(c)* 1980.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* Total national health service expenditure in the United Kingdom as a percentage of gross domestic product in each year since 1984 is given in the table, together with the percentage real terms changes in total NHS expenditure compared with 1979-80. Figures for earlier years are not available on a similar basis, but show an increase in Government spending on health from 3·5 per cent. of GDP in 1963 to 3·7 per cent. in 1970.

Figures for other EC countries are not available on a comparable basis.

United Kingdom NHS expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Year	Gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP	United Kingdom NHS expenditure percentage real terms change since 1979-80
1983-84	5·3	16·1
1984-85	5·4	18·7
1985-86	5·2	19·1
1986-87	5·2	24·0
1987-88	5·1	29·1
1988-89	5·1	33·7
1989-90	5·1	35·4
1990-91	5·3	39·9
1991-92	5·7	48·0
1992-93[1]	6·0	55·4

[1] Estimate.

Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures showing health expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 29 January column 889]:* I regret that there was an error in my previous reply.

The estimated gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP for 1992-93 should read 6·0. The corrected table is as follows:

United Kingdom national health service expenditure as a percentage of GDP

	Gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP
1983-84	5·3
1984-85	5·4
1985-86	5·2
1986-87	5·2
1987-88	5·1
1988-89	5·1
1989-90	5·1
1990-91	5·3

	Gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP
1991-92	5·7
1992-93[1]	6·0

[1] Estimate.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs

6. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies he intends to provide to tackle drug problems in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: In addition to developing the drugs prevention initiatives, whose lives were recently extended until 1995, we are implementing the EC directive on precursor chemical control, and putting through the House the Criminal Justice Act. Finally, at a national level, we are committed to bringing forward proposals to ensure that the control of drug misuse is co-ordinated more effectively.

26. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies he intends to promote to tackle drug problems in Blyth Valley.

Mr. Jack: I wrote to the hon. Member on 30 November 1992 about some of the projects in the north-east in which the drugs prevention team based in Newcastle has been involved and offered my assistance on any related matters he wished to raise including how these ideas might apply to Blyth. That offer still stands.

Visa Nationals

16. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make arrangements during 1993 to reduce the maximum period for which a visa national may visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have no plans to reduce the maximum period for a visit specified in the immigration rules, but I will consider in due course whether any changes are called for in connection with the draft external frontiers convention when action is needed to ratify it.

Stabbing

17. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victims there have been of crimes of stabbing in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: We do not know the total number of victims of stabbings, which are not recorded as a separate offence category by the police. We do know that the number of homicides in England and Wales where the method of killing was by a sharp instrument were 182 in 1989; 184 in 1990; and 223 in 1991.

Young Offenders

18. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to tackle youth crime.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have introduced a wide range of measures which aim to prevent young people from committing crime. We have also considerably strengthened the powers of the courts to deal with those who do. I am now preparing proposals for new measures which will increase the powers of the courts to provide care and training in secure accommodation for juveniles who persistently re-offend.

Racist Organisations

19. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in the law he is considering in relation to racist organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The views of racist organisations are repugnant to the Government and to the public at large and an offence is committed under the Public Order Act 1986 if there is the intention or likelihood of stirring up racial hatred, or if threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour takes place. The Government have no present plans to change the law.

Prison Population

20. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the size of the prison population; and what the figure was three years ago.

Mr. Peter Loyd: On 31 December 1992 the prison population in England and Wales was 40,600. Three years earlier it was 45,900.

Community Service Orders

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current use of community service orders.

Mr. Jack: The courts are making increasing use of community service orders. In 1991, 41,200 community service orders were started, an 8 per cent. increase over 1990.

Police (Civilian Staff)

22. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilians now work in the police force; and what change there has been in this figure since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There were 49,085 civilian staff employed by the police service in England and Wales at the end of November 1992. This is an increase of 14,455, or 42 per cent., since the Government first took office in 1979.

Electoral Registration

23. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to take to improve the current system of electoral registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have set up a working group of Home Office officials and representatives of electoral registration officers and local authorities to look at all aspects of electoral registration. We shall consider the working group's findings once it has concluded its work.

Car Crime

24. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had recently with the Northumbria police authority about car crimes in the force area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of Northumbria police authority on 10 December 1992 to discuss matters of concern to them. Car crime in the force area was not raised specifically.

Police (Restructuring)

25. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet in a position to make a statement on the future organisation of the police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering what reforms may be needed and will announce his proposals as soon as possible. The interested parties will be consulted before final decisions are reached.

Crime Prevention Board

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from Crime Concern over the establishment of a new national crime prevention board; and what representations he has made.

Mr. Jack: The chairman of Crime Concern wrote to me last month welcoming the setting up of a National Board for Crime Prevention and seeking discussions on the relationship between it and the board. I have invited Crime Concern to come and discuss these matters with me once separate discussions between its representatives and senior officials on the ways in which they can contribute to the new developments on crime prevention have been completed. I have no doubt that Crime Concern will have a valuable contribution to make in assisting the work of the board.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

28. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those organisations which have written to him to register their opposition to the proposals contained in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have arranged for a list of the main organisations who have written to us to be placed in the Library.

Refugees (Detention Centres)

29. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans Her Majesty's Government have to build new detention centres for refugees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We plan to provide about 300 additional detention places in phases from 1993 to 1995 to accommodate those detained under immigration powers, including asylum applicants. These plans have not yet been finalised.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish his consultation paper on wheel clamping on private property.

Mr. Jack: A consultation paper on wheel clamping on private land will be published later this month.

Police (SSAs)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the standard spending assessment in respect of the police service for each local authority in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will estimate the effect of this standard spending assessment if *(a)* the 1987 system of needs assessment and *(b)* the safety net arrangements introduced in 1988 had still been in place.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Police elements of English local authorities' standard spending assessments for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are given in the table. No figures are shown for Wales because Welsh local authorities' standard spending assessments do not identify separate elements for individual services such as police.

Information on what current police standard spending assessments would be if they were calculated by reference to the distribution formula which was discontinued in 1987 is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

£ million

Police authority	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Avon and Somerset[1]	63·999	66·489
Bedfordshire	25·127	26·498
Cambridgeshire	26·516	27·447
Cheshire	39·805	41·353
City of London	23·187	26·570
Cleveland	31·139	32·350
Cumbria	24·609	25·566
Derbyshire	38·354	39·846
Devon and Corwall[1]	60·620	62·929
Dorset	26·993	28·043
Durham	28·796	29·917
Essex	64·662	67·767
Greater Manchester	144·376	149·884
Gloucestershire	24·546	25·501
Hampshire[1]	71·551	75·453
Hertfordshire	38·803	40·290
Humberside	42·168	43·809
Kent	68·381	72·419
Lancashire	66·943	69·547
Leicestershire	38·416	39·910
Lincolnshire	25·002	25·975
Merseyside	97·563	101·359
Metropolitan Police	729·511	761·712
Norfolk	29·978	31·144
Northamptonshire	24·671	25·630
Northumbria	74·676	77·581
North Yorkshire	29·398	30·541
Nottinghamshire	48·595	50·485
South Yorkshire	62·838	65·282
Staffordshire	45·921	47·707
Suffolk	25·562	26·557
Surrey	39·239	40·503
Sussex[1]	60·754	64·003
Thames Valley[1]	85·179	90·575
Warwickshire	21·520	22·443
West Mercia[1]	42,562	44·218
West Midlands	143·090	148·656
West Yorkshire	109·774	114·045
Wiltshire	26·495	27·763

[1] Combined police authority. Figures shown are the sums of police elements of constituent county councils' SSAs.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to discourage crime by juveniles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government have already introduced a wide range of measures to discourage young people from committing crime. In the Criminal Justice Act 1991, implemented on 1 October 1992, we have recently strengthened the powers of the court in relation to defendants under the age of 18.

Both in absolute terms, and as a proportion of all known offenders, the number of known juvenile offenders has declined in recent years. But the Government are not complacent. We are currently considering what additional measures it might be appropriate to introduce in order to deal more effectively with the small number of juveniles who persistently re-offend and for whom existing arrangements appear to be inadequate.

Parliamentary Boundaries Commission

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the Parliamentary Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the four boundary commissions for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are making satisfactory progress with their programmes of work to review the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies in the United Kingdom.

Youth Crime, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to tackle youth crime in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 10 February 1993 at column *625*.

Operation Container

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of Operation Container; and what recent consultation he has had with the Greater Manchester police authority about its effects on policing in the conurbation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service expects Operation Container to end shortly, although this will depend on the prison population, especially the numbers remanded and committed to custody in the north-west.

The prison service has weekly meetings with the Greater Manchester police on Operation Container. In addition, on 5 February, the prison service area manager for the trans-Pennine area—which includes Manchester prison—discussed the management of plans to reduce numbers in police cells with the senior headquarters officers concerned. The implications of police cell usage on police operations was discussed at that meeting. It was explained that the police had successfully been able to confine the operation largely to rest day working in order to minimise the effect on normal police operations.

HMP Doncaster

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has now made a decision on whether he will allow the prison service to make an in-house bid for the management of Her Majesty's prison, Doncaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Terrorism and Drug Importers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in legislation will be required to permit the security service to develop its role in combating threats from terrorism and drug importers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Security Service Act 1989 defines the functions of the service as being the protection of national security and the safeguarding of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats from overseas.

The security service may conduct investigations only into areas which satisfy one or both of these criteria. Terrorism is referred to in the Act as a particular threat to national security and therefore falls within the criteria. The scale of drugs trafficking and other types of organised crime is not such that there is a current threat to national security. The security service therefore has no role in investigating these criminal matters and, contrary to recent press allegations, is not seeking one. The Government have no plans to amend the Act to redefine the functions of the service in this respect.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent new appointments he has made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Miss Linda Haye, formerly head of the youth and community department of Hertfordshire county council, has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the Police Complaints Authority. She will take up her post on 15 February.

TRANSPORT

ATOLs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of package air travel operators who do not hold an air transport operator's licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: It is an offence under the Civil Aviation (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) Regulations 1972 for those who are required to hold an ATOL not to do so. It is not readily possible to estimate how many package holiday operators are in breach of that requirement at any one time; but the Civil Aviation Authority will, where appropriate, prosecute operators apparently guilty of such an offence and it is open to anyone who believes that an offence has been committed to report the matter to the authority.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider placing a legal responsibility on airlines

to ensure that operators of packaged air travel, whose reservations are accepted by them, are in possession of a valid air transport operator's licence and comply with relevant EC directives.

Mr. Norris: Such a responsibility has been placed on United Kingdom airlines by regulation 11(1)(a) of the Licensing of Air Carriers Regulations 1992.

Cyclists, London

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will conduct a survey of the number of cyclists in central London who ride their machines after lighting-up time without any lights; if he will assess the risks to road safety resulting from unlit cycles; and what action he is taking to encourage them to ensure that they display adequate lighting.

Mr. Norris: Only about one fifth of all reported cycle accidents happen during the hours of darkness. It is not possible to estimate what proportion of these accidents is caused by the bicycle being unlit. The proposed survey would not permit this to be determined.

The law requires front and rear lights to be used between sunset and sunrise. Advice to cyclists about this requirement is contained in the highway code and that message is reinforced in road safety campaigns, such as the "Cycle Safe" campaign which is to be run later this year.

Road and Rail Freight

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportions of freight were carried by rail and by road in 1991, 1979 and 1967 in Great Britain, Germany and Japan.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent statistics readily available are for 1990, published, with 1980, in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992", tables 8.9 and 8.10. Statistics for 1970 onwards, with definitions and more detailed comparisons, are published in the transport statistics report "International Comparisons of Transport Statistics Part 1: Intermodal". Both publications are in the House of Commons Library. Reliable comparisons are not available for years prior to 1970.

Piracy

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department's merchant shipping notice on piracy and armed robbery will be published.

Mr. Norris: Merchant shipping notice No. M 1517 "Piracy and Armed Robbery" is being distributed to shipowners, masters and crews. A copy of the merchant shipping notice has been placed in the Library of the House.

Airline Competition

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to discuss airline competition with chairmen of British-owned airlines; and which chairmen he proposes to meet.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend regularly meets chairmen of United Kingdom airlines to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will instigate an Office of Fair Trading investigation of competition and fare structures in the airline industry.

Mr. Norris: No. Within the EC, Community legislation covers these issues. Elsewhere, the Civil Aviation Authority already has appropriate powers.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action the Civl Aviation Authority is taking to allow greater competition between British airlines on Atlantic routes with particular reference to the London to San Francisco service;

(2) if he will use his powers to direct the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure greater consumer choice between British airlines serving Atlantic routes with particular reference to the London to San Francisco service.

Mr. Norris: We understand that cases concerning competitive aspects of north Atlantic routes, including competition on the London-San Francisco route, are before the Civil Aviation Authority. In view of the Secretary of State's appellate role, it would be inappropriate to comment.

British Airways Board

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what continuing financial or related interest in British Airways the Government have following privatisation relating to the structure and composition of the board of directors.

Mr. Norris: The Government retained a small shareholding in British Airways following privatisation in order to meet entitlements which were expected to arise under the loyalty bonus arrangements forming part of the offer for sale. The holding currently amounts to about 3·2 million shares, or 0·4 per cent. of total shareholdings in the company.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will use his reserve powers to ensure the fair allocation at Heathrow airport of take-off and landing slots for large and small British airlines.

Mr. Norris: No. Slot allocation at Heathrow is a matter for the airport co-ordinator, working within industry guidelines and European Community legislation.

Rail Subsidy

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will guarantee continuing levels of subsidy to prospective private sector railway franchisees for the full length of their franchise.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* It will be for the franchising director to negotiate contracts with private sector franchisees, and to make any subsidy payments necessary under them from within his budget. In doing so he will be in no different a position to any other public sector body in entering into contracts which run beyond the normal three-year public expenditure planning cycle.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what limit he will place on the amount of subsidy to be

offered to prospective rail freight operators under the arrangements announced by the Government for the next 15 years; and what estimate he has made of the total amount to be guaranteed.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The Government have not set a specific time limit on the new scheme—we have said that it will be reviewed after a period of operation. The amount of funds available will depend on the level of demand for the scheme, objective assessment of its benefits, and competing demands for public expenditure.

DEFENCE

Aldermaston (Accidents)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department expects to reply to the letter from Greenpeace to Mr. Allen, senior administration officer at Aldermaston, concerning accidents at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The Department will reply to the Greenpeace letter of 26 January 1993 concerning accidents at AWE Aldermaston as soon as possible.

Bands

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the establishment of pipe bands of Scottish regiments, broken down by specialisation as appropriate; how they are funded; what are their annual costs; what training facilities for military piping are available, and at what annual cost; what is the annual income obtained from public or private performances of Scottish military pipe bands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pipe bands are not separately established in Scottish regiments, but a regiment could have 15 pipes, six side drums, two tenor drums and a base drum. There is currently a piping school within the Household Division, a Guards Depot piping school and a piping and drumming wing of the Scottish Division and an Army school of piping. Central records are not held for the annual cost, the training cost or the annual income of pipe bands.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the establishment, annual cost and training arrangements for the pipe bands of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no separate establishments for pipe bands in the regiment. The maximum number of instruments likely to be available to any regiment are 15 pipes, six side drums, two tenor drums and a base drum. Central records are not held for the annual costs of the bands. Pipers are trained at the Army school of piping in Edinburgh.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which ways the initial and subsequent training of band personnel varies between each of the services; and in each case what is the length of the full-time training undertaken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The principal differences between the training of musicians in the services are due to different standards of musical competence on entry. The length and nature of training is affected by the degree of integration of musical and military training. In the Royal Marines these are fully integrated, whilst at the Royal Military School of Music and the Royal Air Force School of Music the training is predominantly musical, with military training being provided elsewhere. The lengths of training of personnel in the three services prior to joining a band are as follows:

Royal Marines
Musicians undergo eight terms of 15 weeks each. Buglers undergo five terms of 15 weeks each.

Army
10 weeks Common Military Syllabus (Recruits) and up to 44 weeks musical training, followed by three weeks on the Bandsmen Medical Assistants Course.

Royal Air Force
7 weeks initial recruit training; up to a year's musical training for non-graduates or, for graduates a shorter familiarisation course of between six weeks and four months (the length depends on individual capability); and three weeks and two days training as medical assistants.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to publish in full the review by the Commandant of the Royal Military School of Music of the future organisation, structure and geographical location of Army bands in the light of the restructuring of the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is an internal review, and I do not therefore intend to publish it in full. No decision has yet been made on the recommendations put forward by the review, but an announcement will be made in due course once any decisions are taken.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what equivalent level of civilian paramedical expertise Army band personnel are trained; and where, when and how often they are trained in these skills.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Army band personnel are trained to medical assistant rather than full paramedic standards. On completion of music training they attend a medical assistant course at the Royal Army Medical Corps training centre and thereafter receive regular refresher training in their units by qualified instructors. This enables them to undertake mobilisation roles in direct support of medical units in war.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role is played by the bands of regiments deployed *(a)* on emergency tours to Northern Ireland and Belize and *(b)* on residential tours outside Great Britain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The precise role of a band in any given theatre can vary, depending on the requirements of the unit commanding officer. On emergency tours to Northern Ireland and Belize bands deploy with units at the commanding officer's discretion, where they would typically man medical centres, deploy on patrol, as medical staff, and give concerts. When a unit has an integral band it would normally accompany the unit on residential tours outside Great Britain to BAOR, Cyprus, Hong Kong or Northern Ireland. Similar roles to those carried out on emergency tours are undertaken including taking part in ceremonial duties.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the rules governing the use of funds received by bands as a result of public engagements; what has been the total income in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will publish details of the level and nature of current commercial sponsorship of military bands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In return for a contribution to public funds service bands are permitted to carry out fee-paying engagements. The total income, in the last financial year for which figures are available, 1991-92, was £113,000. There were fewer engagements that year as a knock-on effect of Operation Granby. Details of commercial sponsorship are not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It is not, however, believed to be significant in scale.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* military operations and *(b)* operations in support of civil authorities in which Army band personnel have participated in the past 10 years, showing in each case the numbers participating and the nature of their activities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Army band personnel may deploy, usually as medics, with the parent unit to any operational theatre, or on any operation in support of the civil authorities.

Guatemala

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what charges will be raised by his Department for the flights currently being undertaken by an RAF C-130 in Guatemala; how many flights were undertaken; and from which agency the request for assistance originated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF C-130 flew nine sorties totalling 11 hours 20 minutes, in response to a request from the Overseas Development Administration. The flying charge, based on extra cost, will amount to some £16,500.

Channel Tunnel (Challenger Tanks)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the arrangements which will apply to the transit of British and NATO military material through France via the channel tunnel; and if the railways in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the European mainland and *(c)* the channel tunnel can carry Challenger tanks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decisions have been made on the military use of the tunnel in peacetime. Cost will be a major factor in any decision to use the tunnel for routine movements. The dimensions of the Challenger tank, and the absence of suitable rolling stock, currently preclude it from movement on the railways in the United Kingdom. Challenger tanks are routinely moved by rail in Germany. The tunnel is physically capable of taking the Challenger tank although a number of technical aspects as well as commercial and safety aspects would have to be resolved first.

TA Officers (Official Secrets Acts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Territorial Army officers have been charged under the Official Secrets Acts in each year since 1970; in how many of those cases the accused was kept in custody between arrest and trial, and for how long in each case; what was the outcome of each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Readily available records cover only the period since 1985. The information requested prior to that could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Since 1985 one Territorial officer has been charged under the Official Secrets Act—in 1992. That case is ongoing and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Military Training

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what basic military training is undertaken by *(a)* Army, *(b)* Royal Marine and *(c)* Royal Air Force band personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Marine musicians and buglers are trained in a range of basic military skills, to enable them to fulful their peace and war roles, including medical support. For new entrants, this training is provided concurrently with musical training, and in the first 15-week term of their courses some 80 per cent. of the time is spent on basic military training. The proportion of time devoted to musical training increases in subsequent terms. Musicians and buglers undertake seven or more days military training each year following the completion of initial training.

In common with all other recruits to the Army, Army musicians undergo the 10-week common military syllabus (recruits) course on entry, prior to joining the Royal Military School of Music for the musicians' foundation course. On completion of this, they attend a course for bandsmen medical assistants.

Recruits undergo a seven-week initial training course, mostly in drill, at RAF Swinderby, before joining the RAF School of Music. On completion of musical training, trainees attend a medical training course, three weeks and two days long, to equip them for their role as medical assistants.

Warship Refits

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy concerning competitive tenders for refitting of naval warships.

Mr. Aitken: It remains our policy that, wherever possible, and in the interests of providing overall best value for money, competitive tenders will continue to be invited for that portion of the naval refitting programme not allocated to the two royal dockyards as part of their core programme.

HMS Gloucester

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his officials have discussed details of Devonport's offer to refit HMS Gloucester with *(a)* Babcock Thorn Ltd. or *(b)* other persons or bodies connected with Rosyth naval dockyard.

Mr. Aitken: I can confirm that no officials from my Department have discussed details of Devonport's offer with either Babcock Thorn Limited or other non-MOD bodies connected with Rosyth royal dockyard.

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason the 1990 decision to allocate HMS Gloucester to be refitted at Devonport was changed to a tender process; and for what reason the refit was allocated to Rosyth in 1992.

Mr. Aitken: HMS Gloucester was provisionally planned, in 1990, to be refitted at Devonport, but not formally allocated. For overall policy and value for money reasons, at that time it was decided to compete the refit. In 1992 the refit of HMS Gloucester was allocated to Rosyth in order to balance the naval workload there following the decision not to proceed with the planned refit of HMS Revenge.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the rescue missions flown by SAR helicopters based at *(a)* RAF Chivenor and *(b)* RAF Brawdy since 1986 have been to incidents in (i) Wales, (ii) the Bristol channel and (iii) Devon.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is not held in the format required.

Departmental Housing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give details on the level of demand for, and level of provision of, his Department's housing in Scotland;

(2) if he will give details of the level of demand for, and the level of provision of, married quarters for armed forces personnel stationed in Scotland; and if he will break these figures down for each branch of the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, the Ministry of Defence owned 6,821 housing properties in Scotland of which 5,903 were occupied. A total of 6,519 of these were service married quarters of which 5,702 were occupied, broken down by service as follows:

	Married quarter stock	*Married quarters occupied*
Royal Navy	2,058	1,742
Army	1,566	1,220
Royal Air Force	2,895	2,740
Total	6,519	5,702

In addition 52 service families—10 RN, seven Army and 35 RAF—were being paid an allowance to rent private accommodation because of insufficient quarters at their place of duty. The number of families on waiting lists for quarters in Scotland and accommodated temporarily elsewhere could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The majority of the vacant married quarters owned by MOD were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, 171 surplus married quarters were in the process of being sold.

Three hundred and two properties were MOD civilian houses of which 201 were occupied. Fifty-two vacant properties have since been handed back to Dumbarton district council and the handback of a further tranche of 34 vacant properties is under negotiation. In addition, 42 houses were in the process of being sold, mostly to sitting tenants.

Forces Personnel (Scotland)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of how many armed forces personnel are currently stationed in Scotland; and if he will break these figures down by branch of the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 1 January 1993 the number of armed forces personnel in Scotland were, in each service:

	Number
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	[1]9,998
Army	2,185
Royal Air Force	7,532
TOTAL	19,715

[1] Including sea service personnel docked in Scottish waters.

The figures include all personnel—male and female, officers and other ranks, trained and untrained.

Barracks

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers *(a)* are, and *(b)* can be accommodated in barracks which are curently in use in Scotland; and which barracks these are.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Fifty-eight officers and 966 soldiers of the regular Army are accommodated in barracks currently in use in Scotland. These figures fluctuate daily owing to postings, enlistments and discharges. Barrack accommodation is available for 163 officers and 2,022 soldiers in Edinburgh at Craigiehall, the Castle, Dreghorn and Glencorse; in Inverness; in Fort George; and in the Hebrides at Benbecula and St. Kilda.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how many days per annum barracks not currently used by the Regular Army are used by the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve; which barracks are used by the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve; and if he will give similar information for Royal Navy quarters, Royal Air Force quarters and Royal Marine barracks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Army Trucks

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sources of supply of 4 × 4 Army trucks there are in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We currently purchase 4 × 4 Army trucks from three companies in the United Kingdom. A number of other such companies have the capability to bid for any future orders.

Royal Flight

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many crew, and at what cost, are permanently attached to the royal flight.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two hundred personnel are permanently attached to the Queen's Flight, of which 21 officers crew the aircraft. The flight's personnel costs amounted to £3.776 million in financial year 1991-92.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to seek the establishment of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty before the expiry of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

We have always accepted the long-term goal of a comprehensive test ban to be achieved on a step-by-step basis. The case for extension of the non-proliferation treaty stands irrespective of the state of progress towards a comprehensive test ban.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Leptospira Hardjo

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he will take to eradicate leptospira hardjo infection from the national dairy herd; and what action is being taken to warn dairy farmers and the public about the dangers of this disease.

Mr. Soames: Leptospira hardjo is not a notifiable disease and there are no plans to introduce eradication measures. Vaccination and treatment are effective in protecting herds. The disease represents a potential hazard to those in direct contact with cattle, but is not a risk to the general public. In discussion with veterinary organisations, the Department has produced an advisory document, agreed with the Health and Safety Executive, which contains advice on avoidance and dealing with the disease and which is being published and circulated by the British Cattle Veterinary Association.

High Tides

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department is taking in respect of the high tide levels predicted for March this year.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware that unusually high tides are predicted around some parts of the coast on 10–11 March as a result of a combination of factors, including the closeness of the moon's approach to the earth and the approaching equinox. In itself, this does not pose a flood risk since coastal defences are designed to provide a margin over highest astronomical tide levels. However, much will depend on weather conditions at the time. The Meteorological Office's storm tide warning service, which is funded by this Department, will continue to monitor the situation closely and pass any necessary warnings to the National Rivers Authority. In addition, officials in the Department have written to local flood emergency contacts drawing their attention to the possibility of high tides in early March so as to enable the local services involved to be ready to respond to any flood warnings received.

EMPLOYMENT

Check-off Deductions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the number of consents that would be required under the proposed requirement that employers seek renewed consent to check-off deductions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Green Paper "Industrial relations in the 1990s", published in July 1991, quoted a 1989 survey which suggested that some 7 million employees are currently covered by check-off arrangements. Under provisions contained in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill every employee who wishes to pay union subscriptions through check-off will need to give written consent before deductions are made, and to renew that consent every three years. Where employees are covered by check-off arrangements when these provisions come into effect, employers will have one year during which to seek their written consent that they wish to continue to pay their subscriptions in this way.

Strikes

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost due to strikes in the north-west of England in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is provisionally estimated that in the twelve months to November 1992, the latest period for which data are available, 33,000 working days were lost in the north-west of England. Working days lost in the previous 10 calendar years are given in the following table:

Working days lost in strikes in the North West region

Calendar year	*(thousands)*
1982	989
1983	765
1984	1,381
1985	403
1986	390
1987	374
1988	459
1989	730
1990	722
1991	245

Wages

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms in the east midlands have been found to be paying below minimum rates set by wages councils in each of the last 10 years; and what is the amount of money calculated to be owed to employees in each of these years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Following the merger of the east and west midlands in 1986 to form the midlands division of the wages inspectorate, separate records for the east midlands were no longer kept. The available information is provided in the tables.

Midlands (east)—Wages inspectorate 1982-1985

Year	Number of establishments underpaying	Amount of arrears assessed £
1982	532	160,400
1983	573	167,449
1984	534	184,673
1985	430	142,417

Midlands (east and west)—Wages inspectorate 1986-1991

Year	Number of establishments underpaying	Amount of arrears assessed £
1986	943	302,947
1987	525	199,584
1988	747	190,698
1989	822	160,827
1990	749	197,916
1991	835	179,478

Prince's Trust

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what support the Government are currently giving to the Prince's Trust in its work to help the unemployed.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The work of the Prince's Trust assists both employed and unemployed young people. It is therefore not possible to identify support specifically for the unemployed.

In the current year, the Home Office and DHSS (Northern Ireland) contributed £67,780 to the Prince's Trust volunteers. The Department of Employment contributed £4·375 million to the associated Prince's Youth Business Trust. Further support from public funds has been provided locally through training and enterprise councils.

SCOTLAND

Children's Hospice

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the establishment of a children's hospice in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The statement which my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Local Government made on 2 December 1992 indicated that we accepted there was sufficient evidence of demand to support the establishment of a children's hospice in Scotland. We also believe that, having taken the initiative, the voluntary sector, as is the case with adult hospices, is best placed to develop such a project. While we remain convinced of the advantages of a combined effort by all those interested in taking this matter forward, we also believe that such an effort will be enhanced if there is a clear national focus for the activity. We have therefore decided to support the Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) in its proposal to provide a children's hospice suitably located to meet the demand from all parts of Scotland. I strongly urge all those with an interest in this development to add their efforts to those of CHAS. The Government are showing their support of CHAS in a tangible way by awarding them a grant under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 as a contribution towards their core administrative costs.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 12 February 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Visa Appeals

Mr. Maddox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many ministers of religion have appealed against refusal to grant a visa to enter the United Kingdom in each year since 1987; and how many such appeals were *(a)* upheld and *(b)* refused.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The independent appellate authority does not keep a separate record of the occupation or professional qualifications of individual appellants, and therefore the information requested is not available.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will publish the external advice given to the Lord Chancellor on his proposed changes in legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have received a number of representations since I announced these proposals. The extent to which these are published is a matter for the organisations and individuals concerned.

Judges, etc (Numbers)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the total number of *(a)* Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, *(b)* Lords Justices of Appeal, *(c)* heads of division, *(d)* High Court judges, *(e)* circuit judges, *(f)* recorders, *(g)* assistant recorders, *(h)* stipendiary magistrates and *(i)* full time chairmen; what is the average age of each category; and how many are (i) men, (ii) women, (iii) barristers, (iv) solicitors, (v) black or Asian (vi) ex-independent school and (vii) ex-Oxford or Cambridge, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The available information (as at 1 January 1993) is set out in the table. The figures for black or Asian office holders are believed to be correct, but the formal recording of the ethnic background of applicants for judicial office began only on 1 October 1991, so such information may be incomplete. Aggregated information relating to the school and university background of judges is not readily available. However, the results of a recent special exercise in relation to the university background of the more senior judges are included in the table.

	Number	*Average age (years)*	*Men*	*Women*	*Barrister*	*Solicitor*	*Black/ Asian*	*Oxbridge*
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	10	66·1	10	—	10	—	—	9
Lords Justices	27	63·4	26	1	27	—	—	23
Heads of Division (excludes Lord Chancellor)	4	62	4	—	4	—	—	4
High Court Judges	84	58·6	80	4	84	—	—	68
Circuit Judges	482	58·1	458	24	425	57	2	261
Recorders	764	52·0	727	37	701	63	6	n/a
Assistant Recorders (excludes Assistant Recorders in training)	486	45·4	435	51	407	79	8	n/a
Stipendiary Magistrates	78	53·4	69	9	38	40	1	n/a
Industrial Tribunal Chairmen	61	57·7	50	11	31	30	1	n/a
Value Added Tax Tribunal Chairmen	3	63	3	—	3	—	—	n/a
Social Security Appeal Tribunal Chairmen	25	51·2	19	6	4	21	—	n/a

Magistrates Courts (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the annual cost of magistrates courts in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total cost of magistrates' courts in Wales for 1991-92, the latest date for which information is available, was £16,102,630. This comprises both central and local government provision, and both revenue and capital expenditure.

Legal Aid

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received concerning his new policies on legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I have received a number of such representations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourism

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of "Tourism in the United Kingdom: Realising the Potential" as it applies to his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Those issues in "Tourism in the United Kingdom" which are the responsibility of my Department are being taken forward in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 which came into operation on 1 April 1992 provides enhanced powers for the board and places it in the pivotal role to promote, market and develop Northen Ireland as a tourist destination.

A corporate plan for 1992 to 1995 published by the board develops in detail the guidelines outlined in the 1989-90 strategic review of tourism in Northern Ireland.

The statutory public consultative mechanism for tourism is in operation and the principles of the citizens charter are applied to the board's activities. The board will publish in the spring a report on "sustainable tourism" and open public consultation on the subject of tourism and the environment.

A new selective financial assistance scheme has been introduced for the tourism industry which can assist both the public and private sector to develop and market areas prioritised in the strategic plan which aims to create jobs in tourism and add to the economy taking into account the effects on the environment.

Roads

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what priority is being given to *(a)* upgrading the Larne to Belfast road and *(b)* submitting an application to the European Commission for funding improved transport links between Northern Ireland and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland recognises the importance of the A8 Larne to Belfast road and a £2·5 million scheme to convert a further section of the road to dual carriageway has been included in the current five-year major road works programme.

Under the Northern Ireland transportation programme 1989-93 the European Commission has made available some £120 million European regional development fund grant to support transport infrastructure projects in Northern Ireland. Of this amount £4·4 million is being allocated in respect of a number of projects at the port of Larne from which there are direct shipping services to Ardrossan, Cairnryan and Stranraer. In addition the port of Belfast has been allocated £0·75 million grant towards the provision of facilities to accommodate the Seacat service to Stranraer. Belfast city and Belfast international airports, which provide services to Scottish airports, have both received grant support under the transportation programme for a range of projects.

It is expected that the present transportation programme will continue under the next round of funding post-1993, and will form an important part of the draft community support framework for Northern Ireland to be submitted to Brussels later this year.

Legislation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of all legislation presently applicable in Great Britain which is intended to be applied to Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I keep the legislative needs of Northern Ireland constantly under review in the light of developments in legislation for the rest of the United Kingdom. In the current parliamentary Session planned legislation reflecting those developments includes provision on the subject of access to health records, fire safety, the civil service, social security, environment and safety information, and criminal justice.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many suckler cow premium application forms were processed during each month of 1992; and what was *(a)* the shortest period and *(b)* the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim.

Mr. Hanley: The number of applications processed in 1992 was as follows:

	Number
January	1,602
February	642
March	2,034
April	144
May	119
June	59
July	8
August	11
September	6
October	4
November	3,112
December	7,389

Information regarding the shortest and the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Decommissioning Scheme

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *896*, what checks he will make on whether a fishing vessel applying for decommissioning is owned abroad; if vessels which have been registered overseas at any stop will be eligible for British decommissioning; what steps he intends to take to check where beneficial ownership lies; and if he will make a statement on the application of Community law to payments of decommissioning grants.

Mr. Curry: As I said in my answer of 29 January, the scheme will be confined to fishing vessels registered and licensed in this country. Checks will be made to ensure that this and all other conditions for payment under the scheme are satisfied. The rules of the scheme will be set out in a statutory instrument that the Government will shortly lay before Parliament. These will be in full accordance with Community law.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Of the market tests completed since November 1991, only two have involved the comparison of bids from internal and external service providers. These were:

Headquarters reprographic services;
Headquarters photographic services.

The result of both market tests was the maintenance of the in-house provision.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The following firms of consultants have been used by the Department as part of its market testing programme since November 1991:

Amtec Consulting;
Coopers and Lybrand;
Gould Consultants;
Hoskyns Group;
Leopold Joseph and Sons Ltd.

These private sector consultancies together with self-employed purchasing specialists used by the Department have helped to

identify suitable candidates for market testing;
evaluate services currently provided;
provide training in market testing;
support in-house bids;
conduct the competition phase of market testing.

The total cost of these services to date is £80,926.

Beef and Butter

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from persons in the Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency about eligibility for free EC beef and butter; and what response he has made.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has received a petition on behalf of the Bentilee Volunteers, Stoke-on-Trent seeking the inclusion of people in receipt of state pension, long-term invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit as eligible groups for the receipt of food under the EC surplus food scheme. The inclusion of such groups would reduce per capita allocations to 0·21 kg of butter and 0·18 kg of beef per year. To distribute such amounts would be impracticable and would be of little benefit.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will extend the rules for eligibility for persons to whom designated organisations may distribute free butter and beef to include pensioners.

Mr. Curry: Those pensioners in receipt of income support or family credit or disability working allowance or who are homeless and destitute or living in welfare hostels are eligible for free food. To extend the scheme to all pensioners would reduce per capita annual allocations in the United Kingdom to approximately 0·24 kg of butter and 0·20 kg of beef per year. To distribute such amounts would be impracticable and would be of little benefit.

Oil Spillages

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what bio-chemical studies are undertaken of *(a)* beaches contaminated by oil spillages and *(b)* beaches adjacent to areas affected by oil spillages.

Mr. Curry: The need for studies following oil spillages is considered on a case by case basis.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on what basis he assesses the toxicity to marine life of dispersants used in the marine environment to disperse oil from oil spillages;

(2) on which species toxicity tests were conducted for the dispersants used to disperse oil from the MV Braer.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 20 January at column *289*. Full details of the toxicity testing procedures for oil dispersants are contained in the Fisheries Research Technical Report No. 39 which is available in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Music

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest figure for the annual running cost of each of the service schools of music, broken down into principal categories of expenditure; what is the annual intake of each of the service schools of music; and what is the *(a)* civilian and *(b)* service teaching complement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The net cash budget for the Royal Marines School of Music in 1992-93 is £6,693,000, of which £4,598,000 is for pay and allowances. This includes the cost of the 65 personnel of the Royal Marines band located at the school. The 1992 intake of trainees was 35 musicians and six buglers. The staff of the school comprises 47 personnel. Of these, 10 service personnel provide military training, and 23 service and 14 part-time civilian personnel carry out musical training.

The forecast running costs for the Royal Military School of Music in 1992-93 are £1,730,000, which will be offset by estimated receipts of £192,000. Personnel costs account for £1,173,000. The annual intake capacity for initial musical training is 140, including 30 foreign and Commonwealth personnel. The teaching staff comprises six military and 11 civilian full-time instructors and 13 part-time civilian tutors.

The RAF school of music is collocated with headquarters RAF music services and the two units' operating costs are not recorded separately. In the most recent year for which records are available (1991-92) the combined operating costs were £3,947,000. The 1992 intake of trainees was 14 new entrants, plus 19 for advanced training. The teaching complement comprises one officer, four non-commissioned officers and one civilian.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current established strength of each type of band in each of the services; and in each case what are the ranks of the band members, the number of each type of instrument established and the annual running cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The available information which is not necessarily in the same format for each service, is as follows:

Royal Marine Bands

The Royal Marines School of Music, Deal and the RM Bands at CINCFLEET and CINCHAVHOME each has a complement comprising:

Deal

1 Lieutenant Colonel (Special Duty Band)
1 Lieutenant (Special Duty Band)
2 Warrant Officer 2
3 Colour Sergeants
6 Sergeants

11 Corporals
43 Musicians/Buglers

CINCFLEET
1 Captain (Special Duty Band)
2 Warrant Officer 2
3 Colour Sergeants
6 Sergeants
11 Corporals
43 Musicians/Buglers

CINCNAVHOME
1 Captain (Special Duty Band)
1 Warrant Officer 1
4 Colour Sergeants
6 Sergeants
11 Corporals
43 Musicians/Buglers

Instrumentation for all three above is:
1 Bandmaster
2 Flute/Saxophone
2 Oboes
2 Bassoons
2 Solo Clarinets
6 Clarinet/Violin
4 Clarinet/Viola
4 Saxophone/Violin
4 Horns
2 Solo Cornets
5 Cornet/Violin
2 Cornet Piano
5 Trombones
3 Euphonium/Cello
3 Basses
3 Percussion
1 Drum Major
1 Bugle Major
13 Bugler/Drummer

The Royal Marine Bands at Flag Officer Plymouth, Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland (FOSNI) and Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM) each have 42 personnel, comprising:

FO Plymouth
1 Captain (Special Duty Band)
1 Warrant Officer 2
1 Colour Sergeant
6 Sergeants
6 Corporals
27 Musicians/Buglers

FOSNI
1 Captain (Special Duty Band)
1 Warrant Officer 2
1 Colour Sergeant
6 Sergeants
6 Corporals
27 Musicians/Buglers

CTCRM
1 Lieutenant (Special Duty Band)
1 Warrant Officer 2
2 Colour Sergeant
5 Sergeants
9 Corporals
24 Musicians/Buglers

Instrumentation for all three above is:
1 Bandmaster
1 Flute
1 Oboe
1 Bassoon
1 Solo Clarinet
3 Clarinet/Violin
2 Clarinet/Viola
2 Saxophone/Violin
2 Horn
1 Solo Cornet
3 Cornet/Violin
1 Cornet Piano
3 Trombones
1 Euphonium/Cello
2 Basses
1 Percussion
1 Drum Major
7 Bugler/Drummer

The annual running cost budget for the Royal Marine School of Music at Deal in 1992-93 is £6,693,000. Figures are not readily available for the individual Royal Marine Bands.

Army Bands

The strength of Army bands varies on the type of band, there are currently 63 bands in the Army. The establishment and rank of Army band members varies according to the type of band.

Arm/Type of Band
RAC Regimental/Infantry Regiment
1 Warrant Officer 1
1 Warrant Officer 2
1 Staff Sergeant
2 Sergeants
4 Corporals
4 Lance Corporals
9 Privates

Infantry Large
1 Warrant Officer 1
1 Warrant Officer 2
2 Staff Sergeant
4 Sergeants
6 Corporals
6 Lance Corporals
14 Privates

H Cav Mounted Minor Staff
1 Major
2 Warrant Officer 2
2 Staff Sergeant
4 Sergeants
6 Corporals
6 Lance Corporals
14 Privates

Minor Staff
1 Major
1 Warrant Officer 2
2 Staff Sergeant
4 Sergeants
6 Corporals
6 Lance Corporals
14 Privates

Foot Guards Major Staff
1 Major
2 Warrant Officer 2
3 Staff Sergeant
6 Sergeants
9 Corporals
8 Lance Corporals
20 Privates

Major Staff
1 Major
2 Warrant Officer 2
3 Staff Sergeant
6 Sergeants
8 Corporals
8 Lance Corporals
20 Privates

AGC Minor Staff
1 Major
1 Warrant Officer 2
2 Staff Sergeant
4 Sergeants
6 Corporals

6 Lance Corporals
15 Privates

Gurkha Major Staff
1 Major
2 Captains
2 Warrant Officer 2
2 Staff Sergeant
3 Sergeants
8 Corporals
8 Lance Corporals
23 Privates

The information on the number of instruments in Army bands is not held centrally, nor are the annual running costs for each type of band.

RAF Bands
Current Strengths
Central Band— 86 (Two Bands and Salon Orchestra)
Area Bands (4)—168 (42 Musicians in each)

Central Band (includes Salon Orchestra):
1 Director of Music (Sqn Ldr)
1 Assistant Director of Music (Flt Lt)
1 Flight Serrgeant
16 Chief Technicians
18 Sergeants
25 Corporals
19 Junior Technicians
1 Senior Aircraftsman
2 Leading Aircraftsmen

Area bands (×4)
1 Director of Music (1 Sqn Ldr, 3 Flt Lts)
1 Warrant Officer
1 Flight Sergeant
3 Chief Technicians
6 Sergeants
12 Corporals
10 Junior Technicians
6 Senior Aircraftsmen
2 Leading Aircraftsmen

The number of instrumentalists per band is:

Instrument	*Central Band*	*Area Bands (×4)*
Flute/Piccolo	4	2
Oboe	2	2
Clarinet	18	9
Saxophone	6	3
Bassoon	4	2
Horn	8	4
Cornet	12	6
Trombone	8	5
Euphonium	2	2
Tuba	6	3
Percussion/Timpani	6	2
Violins	3	—
Viola	1	—
Cello	1	—
String Bass	1	—
Piano	1	—

The numbers above relate to the instruments established in each Band. Most musicians are accomplished players of more than one instrument.

The annual running costs of the RAF Music Services, including Headquarters costs and the RAF School of Music, based on FY 91/92 rates are as follows:

	£
Headquarters Music Services and United Kingdom Bands	3,947,000
Royal Air Force Germany Band	792,000

The costs include staff costs, LOA, travel and subsistence and other miscellaneous costs, eg. quartering costs.

Leyland DAF

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many DROPS vehicles are still outstanding from the order placed by his Department with Leyland DAF company.

Mr. Aitken: On 5 February 1993, 349 DROPS vehicles were still outstanding from the order placed with Leyland DAF.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect of Leyland DAF company being placed in receivership on the British Army.

Mr. Aitken: A preliminary assessment has been made but it is not possible to be definitive until the receiver has determined the company's future.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many 4-tonne trucks are outstanding from the order placed by the British Army with the Leyland DAF company.

Mr. Aitken: On 5 February 1993, 2,080 4-tonne trucks were outstanding from the order placed with Leyland DAF.

Consultants

86. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is open to individual management areas within the Department to employ consultants as necessary, within the limits of their budgets. Information on these contracts and their value is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Scientists

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to assist the redeployment in civil research and development of scientists losing their jobs because of closure of defence research establishments.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to my hon. Friend.

Letter from J. Chisholm to Mr. Peter Temple-Morris dated 12 February 1993:

In today's written answer the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying directly to your question regarding the steps being taken to assist the redeployment in civil research and development of scientists losing their jobs because of closure of defence research establishments.

While it is true that the DRA's rationalisation programme will result in some 2,000 job losses, we have been able so far to draw our plans to take those wholly in the support areas. Our aim is to retain and develop our front line scientific capability.

I hope you will find this information useful.

Military Hospitals

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he plans for the status and activities of the seven military hospitals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) on 4 February *Official Report*, column *267*.

Royal Yacht

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *37*, if he will list the movements and locations of the royal yacht Britannia during the Falklands' conflict; and what press releases or press advice were issued about its role during the conflict.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the period in question, HMY Britannia left her home port of Portsmouth to visit St. Nazaire between 22 and 27 April 1982, and Dover between 7 and 11 June 1982, in support of official royal engagements. It is not possible to provide the rest of the information requested without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and where his Department first announced that the royal yacht Britannia was no longer considered necessary as a possible hospital ship.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence concluded during late 1992 that there was no longer a requirement for Britannia to fulfil the war role of a hospital ship. We have confirmed this decision in response to specific inquiries, the first instance being by my Department's press office on 20 January 1993.

Royal Flights

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many nights in 1992 crew members of royal flights were found accommodation overseas; what was the cost; and what were the locations involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Whenever practical, aircraft of the Queen's Flight which have carried out tasks to overseas destinations recover to the United Kingdom, thus enabling them to undertake other tasks. When this is not practical, crew members are accommodated in hotels in accordance with the standard regulations which apply to all air transport crews. In 1992, 266 nights were spent away from RAF Benson as a result of flights in the United Kingdom or overseas. The estimate for travel and subsistence for financial year 1992-93 is some £264,000 which covers nights spent away in both the United Kingdom and overseas. Details of individual occurrences could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Winnick: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what policies are pursued to ensure that people from the ethnic minorities are recruited as Officers of the House.

Mr. Beith: In recruiting all staff to the House of Commons service, it is the Commission's policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunities for employment and advancement on the basis of their ability, qualifications and fitness for the work and that there shall be no discrimination on any other grounds. The Commission has appointed an equal opportunities officer whose responsibility it is to monitor the Commission's policy of equal opportunity and to provide relevant advice to management and staff of the House.

Members of selection boards are provided with written guidance as to the conduct of interviews. This makes it clear that there must be no discrimination on grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins, sex or marital status.

The Commission monitors its policy on racial equality by asking candidates to complete a questionnaire indicating their ethnic origin. This is voluntary and it is explained in the accompanying literature that the ethnic information is confidential to the equal opportunities officer and is not available to those involved in the selection process.

EDUCATION

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if schools are permitted to charge the Office for Standards in Education for the time and materials used in providing the essential information and statistics which independent inspectors need to make their inspections.

Mr. Forth: No. The information which registered inspectors will need to carry out an inspection will be readily available in all schools.

Open University

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many people have been enrolled in Open university courses for each year since 1979;

(2) how many Open university degrees have been awarded in each year since 1979.

Mr. Boswell: In 1979-80 there were 70,000 enrolments and 5,800 degrees awarded. Details of Open university enrolment and degrees awarded for later years up to 1990-91 are contained in statistical bulletin 8/92, copies of which are available in the Library.

Books and Magazines (VAT)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effect of a standard rate of VAT on books and magazines on the reading patterns of primary and secondary school children.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment. Books and magazines are zero rated for VAT.

Reading

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to encourage reading among young people.

Mr. Forth: This is already an essential element of our policy. The current review of national curriculum English,

on which the National Curriculum Council is expected to report soon, has been addressing the need to ensure that pupils are encouraged to develop the habit of reading widely, and are introduced to the richness of great literature.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of students with special educational needs who gained entry to university and polytechnics for each year since 1982.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of children with statements of special educational needs in (i) primary schools, (ii) middle schools, (iii) secondary schools and (iv) special schools in each local education authority area.

Mr. Forth: Information about pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained middle, secondary and special schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992 is shown in the table. The numbers of pupils with statements in maintained primary schools in 1992 are not available. In January 1991, the latest year for which reliable figures are available, there were over 30,000 pupils with statements in maintained primary schools.

LEA	*Middle*		*Seconday*		*Special*	
	Pupils with statements		*Pupils with statements*		*Pupils with statements*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
City						
Camden	—	—	137	1·3	277	74·5
Greenwich	—	—	229	1·6	676	91·1
Hackney	—	—	93	1·2	613	94·2
Hammersmith	—	—	72	1·2	392	89·9
Islington	—	—	86	1·1	323	96·4
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	34	0·9	87	100·0
Lambeth	—	—	87	1·4	711	84·3
Lewisham	—	—	127	1·2	422	90·6
Southwark	—	—	95	1·0	371	75·6
Tower Hamlets	—	—	89	0·8	403	78·9
Wandsworth	—	—	112	1·2	663	92·7
Westminster	—	—	81	1·1	158	94·0
Barking	—	—	59	0·6	150	93·2
Barnet	—	—	113	0·6	291	79·7
Bexley	—	—	185	1·3	260	95·6
Brent	—	—	94	0·8	256	72·5
Bromley	—	—	121	0·8	302	84·4
Croydon	—	—	164	1·0	505	98·1
Ealing	69	1·0	87	0·8	428	93·2
Enfield	—	—	26	0·2	128	29·8
Haringey	—	—	42	0·5	242	70·8
Harrow	70	1·3	98	1·2	173	78·6
Havering	—	—	159	1·0	214	95·1
Hillingdon	—	—	85	0·6	313	77·9
Hounslow	—	—	302	2·3	384	98·2
Kingston on Thames	—	—	98	1·3	228	98·7
Merton	82	1·3	89	1·4	235	94·4
Newham	—	—	159	1·2	271	79·2
Redbridge	—	—	63	0·4	367	96·1
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	124	1·7	149	100·0
Sutton	—	—	90	0·8	274	88·1
Waltham Forest	—	—	89	0·7	689	88·7
Birmingham	16	0·5	418	0·6	2,325	77·1
Coventry	—	—	79	0·4	777	94·8
Dudley	—	—	112	0·6	569	99·6
Sandwell	—	—	44	0·2	619	75·6
Solihull	—	—	170	1·2	262	94·6
Walsall	—	—	112	0·6	567	98·6
Wolvehampton	—	—	167	1·1	499	99·6
Knowsley	—	—	151	1·7	501	80·2
Liverpool	—	—	69	0·2	1,487	93·8
St. Helens	—	—	131	1·1	448	95·3
Sefton	—	—	210	1·1	387	90·4
Wirral	—	—	251	1·2	638	82·6
Bolton	—	—	114	0·7	376	77·8
Bury	—	—	274	2·6	278	93·3
Manchester	—	—	134	0·6	646	34·9
Oldham	—	—	229	1·4	444	74·9
Rochdale	—	—	137	1·1	369	73·4
Salford	—	—	75	0·6	298	66·1
Stockport	—	—	315	1·7	405	90·4
Tameside	—	—	173	1·2	340	80·6
Trafford	—	—	168	1·5	343	86·2
Wigan	—	—	189	0·9	461	53·1
Barnsley	—	—	109	0·9	158	100·0
Doncaster	45	0·5	128	0·8	689	97·0

LEA	Middle Pupils with statements Number	Middle Pupils with statements Percentage	Seconday Pupils with statements Number	Seconday Pupils with statements Percentage	Special Pupils with statements Number	Special Pupils with statements Percentage
Rotherham	—	—	83	0·5	623	99·2
Sheffield	94	1·3	316	1·3	819	93·3
Bradford	167	0·7	143	0·7	707	73·5
Calderdale	—	—	85	0·7	179	89·9
Kirklees	47	1·3	249	1·1	643	99·7
Leeds	394	2·3	614	1·8	996	97·7
Wakefield	39	0·5	89	0·6	569	89·6
Gateshead	—	—	68	0·6	328	90·1
Newcastle upon Tyne	46	1·4	94	0·7	675	85·2
North Tyneside	82	1·5	100	1·1	419	95·4
South Tyneside	—	—	117	1·3	346	100·0
Sunderland	—	—	116	0·6	688	99·0
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	—	—	553	1·0	1,917	92·8
Bedfordshire	201	1·2	230	0·8	1,032	90·3
Berkshire	102	2·0	262	0·6	1,572	95·3
Buckinghamshire	339	2·2	634	1·8	1,452	91·8
Cambridgeshire	1	0·6	489	1·2	711	72·3
Cheshire	—	—	1,192	1·9	1,379	91·6
Cleveland	—	—	496	1·3	1,266	89·5
Cornwall	—	—	784	2·7	285	95·6
Cumbria	—	—	654	2·1	287	93·8
Derbyshire	—	—	1,486	2·6	1,062	78·3
Devon	131	3·6	1,300	2·3	1,677	93·8
Dorset	79	0·7	413	1·3	1,095	99·2
Durham	—	—	258	0·7	955	89·4
East Sussex	—	—	117	0·3	1,273	93·2
Essex	—	—	949	1·0	2,317	88·8
Gloucestershire	—	—	305	1·0	848	64·2
Hampshire	342	1·6	1,170	1·4	2,839	77·0
Hereford and Worcester	25	0·2	175	0·5	787	62·5
Hertfordshire	59	1·9	718	1·1	1,894	99·1
Humberside	—	—	452	0·8	1,161	93·6
Isle of Wight	45	0·8	36	0·7	214	84·9
Kent	25	0·6	918	1·0	3,030	90·6
Lancashire	—	—	1,599	1·9	2,891	88·7
Leicestershire	91	1·7	570	1·0	1,076	97·5
Lincolnshire	—	—	713	2·0	1,025	89·5
Norfolk	446	2·7	862	2·1	768	85·7
North Yorkshire	2	0·5	531	1·2	951	94·4
Northamptonshire	48	0·5	287	0·8	991	85·6
Northumberland	163	1·1	118	0·9	485	99·4
Nottinghamshire	8	0·3	122	0·2	1,622	94·4
Oxfordshire	11	0·3	116	0·4	645	76·9
Shropshire	—	—	831	3·1	485	88·2
Somerset	75	1·7	385	1·6	561	92·1
Staffordshire	55	0·8	350	0·6	1,884	84·8
Suffolk	511	3·2	871	2·8	717	90·5
Surrey	321	2·3	498	1·2	1,781	99·9
Warwickshire	95	0·7	151	0·6	1,019	78·3
West Sussex	87	0·9	239	0·6	766	62·1
Wiltshire	78	6·3	1,182	3·7	637	84·6
England	4,791	1·4	32,538	1·2	79,190	86·0

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of pre-school and nursery school children with statements of special educational needs in each local education authority area.

Mr. Forth: The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained nursery schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992 is shown in the table. Information about pre-school children who have statements is not available.

Pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained nursery schools in England: January 1992

LEA	Number of pupils
City	0
Camden	1
Greenwich	0
Hackney	1
Hammersmith	1
Islington	1
Kensington and Chelsea	1
Lambeth	0
Lewisham	0
Southwark	1
Tower Hamlets	1
Wandsworth	1
Westminster	4
Barking	0
Barnet	1
Bexley	2
Brent	0
Bromley	0
Croydon	1
Ealing	0

LEA	Number of pupils
Enfield	0
Haringey	1
Harrow	0
Havering	0
Hounslow	0
Kingston upon Thames	12
Merton	0
Newham	6
Redbridge	0
Richmond upon Thames	0
Sutton	0
Waltham Forest	0
Birmingham	1
Coventry	0
Dudley	0
Sandwell	0
Solihull	0
Walsall	1
Wolverhampton	2
Knowsley	0
Liverpool	1
St. Helens	0
Sefton	1
Wirral	2
Bolton	3
Bury	0
Manchester	0
Oldham	0
Rochdale	2
Salford	0
Stockport	8
Tameside	0
Trafford	0
Wigan	0
Barnsley	1
Doncaster	0
Rotherham	3
Sheffield	1
Bradford	0
Calderdale	0
Kirklees	8
Leeds	0
Wakefield	1
Gateshead	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	3
North Tyneside	1
South Tyneside	1
Sunderland	2
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	5
Bedfordshire	3
Berkshire	30
Buckinghamshire	21
Cambridgeshire	6
Cheshire	6
Cleveland	0
Cornwall	2
Cumbria	5
Derbyshire	5
Devon	1
Dorset	0
Durham	51
East Sussex	0
Essex	0
Gloucestershire	0
Hampshire	0
Hereford and Worcester	0
Hertfordshire	9
Humberside	3
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	0
Lancashire	18
Leicestershire	1
Lincolnshire	8
Norfolk	2
North Yorkshire	7
Northamptonshire	2
Northumberland	1
Nottinghamshire	1
Oxfordshire	1
Shropshire	0
Somerset	0
Staffordshire	7
Suffolk	0
Surrey	23
Warwickshire	3
West Sussex	0
Wiltshire	0
England	298

National Library for the Handicapped Child

105. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to grant governmental funding to the national library for the handicapped child.

Mr. Forth: We have no plans to fund the national library for the handicapped child.

Higher Education Institutions

156. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *744*, if he will conduct a survey of higher education institutions on the advantages of a single organisation fowarding tuition fees to them.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to undertake such a survey.

157. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *744*, if he will bring forward proposals that local authorities forwarding tuition fees to higher education institutions after the specified date should add a payment for interest.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

158. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on representations he has received from and on behalf of higher education institutions in respect of late payment of the tuition fees from his Department via local authorities.

Mr. Boswell: Representations have recently been received from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and from two individual institutions.

Professors of General Practice

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many professors of general practice there are in each medical school in England.

Mr. Boswell: I have been asked to reply.
This information is not collected centrally.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid Loans

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the levels of reduction in debt service achieved by countries that have benefited from the relief of old aid loans granted by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1979 we have written off over £450 million, through retrospective terms adjustment, of aid loans to the poorest countries. In the period 1979-91 this, together with the rescheduling of other aid loans, translated into a £410 million reduction in debt service for the countries concerned.

We recently announced that we would also write off £56 million of aid loans to Zambia from 1 April 1993, provided their economic reform programme stays on track. In addition, we agreed to provide India with local cost aid for projects to offset repayments of past aid loans amounting to £560 million. Thus, the Government have, overall, relieved the burden of aid loans to developing countries by about £1 billion. Twenty-four countries have benefited from these measures.

Forests

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific measures were undertaken to ensure that aid is targeted to the poorest people in areas where the forests are facing the severest threats.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain's aid in all sectors is targeted predominantly to the poorest countries and our forestry programmes are focused on countries, and parts of countries, where forestry and deforestation are important issues such as in Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kenya, Ghana and Malawi. Some relatively better off countries such as Brazil and Malaysia also receive our forestry aid because of the particular problems they face in this sector.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those logging activities recognised by the Overseas Development Administration as promoting sustainable forest use for the benefit of traditional and other forest dwellers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The logging activities most likely to promote sustainable forest use for the benefit of forest dwellers are those in which they participate directly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Work on market testing is combined with other duties and it is not possible to give a figure for the number of people assigned to the market testing programme. We broadly estimate that the cost of the programme to date is £155,000. This includes the cost of support for the in-house teams and other consultancy work. It does not include the cost of the in-house teams themselves.

Tax Welfare

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review tax welfare alongside the review of spending Departments.

Mr. Dorrell: The tax system is reviewed each year in the run-up to the Budget.

Disabled Employees

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of employees in his Department is registered disabled.

Sir John Cope: On 1 January 1993, the latest date for which this information is available, 0·9 per cent. of Treasury staff were registered disabled. The Department employs a number of people with disabilities who have chosen not to register as disabled.

Departmental Expenditure

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what common procedures are being used by Government departments in relation to *(a)* the 1993 public expenditure survey, *(b)* plans for reductions in years beyond 1993-94 and *(c)* plans for 1996-97; what figure is being used to calculate reductions in 1996-97 from the 1995-96 baseline; and what information he has on the effect on real terms of reductions of (i) 2½ per cent. and (ii) 5 per cent. below the 1993-94 baseline for each Department.

Mr. Portillo: Procedures for the 1993 public expenditure survey are currently under discussion. No decisions have been taken.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the publishing industry about the possible imposition of VAT on reading matter.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend has received many representations on Budget-related matters. As is usual, I cannot anticipate his Budget statement.

Monarch (Taxation)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the right hon. Member for Swansea, West can expect a reply to his letter of 12 January, concerning taxation of the monarch.

Mr. Lamont: I shall be replying to the right hon. Member's letter of 12 January very shortly.

Output Statistics

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average output per head for each county in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 February 1993]:* The latest available information, relating to gross domestic product by county for 1987 and 1989, was published in the December 1991 issue of "Economic Trends". Estimates for Scottish regions have recently been revised, reflecting improved methodology, and these are as follows.

Gross domestic product at factor cost
Scottish regions

£ per head

Region	*1987*	*1989*
Borders	5,271	1
Central	5,465	790
Dumfries and Galloway	5,384	6,486
Fife	5,334	6,228
Grampian	7,248	8,966
Highlands and Islands	5,143	5,934
Lothian	6,844	8,190
Strathclyde	5,371	6,536
Tayside	5,465	6,593

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has used consultants PE International and Price Waterhouse in its market testing programme at a cost of £12,800. The legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Serious Fraud Office have not used any firm of consultants.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Refugee Children

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what immigration status is granted to unaccompanied children from the former Yugoslavia; and what assessment he has made of the effect of their families of their immigration status.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Applications are considered individually and decisions take account of all relevant circumstances.

Devon and Cornwall

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were employed by the Devon and Cornwall police force in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is set out in the table:

Devon and Cornwall constabulary
Strength as at 31 December

Year	*Strength*
1979	2,639
1980	2,721
1981	2,694
1982	2,729
1983	2,724
1984	2,745
1985	2,747
1986	2,753
1987	2,797
1988	2,812
1989	2,830
1990	2,867
1991	2,876
[1]1992	2,909

[1]November.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notifiable criminal offences took place in Devon and Cornwall in each year since 1979; and if he will publish separate figures for *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* sexual offences, *(c)* robbery, *(d)* burglary, *(e)* theft and handling of stolen goods, *(f)* fraud and forgery *(g)* criminal damage and *(h)* other offences.

Mr. Jack: Statistics for 1979 are published in Table 32 of the 1979 volume of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Statistics for 1980 are published in table 3.1 of the "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Volume 3". Figures for 1981-90 are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—table 2.4 in the 1983 volume and table 2.5 in the remaining volumes—copies of all these publications are available in the Library. Information for 1991 is published in the table. Figures for 1992 are not year available.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in Devon and Cornwall
Number of offences

	1991
Total	108,208
Violence against the person	3,742
Sexual offences	806
Robbery	295
Burglary	25,708
Theft and handling of stolen goods	57,965
Fraud and forgery	4,175
Criminal damage	14,975
Other offences	542

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has introduced to reduce crime in the south-west.

Mr. Jack: The Devon and Cornwall constabulary has resources to maintain a strong and effective police service. At the end of November 1992 the force strength was 2,909 police officers and 1,400 civilians. This represents an increase in strength of 242 police officers and 292 civilians since 1979. We have also encouraged the development of effective crime prevention programmes. Nine crime prevention panels are in operation in the area and there are 3,378 neighbourhood watch schemes covering over 90,000 households. Other watch schemes have been introduced with the participation of the local community including boat watch, farm watch, community and business watch. The police have also reported a 3 per cent. decrease in the theft of vehicles of 1992 which is likely to be partly attributable to national and local car crime prevention campaigns. In addition an alcohol byelaw, which prohibits

the consumption of alcohol in certain public places in an effort to reduce disorder and anti-social behaviour, was confirmed in Restormel in 1991 following Home Office approval.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested by the Metropolitan police in *(a)* the last six months of 1991 and *(b)* the last six months of 1992; and how many arrested in each period were subsequently (i) charged, (ii) cautioned and (iii) had no action taken against them.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Faithfull

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his consideration of an application to the Court of Appeal to review the conviction of Mr. Peter Faithfull, HMP Sudbury.

Mr. Jack: Following a number of representations on Mr. Faithfull's behalf, we are making enquiries into his case. I can not at present say when my right hon. and learned Friend will be in a position to decide whether a reference to the Court of Appeal would be justified.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received a report from the Viscount Colville of Culross QC on the operation in 1992 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received such a report from Viscount Colville and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in police cells as a remand prisoner in England and Wales as of 1 February.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 1 February there were 159 male prisoners in police cells in England and Wales of whom 132 were unconvicted. There were no women in police cells. The most up to date information, however, is for 11 February when there were 53 male prisoners in police cells, of whom 39 were unconvicted.

Brain Dead Patients

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring forward legislation to amend the law concerning brain dead persons on life support systems.

Mr. Jack: There are no plans to amend the law in this area.

Primates (Experiments)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department further to his answer to the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) of 2 December 1992, *Official Report)* column *215*, about Shamrock Farms, what changes he proposes in terms of both numbers of staff and operational procedures in the Home Office inspectorate to prevent any repetition.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, col. *101*. There are no plans to alter the size of the inspectorate or its operating procedures.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department many motorists were prosecuted for illegally driving in a bus lane in the Greater London area in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not separately identified in the statistics collected centrally.

Market Testing Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since November 1991, the Home Office has awarded contracts to the value of £239,000 for consultancies as part of the market testing programme.

The following companies have been used by candidate areas to advise them on how best to respond to the market testing initiative, viz.

Price Waterhouse
Shreeveport
Corporate Renewal Associates
PA Consulting Group
Worthy Associates

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte were also employed to assist the Department in developing its market testing programme.

Correspondence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his Department's target figures for days taken to reply to correspondence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: From 1 October 1992, the targets for answering ministerial correspondence are

35 calendar days (equivalent to 25 working days) for immigration and nationality department and prison service cases; and

21 calendar days (equivalent to 15 working days) for correspondence on all other subjects.

Prisoner Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and how many women were sent to prison *(a)* on remand and *(b)* on sentence in each month of 1992 and in January 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 February 1993]*: The available information is given in the table. Data for September 1992 to January 1993 are not yet available.

Receptions into Prison service establishments in England and Wales by Sex and Type of Custody: January—August 1992[1]

Month	Males			Females		
	Remand[2]	Sentenced		Remand[2]	Sentenced	
		Fine Defaulters	Others		Fine Defaulters	Others
January	4,700	2,000	4,500	210	110	230
February	4,200	1,700	4,600	210	80	210
March	4,200	1,400	5,000	210	100	210
April	4,200	1,300	4,200	210	90	160
May	4,200	1,300	3,900	210	80	190
June	4,200	1,700	4,400	200	80	170
July	4,400	1,600	4,900	220	80	230
August	4,000	1,600	3,800	190	80	170

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 100 for males and the nearest 10 for females.
[2] Untried only; excludes prisoners first received as convicted but unsentenced.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the sentenced and *(b)* remand gaol population for England and Wales for each month in 1992 and in January 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 February 1993]*: The available information is given in the table.

Prison population by type of custody: England and Wales—January 1992 to January 1993

Month-date	Held in prison service establishments			Held in police cells			Total population in custody
	Remand[1]	Sentenced	Total[2]	Remand[1]	Sentenced	Total	
1992							
31 January	9,901	35,098	45,319	760	487	1,247	46,566
29 February	9,765	35,896	45,964	982	644	1,626	47,590
31 March	9,461	36,086	45,864	1,217	665	1,882	47,746
30 April	9,510	36,141	46,022	1,136	580	1,716	47,738
31 May	9,550	35,495	45,390	744	562	1,306	46,696
30 June	9,559	35,564	45,486	845	501	1,346	46,832
31 July	9,248	36,187	45,765	694	416	1,110	46,875
31 August	9,403	35,682	45,378	725	247	972	46,350
30 September	9,455	35,339	45,020	565	250	815	45,835
31 October	9,163	33,933	43,377	442	86	528	43,905
30 November	9,200	33,236	42,708	259	97	356	43,064
31 December	8,272	31,785	40,328	218	60	278	40,606
1993							
31 January[3]	9,200	31,800	41,346	152	7	159	41,505

[1] Untried and convicted but sentenced.
[2] Includes non-criminal prisoners.
[3] January 1993 totals are provisional; the remand only sentenced figures have been estimated and are shown to the nearest 100.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) when he will issue guidance to Departments on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1988 to market testing;

(2) what proposals he has to issue guidance to the private sector, or make available on request to the private sector, the General Guidance: Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1988 and a document regarding the detailed implications if the regulations apply; and if he will make a statement:

(3) what guidance he proposes on whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1988 will apply subsequent to market testing, where a contractor employs most of the former staff but not the pre-existing premises or equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Attorney-General made a full statement on 21 January to the Standing Committee on the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill which set out clearly the position on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

I am considering what further guidance might be helpful.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for the funding of legal advice for tenderers for departmental service provision contracting out under the market-testing procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Potential tenderers must make their own arrangements for seeking and paying for any necessary legal advice. They can reflect these and all other relevant costs in their bid proposals.

Milking and Mastitis Centre, Berkshire

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the names of the companies that have given grants to the milking and mastitis centre in Compton, Berkshire.

Mr. Waldegrave: Between 1985 and 1992 the milking and mastitis centre was in receipt of funds from the Milk Marketing Board. The centre has recently entered into a contract with a commercial company, under which the company is funding work to the value of some £140,000 over a period of three years. It is one of the terms of the contract that the identity of the company should be treated as commercial-in-confidence information.

Research Funding

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the total cost of the alpha-rated research projects which were refused by each research council in the financial year 1991-92; and how much money was spent by each research council on alpha-rated projects in that financial year;

(2) what proportion of research projects in fundamental science and technology from university departments graded alpha has been rejected in each year since 1981;

(3) what is the proportion of fundamental science and technology projects graded alpha and rejected which involved expenditure of less than £250,000.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the financial year 1991-92, the Agriculture and Food Research Council (AFRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) refused funding for alpha-rated research projects worth £13 million, £22·8 million and £10·2 million respectively, and spent £21·7 million, £7·8 million, and £9 million on alpha-rated projects, respectively.

In the academic year 1991-92, the Medical Research Council (MRC), and the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) refused funding for alpha-rated research projects worth £45 million and £151·8 million respectively, and spent £26 million and £105·6 million on alpha-rated projects, respectively. Figures for the financial year, for these research councils are not available.

The proportion of alpha-rated research projects rejected by each research council is shown in the table:

Council	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
AFRC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	53	27	16	22	45	27
ESRC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	22	46	40	56	56
MRC[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	36	19	45	53	51	57
NERC	49	25	61	48	63	47	48	13	37	39	43
SERC	25	22	22	19	21	40	35	38	46	59	52

[1] Figures for the MRC are for Project Grants only.

Figures which show the proportion of rejected alpha-rated research projects which involved expenditure of less than £250,000 in 1991-92 are as follows: 100 per cent. of the AFRC's, ESRC's, MRC's and NERC's awards in 1991-92 were less than £250,000. 87 per cent. of rejected alpha-rated grant applications to SERC involved expenditure of less than £250,000.

WALES

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department's efficiency unit is responsible for managing its market testing programme and it has the equivalent of approximately six full-time staff engaged on the work. The estimated cost to date is £233,000.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: A market test of building maintenance services has been carried out covering building project services and building inspections. The contract was awarded to Kirkham, Williams and Lewis.

Nuclear Power Plants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the environmental safety of the operation of nuclear power plants in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The two nuclear power stations in Wales at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa are subject to strict regulatory controls, as part of which an extensive environmental monitoring programme is undertaken. The results of this monitoring are regularly published by the Government and have consistently shown that the levels of radioactivity in the vicinity of the two stations meet international and national guidelines.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is his estimate of the maximum and minimum capital allocation that fund-holding general practitioners in Wales will receive for hospital referrals in 1993-94;

(2) what is the maximum and minimum for capital allocation that fund-holding general practitioner practices in Wales have had for hospital referrals in 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: GP fund holders do not receive any capital allocations. A fund is provided to enable them to purchase the hospital services included in the fund-holding scheme. The minimum and maximum allocations to fund holders for these services in 1992-93 were £145,000 and

£1,328,000 respectively. Individual allocations depend on practice list size—which will reflect the number of GPs in the practice—and on the historic level of use of hospital services. Allocations for 1993-94 have not yet been determined.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated to each local authority area in Wales for care and repair housing schemes during each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of his Department's planning policy guidance note on the development of wind energy and other renewable resources, published on 3 February have been printed; and to whom the guidance note has been distributed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I understand that 4,500 copies of the joint Department of the Environment/Welsh Office planning policy guidance note on renewable energy have been printed by HMSO. Copies have been distributed to local authorities in England and Wales and for use by Government Departments, and others are available for sale from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage, in terms of the total population of the valleys programme area, of economically inactive males for the valleys programme area for 1991;

(2) what was the percentage, in terms of the total male population aged over 16 years, of economically inactive males in the valleys programme area, at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: Statistics from the 1991 census are currently being prepared for the valleys programme area and I will write to the hon. Gentleman to give a full answer to the question shortly. Until then I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on 13 January at columns *750-51*, which gives the percentage of economically inactive males aged 16 to 64 for districts included in the valleys programme area.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds will be made available to the Cardiff Bay development corporation in the next financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: During 1993-94 my Department will make available to Cardiff Bay development corporation grant in aid of £44·9 million.

Fire Service

193. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the current capability of the fire service in Wales to cope with the demands made upon it; and what representations he has had from the Fire Brigades Union on the resourcing of the service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

On the basis of reports of inspections during 1992 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, I am broadly satisfied that fire authorities in Wales are in this financial year complying with the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover and with the statutory duties under the Fire Services Act 1947. Her Majesty's inspectorate has, where appropriate, drawn the authorities' attention to some minor areas where they are failing to comply with these standards and duties. I have received no representations from the Fire Brigades Union specifically about the resourcing of the fire service in Wales, but my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has discussed some resource issues relating to the fire service more generally with representatives of the Fire Brigades Union last November.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if, following the change in the value of the pound sterling, he will reassess the case for central funding of the promotion of tourism in England.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the importance of sports-related tourism.

Mr. Key: The relationship between sports and tourism is strong and mutually beneficial. The Sports Council estimates that some 11 per cent. of expenditure by domestic and overseas tourists is sport-related.

My Department provides grant in aid to the Sports Council to promote sport and leisure activities in Britain, and this includes activities undertaken by tourists.

We have already committed up to £75 million towards an arena, a velodrome and for the preparation of the site for the Olympic stadium. If Manchester is successful, then the benefits to British tourism, particularly in the north-west, will be considerable.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Eastbourne, (Mr. Waterson) of 25 January, *Official Report*, column 694, what assessment his Department has made of the levels of investment in tourism-related projects since the decision to suspend grants made under section 4 of the Tourism Development Act 1969; and what the figure was in 1989.

Mr. Key: The English tourist board (ETB) publishes a biannual survey of investment in tourism-related projects. According to ETB figures, projects with a total value of £2,921 million (excluding those with a value of less than £500,000) were under construction in England between January and June 1989. The corresponding figure for the six months from January to June 1992 was £1,062 million.

This level of investment is many times higher than the total value of projects assisted by the section 4 scheme in England. In the 1988-89 financial year, expenditure on section 4 grants amounted to £13·2 million and total investment in projects assisted by these grants was just over £123 million.

EMPLOYMENT

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the firms of consultants used by her Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive, the employment Department headquarters and the Employment service have used the following consultants to advise on its market testing programme, at a total cost of £144,885 (including VAT and expenses):

Coopers and Lybrand
Ernst and Young
John Pearce
KPMG
PA Consulting

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all the market tests that have taken place in her Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Four tests have been completed. One is under negotiation and therefore details are confidential. Of the remainder, both the Employment Department headquarters and the employment service travel services contracts were awarded to Wagons Lit. In-house provision was maintained for the employment service's information technology mainframe service.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff in her Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost her Department since November 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Full information on the costs and staffing involved in the market testing programme across the Employment Department group are not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member when the information can be collated.

Wages Councils

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give estimates for the number of black workers likely to be adversely affected by the abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 8 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *503*.

Youth Training

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training places are currently available in the Bristol travel-to-work area.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from Avon training and enterprise council that as at 29 January 1993 there was a total of 258 YT places available in the county of Avon. Separate records are not maintained for individual travel-to-work areas.

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which elements of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill were not discussed in advance with the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Equal Opportunities Commission was consulted about the most significant provisions in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill which concern equality of opportunity and in which it has a legitimate interest. The commission was not consulted about the provisions affecting trade unions or other broader industrial relations issues.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* improvement notices, *(b)* prohibition notices and *(c)* prosecutions have been issued or commenced by the Health and Safety Executive's offshore division (i) from 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992 and (ii) since 1 April 1992; and what were the results and penalties in each case of a completed prosecution.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

	1 April 19991 to 31 March 1992	*Since 1 April 1992*
Number of improvement notices served	nil	8
Number of prohibition notices served	2	3

Information on completed prosecutions is as follows:

(i) Between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992, a total of three companies were convicted and fines of £850, £20,000 and £5,000, respectively, were imposed.

(ii) Since 1 April 1992, a total of six companies have been convicted. Fines of £100,000, £1,000 £30,000, £1,000, £1,000 and £5,000, respectively, were imposed. Charges brought against two compamnies were not proved.

Economically Inactive Males

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage, in terms of the total population, of economically inactive males in the United Kingdom, at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The most recent results from the labour force survey for the whole of the United Kingdom are for spring (March to May) 1992. At that time there were a total of 5,733,000 economically inactive males representing 26·3 per cent. of the total male population aged 16 and over.

HEALTH

NHS Employees

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time equivalent *(a)* nursing, *(b)* midwifery, *(c)* management and *(d)* clerical staff were employed by the national health service in each Birmingham health authority area and the West Midlands regional health authority area in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The figures are shown in the table. Many of the functions undertaken by senior nursing and senior professional staff are now reflected in the national health service management figures. This means that year-on-year comparisons are invalid. Management still accounts for less than 1·8 per cent. of the NHS work force and the ratio of clinical to support staff has never been higher.

Whole-time equivalent staff in each Birmingham health authority area and West Midlands regional health authority

	Nursing	*Midwifery*	*Management*	*Administration and clerical*
September 1983				
West Midlands RHA	38,450	2,370	[2]—	11,120
Central Birmingham DHA	2,310	260	[2]—	880
East Birmingham DHA	1,320	20	[2]—	440
North Birmingham DHA	1,490	150	[2]—	460
South Birmingham DHA	2,540	110	[2]—	680
West Birmingham DHA	2,420	150	[2]—	600
September 1984				
West Midlands RHA	38,460	2,540	[2]—	11,150
Central Birmingham DHA	2,420	260	[2]—	870
East Birmingham DHA	1,360	20	[2]—	450
North Birmingham DHA	1,500	160	[2]—	480
South Birmingham DHA	2,390	120	[2]—	630
West Birmingham DHA	2,440	150	[2]—	580
September 1985				
West Midlands RHA	39,480	2,570	10	11,000
Central Birmingham DHA	2,480	250	[1]—	890
East Birmingham DHA	1,390	20	[1]—	460
North Birmingham DHA	1,560	160	0	380
South Birmingham DHA	2,350	110	[1]—	660
West Birmingham DHA	2,490	140	0	610
September 1986				
West Midlands RHA	39,930	2,590	60	11,220
Central Birmingham DHA	2,550	250	10	880
East Birmingham DHA	1,380	30	[1]—	470
North Birmingham DHA	1,300	140	[1]—	360
South Birmingham DHA	2,440	100	[1]—	670
West Birmingham DHA	2,460	130	[1]—	600
September 1987				
West Midlands RHA	40,490	2,690	90	11,480
Central Birmingham DHA	2,660	250	10	910
East Birmingham DHA	1,380	30	10	450
North Birmingham DHA	1,260	150	[1]—	340
South Birmingham DHA	2,530	100	[1]—	680
West Birmingham DHA	2,460	120	[1]—	580
September 1988				
West Midlands RHA	39,440	2,720	150	11,530
Central Birmingham DHA	2,620	250	10	920
East Birmingham DHA	1,370	20	10	450
North Birmingham DHA	1,230	150	[1]—	350
South Birmingham DHA	2,520	100	10	710
West Birmingham DHA	2,410	130	10	580
September 1989				
West Midlands RHA	39,770	2,770	530	11,800
Central Birmingham DHA	2,790	270	40	940
East Birmingham DHA	1,350	30	20	440
North Birmingham DHA	1,290	150	20	350
South Birmingham DHA	2,480	90	10	750
West Birmingham DHA	2,260	130	30	590
September 1990				

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
West Midlands RHA	40,410	2,820	1,060	11,950
Central Birmingham DHA	2,830	280	80	950
East Birmingham DHA	1,390	30	40	490
North Birmingham DHA	1,270	130	30	350
South Birmingham DHA	2,400	90	50	750
West Birmingham DHA	2,250	150	60	670
September 1991				
West Midlands RHA	38,960	2,710	1,440	12,740
East Birmingham DHA	1,440	30	[2]—	[2]—
North Birmingham DHA	1,310	130	[2]—	[2]—
South Birmingham DHA[3]	4,600	360	[2]—	[2]—
West Birmingham DHA	2,210	150	[2]—	[2]—

Source:
Non Medical Manpower Census, except for 1991 Managerial and Administrative and Clerical staff which is collected on the form KM49. The above tables catergorise staff by the terms and conditions on which they are paid. Staff with managerial reponsibilities were, until a discrete NHS management function was introduced in a series of phased implementations for 1984, paid on terms according to their professional function (eg. administration, nursing etc).
[1] means less than 5.
[2] not available.
[3]Central Birmingham DHA merged with South Birmingham DHA on the 1st April 1991.
Notes:
1. Includes agency staff.
2. Management figures can not be broken down by DHA in 1991 due to changes in data collection to a Regional return KM49.

Staffordshire Health Authorities

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time equivalent staff were employed by the national health service as *(a)* managerial staff, *(b)* administrative and clerical staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff in (i) the South-East Staffordshire health authority area and (ii) the Mid-Staffordshire health authority in each year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures are shown in the table.

Nursing and midwifery, administrative and clerical and general and senior managers in South-East Staffordshire and Mid-Staffordshire HAs from September 1987 to September 1991
Whole-time equivalents

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
South-East Staffordshire					
Nursing and midwifery (excluding agency)	1,910	1,900	1,880	1,840	1,760
Administrative and clerical	430	440	430	440	—
General and senior managers	10	10	30	50	—
Mid-Staffordshire					
Nursing and midwifery (excluding agency)	1,780	1,760	1,800	1,750	1,830
Administrative and clerical	410	410	390	420	—
General and senior managers	10	10	60	80	—

Notes:
1. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. '—' indicates that the 1991 figures for Administrative and Clerical and General and senior Managers are not centrally available at District level.
3. Source of information: Non-Medical Manpower Census HAP(STATS)B.
4. The fall in the number of nursing and midwifery staff in South-East Staffordshire is because of the transfer of services for elderly mentally ill patients from St. Matthews's hospital to other health authorities and to community homes.

Hospital Costs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what returns and at what intervals are made to her by hospitals on the average costs of procedures; and in what form those returns are made available to Parliament.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not routinely collect information on the costs of particular operations or procedures. However, since 1987-88 the Department has collected annual figures on average treatment costs by specialty by district. The health service indicators have included average treatment costs for patients using a hospital bed for most specialties. A copy of the indicators is available in the Library. For 1991-92 the specialty costs return was developed to collect total average costs by specialty on a provider unit basis. When the 1991-92 indicators are published later this year average specialty costs will therefore be at hospital rather than district level.

Health Care Provision

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent her Department collects and analyses statistics relating to hospital and health care provision within the private sector as well as national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Centrally collected information about the private sector is via Department of Health forms KO36, KO37 and KO71.

KO36 provides information about beds and other facilities in private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984. As well as recording the number of institutions, there is a count of available beds, hospitals with operating theatres, consulting rooms and various clinical departments. The return also records the numbers of nursing staff by their level of qualification.

KO37 collects aggregate activity for all private mental nursing homes registered by a health authority under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984. The return records data on patients detained under the provision of the Mental Health Act 1983. Latest data are published in a Statistical Bulletin "In-Patients Formally Detained in Hospital Under the Mental Health Act 1983 and Other Legislation, England 1984—1989-90" Bulletin 2(7)92, ISBN 1 85839 007 9.

KO71 collects aggregate data on new episodes of drug misuse and the type of drug used. The return collects data from the national health service, voluntary, local authority and private services. This is a new return and it is proposed to publish data later this year.

Nurse Prescribing

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the financial implications of deferring the implementation of nurse prescribing; what information she has on the long-term savings in health care costs which would flow from enabling certain nurses to write prescriptions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Based on the Touche Ross cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the Department, we estimate that postponing the implementation of nurse prescribing will avoid start-up costs of £11 million and annual costs, once all nurse precribers are trained, of £15 million at 1991-92 prices.

The time savings for each prescribing nurse and general practitioner consequential on the implementation of nurse prescribing are unlikely to be translated into reduced expenditure because the relatively small amounts of time saved per week are likely to be used up in a wide range of other activities. The main benefit of nurse prescribing is a speedier and better service for patients, the effects of which cannot be translated into monetary terms. As my hon. Friend knows, we are committed to implementing nurse prescribing as soon as resources permit.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is currently being undertaken by her Department to ensure that local authorities fulfil obligations outlined in section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Yeo: We expect local authorities to be aware of their statutory duties under section 2(1) of the 1970 Act to provide a range of services for disabled people, where they accept that there is need. Each case is assessed on its own merits by the local authority. The Department receives regular returns on certain services provided by local authorities under the Act, as well as information from other sources including the social services inspectorate. We follow up specific cases referred to the Department, where it is alleged that a local authority is in breach of its statutory duties.

Oil Spillages

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she collects to identify human health risks arising out of oil spillage incidents; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health keeps under continual review the relevant scientific literature on chemicals which are likely to be harmful to human health. The Department is also able to seek advice from its expert advisory committees. Decisions on any necessary monitoring of food and the environment following an oil spillage incident are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who would consult the Health Departments on health effects.

Refugee Children

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources have been targeted towards unaccompanied children who are refugees from former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment gave to him today.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when guidance under the Children Act 1989 on refugee and asylum-seeking children will be published.

Mr. Yeo: Guidance and training material for social services staff working with unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children is expected to be published in the spring.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she issues on the identification of who has parental responsibility for unaccompanied children who enter the United Kingdom as refugees.

Mr. Yeo: No specific guidance has been issued on parental responsibility for unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children. Local authorities have responsibilities under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 in relation to unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children.

In-vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the availability of in-vitro fertilisation services within the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 4 December 1992 at columns *433-34*.

Refugees

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued to local authorities and voluntary organisations in order to deal with the co-ordination of health care for refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Yeo: For the 1,000 displaced persons and their dependants whom the Government have agreed to accept from the former Yugoslavia, three reception centres have been opened. The staff of these centres, which are run by voluntary organisations, will liaise with the statutory authorities as necessary to ensure that health or personal social services needs are met. Departmental officials have written to both local authorities and health authorities in the reception centre areas to alert them to the expected arrivals.

Child Care

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the voluntary child day care organisations which have closed due to the introduction of regulations regarding adequate facilities under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Referral Decisions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *470*, if she will now issue guidelines to ensure that community health councils are notified about extra-contractual referral decisions, affecting the population in their areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already asked regional health authorities to ensure that community health councils have access to information about purchasers' contracts with providers and their purchasing plans which will include extra-contractual referral patterns. However, as each ECR decision is based on individual clinical factors, it would not be appropriate to notify community health councils of these decisions.

North West Thames Health Authority

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the contract of employment for the current chairman of the North West Thames health authority expires.

Dr. Mawhinney: The date is 31 July 1994.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions Ministers from her Department and senior civil servants have had with the chairman and the chief executive of the North West Thames health authority; and what was the outcome of these discussions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers and senior officials frequently meet the chairman and chief executives of regional health authorities to discuss a wide range of topics and issues.

Tomlinson Report

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will place copies of the Capita and Touche Ross studies commissioned by her Department in connection with the Tomlinson report in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Capita/Touche Ross study is one of three commissioned from management consultants as part of a preliminary review of options for reconfiguring acute services in inner London. Some of the information supplied by purchasers and providers for the studies was on an in-confidence basis and the full reports are not intended for publication. I will, however, arrange for executive summaries to be placed in the Library in due course.

General Practitioners

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the allocations to non-GP fund-holding practices in each region for 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not held centrally. However, the aggregate indicative prescribing amounts allocated to non-fund-holding general practitioners at regional and family health services authorities level for 1992-93 are shown in the table.

1992-93 Indicative prescribing amounts[1]

	£
Northern	161,551,312
Cleveland	28,278,187
Cumbria	26,895,353
Durham	29,197,667
Gateshead	9,935,418
South Tyneside	9,018,511
Sunderland	18,585,952
Newcastle	14,318,000
North Tyneside	11,846,208
Northumberland	13,476,016
Yorkshire	170,944,380
Humberside	41,995,512
North Yorkshire	31,473,094
Bradford	23,116,300
Calderdale	9,528,533
Kirklees	19,674,833
Leeds	33,224,889
Wakefield	11,931,219
Trent	226,040,528
Derbyshire	40,157,309
Leicestershire	39,607,897
Lincolnshire	31,611,166
Nottinghamshire	44,955,047
Barnsley	14,134,291
Doncaster	15,822,522
Rotherham	12,578,370
Sheffield	27,173,926
East Anglia	110,081,510
Cambridgeshire	32,930,439
Norfolk	44,715,873
Suffolk	32,435,198
North West Thames	161,624,985
Barnet	16,159,297
Bedfordshire	25,617,020
Hertfordshire	38,543,203
Brent and Harrow	25,640,541
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	31,987,000
Hillingdon	10,039,430
Kensington, City and Westminster	13,638,494
North East Thames	183,970,935
Essex	73,773,600
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	17,921,299
Camden and Islington	17,244,237
City and East London	29,756,162
Enfield and Haringey	21,791,339
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	23,484,298
South East Thames	182,199,827
Kent	75,300,058
East Sussex	41,110,910
Bromley	13,356,276
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	32,360,943

	£
Greenwich and Bexley	20,071,640
South West Thames	135,778,738
Surrey	44,554,588
West Sussex	37,042,262
Kingston and Richmond	11,621,062
Croydon	14,246,115
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	28,314,711
Wessex	142,533,409
Hampshire	72,991,774
Dorset	35,685,885
Wiltshire	27,966,799
Isle of Wight	5,888,951
Oxford	103,651,699
Berkshire	31,046,847
Buckinghamshire	23,727,503
Northants	26,007,082
Oxfordshire	22,870,267
South Western	177,396,623
Avon	47,107,788
Cornwall	28,843,210
Devon	55,347,684
Gloucestershire	25,608,280
Somerset	20,489,661
West Midlands	261,441,507
Birmingham	56,355,959
Coventry	16,689,102
Dudley	15,535,775
Hereford and Worcester	29,495,176
Sandwell	14,411,416
Shropshire	19,110,046
Solihull	8,307,163
Staffordshire	49,634,920
Walsall	15,457,921
Warwickshire	22,269,467
Wolverhampton	14,174,562
Mersey	126,929,323
Cheshire	44,430,300
Liverpool	27,252,313
Sefton	13,647,842
St. Helens	20,320,141
Wirral	21,278,727
North Western	223,227,213
Lancashire	81,516,576
Bolton	12,207,541
Bury	10,896,582
Manchester	27,101,200
Oldham	11,571,437
Rochdale	10,213,084
Salford	12,454,860
Stockport	15,253,520
Tameside	10,783,925
Trafford	12,668,266
Wigan	18,560,222

[1] Taken from December 1992 PPA data.

Death Certificates

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued for the completion of death certificates in cases where the actual cause of death is as a result of a long illness, in order to identify the illness contributing to, and indirectly the cause of, death.

Mr. Sackville: Medical certificates of cause of death are required to be completed by a registered medical practitioner. The form of the certificate is prescribed and is in the internationally agreed format which is designed to identify an underlying cause for all recorded deaths, except where the deceased is aged under 28 days. In addition, the certifier may record other significant conditions contributing to the death but which are not related to the disease or condition causing it.

Guidelines relating to their completion accompany the death certificates and are supplied to registered medical practitioners. Specimen copies have been placed in the Library and are available to interested parties on request.

Capitation Targets

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *469-70*, if she will publish such information as she has on capitation targets.

Mr. Sackville: No. As I explained in my earlier reply, the information at present held centrally contains inconsistencies and would be misleading as a source of comparisons between districts of different health regions. Consistent and comparable information will be placed in the Library as soon as it is available.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those self-governing trusts that have filed their current accounts, indicating what percentage of the total this represents.

Dr. Mawhinney: All 57 first-wave national health service trusts have submitted the necessary financial accounts information for 1991-92 to the Department.

Creutzfeld Jakob Disease

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the present number of known and suspected cases of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease and the geographic location of these cases; and what comparable data she has for the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Information showing the total number of definite and probable cases of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease is produced on a yearly basis by Dr. R. G. Will, consultant neurologist at the national CJD surveillance unit, Edinburgh. Data for 1992 will be available later this year.

Between 1987 and 1990 there were a total of 104 definite cases of CJD. The available data on deaths in the calendar year 1991 show that 28 people have been confirmed as CJD with a further four probable cases. The available information is shown in the table.

Definite and probable cases of CJD 1987-1991

Year and status		*Number*
1987	Definite	22
1988	Definite	22
1989	Definite	28
1990	Definite	32
1991	Definite	28
	Probable	4

Detailed information on geographical location of definite and probable cases is contained in the last report from Dr. Will. Copies have been placed in the Library.

This report confirms that there has been no change in the incidence, geographical distribution or occupational

distribution of CJD. It will, however, be necessary to continue the study into the incidence of CJD for a decade or more to detect any change in the pattern of the disease.

Hospitals (Alcohol Sales)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of hospitals have bars on hospital premises selling alcohol.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally.

Down's Syndrome

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department has conducted into the use of, and efficacy of the Bart's test for pregnant women for Down's syndrome.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* Recently published articles and published studies on maternal serum screening, including the Bart's triple test, are listed as follows. Copies are available in the Library. These were funded from various sources.

The implications of these new tests are complex and are being addressed at the moment by two separate working parties set up by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and regional directors of public health.

Maternal serum screening for Down's Syndrome in early pregnancy—Wald N. J, Cuckle H. S, Dansem J. W. et al, British Medical Journal 1988, pp 883-7.

Antenatal maternal serum screening for Down's Syndrome: results of a demonstration project—Wald, Kennard, Densem et al, British Medical Journal 224/92, pp 391-4.

Prenatal screening for Down's Syndrome with use of maternal serum makers—Haddow J. E, Palomaki G. E, Knight G. J, et al, New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 327, No. 9, pp 588-93.

Maternal serum screening for fetal Down Syndrome in Women less than 35 years of age using alpha-fetaprotein, hCG, and unconjugated estriol: a prospective 2 year study —Phillips et al, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vol. 80, No. 3, Part 1, pp 353-8.

Prospective intervention trial of a screening protocol to identify fetal trisonomy 18 using maternal serum alpha-fetoprotein, unconjugated oestriol, and human chorinonic gonadotropin—Palomaki GE, Knight GJ et al, Prenatal diagnosis, Vol. 12, pp 925-30.

Health Care Funding

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of funding per capita for health care for each of the last five years for *(a)* the North East Essex health district and *(b)* the East Suffolk health district.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of funding per capita for health care in each of the last five years for *(a)* Mid Essex health district and *(b)* the East Suffolk health district.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 1 February 1993]:* The allocation of funds to the district health authorities is a matter for the North East Thames and the East Anglian regional health authorities respectively and detailed information is not collected centrally.

Information which relates the expenditure of the DHAs to their resident populations is shown in the table.

The figures which for the years before 1991-92 predate the national health service reforms, show the DHAs as providers of health care. Expenditure per head of population therefore reflects patterns of local service provision and the effects of patient flows across health authority boundaries.

The figures for 1991-92, which show the DHAs as purchasers and are not comparable to those for earlier years, reflect a transitional position as each RHA moves towards allocating funds to DHAs on a weighted capitation basis. Figures for total spending per capita include other resources, such as regional budgets and local income, in addition to allocations for resident population.

Revenue expenditure per head of population

Year	*North East Essex district health authority*	*Mid Essex district health authority*	*East Suffolk district health authority*
	£	£	£
1987-88	202	199	206
1988-89	220	219	226
1989-90	236	237	245
1990-91	247	255	270
1991-92	317	316	345

Sources:

a. Annual accounts of the North East Essex, the Mid Essex and the East Suffolk district health authorities.

b. Mid-year estimates of resident population—1987-91 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:

1. For the years prior to 1991-92, the figures for the DHAs are based upon their total revenue expenditure on the services which they managed or accounted for in the relevant financial years. For 1991-92 the figures for the DHAs are based upon their total revenue expenditure on purchases of health care and directly related services through contracts placed with their own Directly Managed Units and other providers of health care. Expenditure incurred on the authorities' administrative and purchasing functions is excluded.

2. Capital expenditure incurred by the DHAs and all expenditure incurred by RHAs on behalf of their regions as a whole is excluded.

3. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in particular districts who receive treatment in others. For consistency the population estimates employed are those based on the 1981 Census.

Wessex Regional Health Authority (Computer)

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the money lost by Wessex regional health authority in attempting to install a new computer system; and if she will make a statement on the current situation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to the reply, 10 February, column 701]:* A comprehensive report in the public interest on this subject was published in July 1992. In addition, the district auditor decided to provide further material to Wessex regional health authority in confidence, to enable the authority to pursue all avenues for legal action. When I was informed of these documents, I instructed the chief executive of the national health service to ensure that rigorous remedial action was taken by the region and closely monitored by the national health service management executive; and that every opportunity for legal and police action was fully explored. Wessex regional health authority made all the material available to the police, whose inquiries are continuing. Legal action is still in progress.

It is very important that these serious matters should be fully studied and lessons learnt. I understand that the Public Accounts Committee has commissioned a further

report on the project from the Comptroller and Auditor General and I shall consider it very carefully. It is important that as much information as possible should be in the public domain. With regard to the confidential reports to the regional health authority, I am advised that under section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, disclosure would require the consent of the people to whom the information relates. All the major points of concern are, however, set out very fully in the district auditor's public report.

Drug Addiction

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many individual general practitioners provided notifications of drug addiction in the last year.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

In 1991, the last year for which figures are available, there were 3,075 general practitioners in the United Kingdom who provided such notifications to the Home Office.

Radiation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to reduce the United Kingdom's radiation dose limit to 0·3 milliSieverts and the lifetime radiation dose limit to 21 mSv.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom's radiation dose limits, for the public and for workers, comply with the current EC Eurotom directive on basic standards for radiation protection. Revision of this directive, and the dose limits therein, will begin later this year. My right hon. Friend has no plans to reduce dose limits in advance of revision of the directive.

ENVIRONMENT

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Howard: A provisional list of the regulations for which this Department is responsible and which impact on business has recently been prepared. I will arrange for it to be placed in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the firms of consultants used by his Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department has used the following consultancy services to assist it in the development of the market testing process since November 1991:

Dr. Alan Kemp
Shreeveport
Simon Thorpe Consultancy
Hoskyns Group plc
Prime Strategy Consultants
Symonds
Capita Management Consultancy
Civil Service College
Coopers and Lybrand
Peter Burholt Consultancy Ltd.
Lane Whittlesey Business Consultants.

The total cost of consultancies let to date is £302,004.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the meetings his Ministers have had with representatives of the voluntary sector to discuss the impact of the reduction of the urban programme, including an account of the representations made; and what action he intends to take as a result of these representations.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have met representatives of the voluntary sector to discuss how the changes to the urban programme might affect them. I welcome the valuable work that the voluntary sector does in urban areas and I am pleased that the urban programme will be able to continue to fund voluntary sector projects that have been approved in this or previous financial years, for up to four years. The voluntary sector draws its funding from a wide range of sources and non-urban priority authorities support such groups without additional assistance from central Government.

Forest of Dean Council

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the indebtedness of the Forest of Dean district council in each year since 1980.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table:

Total external debt (temporary and longer-term)

Year End	*Forest of Dean £000*
1979-80	20,000
1980-81	22,000
1981-82	22,000
1982-83	21,000
1983-84	26,000
1984-85	31,000
1985-86	31,000
1986-87	25,635
1987-88	22,872
1988-89	26,777
1989-90	26,653
1990-91	31,334
1991-92	30,523

Figures for 1985-86 and earlier have been rounded to the nearest £100,000

Source:
1979-81 CIPFA Return of Outstanding Debt.
1981-90 CIPFA Capital Expenditure and Debt Financing Statistics.
1990-92 Local authority returns and PWLB.

Local Government Debts, Essex

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the indebtedness of Essex county council, Colchester borough council and Maldon district council in each year since 1980.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table:

Total external debt (temporary and longer-term)

Year end	Essex £000	Colchester £000	Maldon £000
1979-80	85,000	44,000	13,000
1980-81	48,000	46,000	13,000
1981-82	44,000	44,000	12,000
1982-83	51,000	41,000	10,000
1983-84	41,000	42,000	n/a
1984-85	70,000	49,000	10,000
1985-86	62,000	44,000	9,000
1986-87	86,420	39,365	6,791
1987-88	103,465	34,655	4,703
1988-89	113,466	36,512	2,707
1989-90	128,411	46,246	5,393
1990-91	131,130	47,890	8,269
1991-92	172,424	50,444	8,624

Notes:
Figures for 1985-86 and earlier have been rounded to the nearest £100,000
Source: 1979-81 CIPFA Return of Outstanding Debt.
1981-90 CIPFA Capital Expenditure and Debt Financing Statistics
1990-92 Local authority returns and PWLB.

Local Government Debts

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing the indebtedness of each district authority in ascending order;
(2) if he will publish a table showing the indebtedness of each county authority in ascending order.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have today placed the information requested about the outstanding debt of county and district councils in the Library of the House.

Community Charge

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people registered for the community charge became liable to pay the charge as a result of attaining the age of 18 years after 31 March 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: Individual community charge registration officers hold information about charge payers; there are no central records.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the community charge reduction scheme to people registered who became liable to pay on reaching 18 years of age after 31 March 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

Refugees (Local Authorities)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources, additional to standard spending assessment provision, will be made available to local authorities providing support to refugees of former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Robin Squire: Details of the financial assistance in respect of 1992-93 which will be available to those local authorities most affected by the influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia are set out in the Special Grant Report (No. 5) which was approved by the House on 3 February 1993. A further Special Grant Report incorporating details of a scheme of financial assistance for the financial year 1993-94 will be laid in due course.

Oil Spillages

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an advisory team to collate information on oil spill impact on the environment and pursue research into control and prevention measures.

Mr. Maclean: Information on oil spills and discharges throughout the north-east Atlantic is collected and evaluated by the Paris Commission, in which Department of the Environment officials play a full part. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has announced an ecological steering group to consider what lessons are to be learnt and what research is suggested by the MV Braer incident.

City Challenge

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *522*, if he will place in the Library the information subsequent to the 1981 census which was used to amend the criteria for urban areas eligible to apply for city challenge.

Mr. Howard: Information on unemployment levels and derelict land was used to inform the selection of urban priority areas subsequent to the 1981 census. Both sets of information were published; unemployment data in the regular statistical series from the Department of Employment and derelict land from the Department of the Environment's survey—"Survey of Derelict Land in England 1982, DOE 1984".

Transfers of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to Cherwell district council and Hampshire county council on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Robin Squire: No guidance on the application of the regulations has been issued to either authority. My Department has, however, made clear in correspondence with Cherwell district council and with the local authority associations that in its view the regulations will not normally apply to the straightforward contracting out of local authority services in consideration of a fee. It is accepted that the regulations may apply in certain circumstances where the arrangements entered into with a contractor are more complicated, but any local authority which attempts to structure a contract to ensure that the regulations apply, or insists that contractors tender on the basis that they apply, may be guilty of anti-competitive behaviour and thus risk sanctions imposed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Urban Partnership Fund

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities will receive assistance from the urban partnership fund; and if he will make a statement on the progress of the capital partnership programme.

Mr. Howard: There has been an enthusiastic response to our invitation to the 57 urban priority authorities to bid for a share of the £20 million urban partnership fund element of capital partnership. I am pleased to announce offers of support to these local authorities and their partners:

Birmingham, Bolton, Brent, Bristol, Burnley, Coventry, Derby, Doncaster, Dudley, Gateshead, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hartlepool, Hull, Islington, Kirklees, Knowsley, Leeds, Leicester, Lambeth, Langbaurgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newham, North Tyneside, Nottingham, Oldham, Plymouth, Preston, Rochdale, Rotherham, Salford, Sandwell, Sefton, Sheffield, South Tyneside, Southwark, Stockton, Sunderland, Wandsworth, Wigan, Wirral, Wolverhampton.

Along with support from the fund, the authorities will make use of about £33 million capital receipts and, taken together, the projects are estimated to lever in over £130 million of private sector resources. The projects will provide a major boost to regeneration activity and continue the partnership approach to renewal which is a central feature of Government inner cities initiatives and crucial to achieving lasting regeneration.

A wide range of project proposals to benefit urban areas and their communities were submitted. Those selected were the ones which best met the criteria. These include: whether the proposals address the needs of local people and business in the area; whether they complement other activity in the area; and value for money, including whether they lever in resources which might otherwise not be available for renewal of the area.

Each authority has today been notified of the outcome of its bid. Authorities whose bids were not successful, due to the heavy demand on the funds available, will naturally be disappointed. We hope that at least some elements of the proposals can be taken forward using their capital receipts.

A full list list of proposed projects has been placed in the Library of the House.

The urban partnership fund is only the first of a number of components of capital partnership for which successful bids will be announced. The others are:

Housing Partnership, including the Housing Partnership Fund; Environmental Partnership, including programmes for recycling, waste management, contaminated land and landfill gas; and Countryside Partnership, covering programmes of the Rural Development Commission and Countryside Commission.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Appointments

Mr. Canavan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what public appointments he has made since 1 November 1992; and what information he has on the political affiliations of those appointed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is responsible for a total of over 800 public appointments. A total of 114 appointments, including reappointments, to 21 public bodies have been made since 1 November 1992. We do not routinely collect information on the political affiliations of those appointed, although sometimes this information is already in the public domain. The readily available information about the public appointments for which my right hon. Friend is responsible is published regularly in "Public Bodies".

Motor Industry

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with his EC counterparts about the level of *(a)* Italian Government intervention in support of Fiat and *(b)* French Government support of Renault.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have consistently drawn to the attention of the Commission cases involving alleged unfair state aid in the vehicles sector. The Commission's investigations have included reviews of state support for Fiat and Renault and have resulted in legally binding decisions on the level of aid permissible.

Clean Coal Technology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will outline the research undertaken by his Department to date on *(a)* the quality and *(b)* pollution levels occuring when burning (i) deep-mined coal produced within the United Kingdom coalfields, (ii) open-cast coal produced within the United Kingdom, (iii) deep-mined coal from each country that exports coal into the United Kingdom and (iv) open-cast coal from each country that exports coal to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The key aim for Government support for clean coal technology research over the past few years has been to ensure that coal can achieve its full economic potential in contributing to United Kingdom energy supply taking account of the increasing severe environmental constraints. Although our programme has focused on improving the quality and reducing the pollution levels of using United Kingdom coals, much of the research would be applicable to deep mine and opencast coal from both the United Kingdom and overseas.

The present programme is funding a portfolio of 56 projects with a value of over £114 million. Many of these projects are collaborative projects undertaken in partnership with United Kingdom industry, universities, British Coal, and overseas organisations under the auspices of the European Commission and International Energy Agency. Most of this expenditure is funding research on advanced power generation such as British Coal's topping cycle technology, alternative uses of coal —for example, British Coal's coal liquefaction project at Point of Ayr, North Wales—and coal science research with universities and United Kingdom industry.

A wide range of reports on coal quality, emissions, and technologies applicable to both United Kingdom and overseas coals are published by IEA Coal Research which forms one of the projects supported by my Department. A list of its publications are in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what total funding for clean coal technology, including funding by the International Energy Association, has been given in the United Kingdom for each year since 1985; and what comparable information he has for Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The International Energy Agency does not provide funds of its own, but encourages voluntary collaborative arrangements between member countries who contribute funds to a number of agreements including those based on clean coal technologies. Figures for the distribution of such

funds among member countries are not readily available and I cannot add any further financial information to my previous reply in the *Official Report*, column *206* on 3 February 1993. The United Kingdom has, however, participated in most of the coal-related IEA agreements.

Wave Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what change his Department has made in the method of calculating the cost of wave power since the report of the energy technology support unit (ETSU-R-26) on wave energy in 1985.

Mr. Eggar: The method of calculating the cost of wave power as part of the 1992 review of wave energy is detailed in ETSU report R-72, "A Review of Wave Energy", a copy of which is in the Library.

Disabled Employees

Miss Lestor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of employees in his Department are registered disabled.

Mr. Eggar: On 1 July 1992, the latest date for which information is readily available, 1·0 per cent. of the Department's employees were registered as disabled.

The Department also employs a number of people who are known to be disabled but have chosen not to register.

Japanese Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he had with the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry in relation to flows of Japanese investment in manufacturing industry into each European Community country.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* My colleagues and I hold regular meetings with the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Our discussions on Japanese manufacturing investment are of a bilateral nature only.

Coal Industry

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are directly or indirectly employed in the coal mining industry *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available estimates of employees in employment show that there were 63,000 employees in the coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels industry in the United Kingdom in September 1992. More detailed estimates are available only from the census of employment. The latest results relate to September 1989 and are as follows:

Employees in employment

	Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels	*Of which Deep coal mines*
Scotland	3,400	2,400
United Kingdom	96,000	88,700

Note: Estimates for 1991 will be published in April 1993.

The Department has no figures for people indirectly employed in any industry.

Ship Building

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many engineering apprenticeships were available in the United Kingdom ship building industry in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Information relating specifically to the number of engineering apprenticeships available in the shipbuilding industry for the years 1974, 1979 and 1992 is not available.

PRIME MINISTER

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Ward: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the latest reports of the pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: The 1993 reports of the review bodies on the pay of nursing staff, midwives and health visitors, the professions allied to medicine, the armed forces, and school teachers have now been published. Copies are available in the Vote Office. The Government are grateful to the members of the review bodies for the time and care which they have put into the preparation of the reports.

In November the Government announced that public sector pay settlements in the coming year would be restricted to a range of 0 to 1·5 per cent. In line with the approach to public sector pay restraint, the groups covered by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body, the Nurses Pay Review Body and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body would receive an increase in pay of 1·5 per cent. from 1 April 1993. These review bodies were, however, invited by the Government to continue work on other specific issues and consider their position on performance pay, as appropriate to their remit groups.

In accordance with this earlier statement, the Government will pay increases of 1·5 per cent. to doctors and dentists, nursing staff, midwives and health visitors, professions allied to medicine and the armed forces with effect from 1 April 1993.

The School Teachers Review Body had previously been directed to report on school teachers' pay and conditions in 1993-94. The Secretary of State for Education directed it to have regard to the Government's general approach to public sector pay restraint.

The School Teachers Review Body has recommended an across the board increase of 1 per cent. from 1 April 1993 together with restructuring of classroom teachers' pay effective from 1 September 1993. The recommendations would cost a total of 1·5 per cent. in the financial year 1993-94 and an additional 0·35 per cent. in the following year. The Government therefore propose to reduce the across-the-board increase for qualified classroom teachers at 1 April to 0·55 per cent., but to make a one-off payment of £90 to those teachers on 1 May 1993. This, together with the implementation of restructuring designed to develop the relationship between pay and performance in schools, will give teachers, like most other review body groups, an increase in pay of 1·5 per cent. whilst containing the total cost within the settlement limit. Head and deputy head teachers will, as recommended by the review body, receive an increase of 1 per cent. on 1 April.

The Top Salaries Review Body did not report this year. In common with Ministers and Members of Parliament, Top Salaries Review Body groups will receive no pay increase in respect of 1993. The Government will honour their commitment to pay the deferred second stage of the 1992 award, under which these groups will receive an increase of 2·9 per cent. from 1 April 1993.

The Doctors and Dentists Review Body also decided not to report this year, but recommended an increase in the number of distinction awards for consultant medical and dental staff. The Nurses Pay Review Body and Armed Forces Pay Review Body also produced a number of recommendations. The Government have accepted all of these recommendations.

The Government are also committed under the citizens charter to establishing a regular and direct link between a person's contribution to the quality of services and his or her reward. The review bodies have therefore been asked to consider the longer-term development of performance pay which will make this a reality.

The table shows the increases for each group, and their cost.

Review body	*Pay bill increase 1993-94*[1] *Per cent.*	*Public expenditure expenditure cost £ million*
Doctors and dentists (DDRB)[2]	1·5	[3][4]61
Nurses and allied professions (NAPRB)[2]		
nurses and midwives	1·5	[3]114
professions allied to medicine (PAMs)	1·5	[3]12
Armed forces (AFPRB)[5]	1·5	85
School teachers (STRB)[6]	1·5	[7]157

[1] Percentages by which the awards would increase the estimated 1993-94 pay bill.

[2] Great Britain. Northern Ireland health service pay normally follows Great Britain but is decided separately.

[3] Includes cost of staff in NHS Trusts.

[4] Figures exclude general medical practitioners' expenses which are subject to negotiation.

[5] United Kingdom.

[6] England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate pay regimes for school teachers.

[7] Does not include any consequential increases in the paybill of sixth form colleges becoming Further Education Corporations on 1 April.

The cost of implementing these increases will be met from within the public expenditure planning totals published in the autumn statement.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit Fraud

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what incentives he proposes to give councils to strengthen the numbers of staff engaged in the detection of housing benefit fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November a number of measures to encourage local authorities to bear down on housing benefit fraud. From April this year, the level of benefit subsidy for housing benefit fraudulent overpayments will be increased from 25 per cent. to full rate 95 per cent. It is also proposed to allow local authorities to share in any weekly benefit savings above a specified level and generated through their anti-fraud efforts. These savings will be paid through the administrative subsidy arrangements.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to refund councils involved in the detection of housing benefit fraud their legitimate overhead costs, legal expenses and any other sums not recompensed by recovery from those convicted of fraud and conspiracy to defraud that council.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

Under present arrangements, there is no specific element in central Government funding, including the amount paid for administration subsidy by the Department, to cover those costs. However, under proposed arrangements from April 1993, authorities will be able to share in any weekly benefit savings, above a specified level, which their fraud staff generate.

Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners had an income of less than £5,000 a year, at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to her reply, 11 January 1993, c. 675]:* The following information was incorrect.

'It is estimated[1] that 61 per cent. of single pensioners[2] had an income of less than £5,000 per year in 1988 (the latest available date).'

The correct information is as follows:

'It is estimated[1] that 61 per cent. of pensioners[2] had an income of less than £5,000 per year in 1988 (the latest available date)'.

Notes:

[1] Family Expenditure Survey 1988.

[2] Based on pensioner units—ie single people over state pension age and couples where the husband is aged 65 or over, regardless of whether they are drawing state pension.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Mohd Khalil

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision will be taken on an application made to the British post in Islamabad by Mr. Mohd Khalil (Ref. IMM/B4131) to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lenox-Boyd: A decision was made by the British high commission in Islamabad on 28 September 1992 to refuse entry clearance to Mr. Mohammed Khalil as the entry clearance officer was not satisfied, as he is required to be under the immigration rules, that the primary purpose of the marriage was not to gain entry to the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the ECO was not satisfied that there was adequate support and accommodation available for Mr. Khalil in the United Kingdom without recourse to public funds.

Due to an administrative error, the formal notice of refusal was not sent to Mr. Khalil, but the ECO will now shortly do so. Any inconvenience this may have caused to Mr. Khalil is regretted.

Ministers of Religion

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many complaints were received by the British post in Islamabad before 1989 from

those applying for entry clearance to settle in the United Kingdom or to visit the United Kingdom concerning priority entry clearance procedures being applied to ministers of religion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1989 many complaints were received by the post in Islamabad from sponsors and Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom about the waiting time for interviews for members of families seeking to join heads of households settled in the United Kingdom. The numbers of complaints was not recorded.

In order to give priority to family reunification cases, the queues were reorganised. As part of that exercise ministers of religion were reallocated from Q1 to Q3. This is the correct queue for applicants wishing to remain in the United Kingdom for more than six months other than those qualifying for Q1; those with a right of abode; applicants with a prima facie claim to British citizenship; aged dependents over 70; compassionate cases; Q2, spouses and dependent children under 18; and Q4, reapplicants.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many ministers of religion have applied for visas to enter the United Kingdom at British overseas posts in each year since 1987; and how many were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate expense. The records since 1987 would need to be checked manually at 156 posts worldwide.

Muslim Women (Rape)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence is being collated by Her Majesty's Government over the systematic rape of Muslim women in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is collecting a large body of information about alleged breaches of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, including information about the sexual abuse of women. We propose to submit any substantiated evidence to the United Nations Secretary-General.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting between the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Grantham, and Mr. Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My meeting on 4 February was a significant step in raising the profile of Mr. Rushdie's continuing plight. It is almost four years since Ayatollah Khomeini issued his death threat against him. In the face of the continued threat to Mr. Rushdie and recent statements by senior figures in Iran, it was right to demonstrate our support by holding the meeting.

I brought Mr. Rushdie up to date on our continuing efforts to resolve the problem of the fatwa and our decision to raise our profile and encourage international leaders and organisations to rally behind his cause. I reassured Mr. Rushdie that we remained greatly concerned by the continuing failure of the Iranian authorities to repudiate the incitement to murder and the bounty offered in that respect by an Iranian organisation. This failure inevitably prevents the establishment of full and friendly relations with Iran.

Secret Intelligence Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the cost of modifications to the new secret intelligence service headquarters building; if he will categorise that expenditure with amounts; and what proportion the cost of modifications bears to the cost of construction.

Mr. Hurd: The latest estimate of the total cost of the new secret intelligence service headquarters is £236 million. The cost of the site and original construction was some £150 million and completion costs including fitting out and equipping the building are likely to be a further £86 million. Part of the cost relates to the specialised nature of the secret intelligence service's requirements. It is not usual or sensible to comment further on matters of this nature.

Overseas Missions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many tennis courts are attached to British missions abroad; how many have been built in the last 10 years; at what cost to the taxpayer; and what is the monthly maintenance cost.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* There are 81 tennis courts at Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts overseas. Eleven courts have been constructed in the past 10 years, at a total cost of about £225,000. The estimated monthly maintenance cost of an average tennis court is about £50.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many swimming pools are attached to British missions abroad; how many have been built in the last 10 years; at what cost to the taxpayer; and what is the monthly maintenance cost.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* There are 135 swimming pools at Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts overseas. Twenty swimming pools have been built in the last 10 years, at a total cost of about £750,000. The estimated monthly maintenance cost of an average pool is about £200.

SCOTLAND

Castle Fraser Estates

155. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide extra funds for Scottish Homes under the rural housing initiative to accommodate tenants to be evicted by Castle Fraser Estates; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, Scottish Homes' total resources for 1993-94 already allow for a significant increase of 9 per cent. over its original programme for 1992-93. It is for Scottish Homes to decide on the relative

priority of particular projects within its programme. The responsibility for dealing with any individuals who become homeless rests with local authorities which have a duty in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to provide advice and assistance to people in their area who become homeless.

Tied House Tenants

156. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legal protection for long-standing tenants of tied houses on estates; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These tenancies are private arrangements between the tenants and their employers, and the conditions of tenure are known to the tenants when they enter into their contract of employment. However, tied tenants cannot be removed from their homes without a court order.

Drug Prescribing

157. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the savings achieved in Scotland in each of the seven therapeutic categories covered by the limited list regulations of 1985 in each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991; and what were the total savings achieved in each year.

Mr. Stewart: In 1985-86, the first year of its operation, the selected list scheme saved £8·1 million on the Scottish NHS drugs bill. The savings in each of the therapeutic categories within the scheme were as follows:

	£ thousands
Analgesics for mild to moderate pain	2,400
Antacids	465
Benzodiazepine tranquillisers and sedatives	1,995
Cough and cold remedies	2,301
Laxatives	105
Tonics and bitters	35
Vitamins	772

It is not possible to make meaningful estimates for subsequent years, but we have no reason to doubt that significant savings will continue to be made.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prescription items per person in Scotland there have been each year since 1985.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* From the Scottish health service statistics the number of prescription items per person in each year since 1985 has been:

Year	*Number*
1985	6·96
1986-87	7·04
1988	7·33
1989	7·59
1990	8·00
1991	8·22
1992	8·63

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the general practitioners drugs bill in Scotland has been each year since 1985; if he will provide a breakdown by health board; and what has been *(a)* the expenditure on NHS medicines and *(b)* the total NHS drugs bill in Scotland in each year.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer of 9 February 1993]:* The following are the cost of drugs dispensed in the community by health boards for each year since 1985 and the cost of drugs supplied to hospitals for the same years. Over 99 per cent. of the costs for drugs dispensed in the community relate to prescribing by GPs.

Ingredient cost of prescriptions dispensed in the community

£ million

Health Board	*1991-92*	*1990-91*	*1989-90*	*1988-89*	*1987-88*	*1986-87*	*1985-86*
Argyll and Clyde	26·47	23·54	21·31	19·09	16·93	15·34	13·70
Ayrshire and Arran	23·98	21·47	19·54	17·25	15·41	13·98	12·45
Borders	5·82	5·21	4·76	4·28	3·85	3·49	3·12
Dumfries and Galloway	8·70	7·61	6·84	6·02	5·39	4·98	4·40
Fife	18·25	16·32	14·80	13·10	11·50	10·58	9·40
Forth Valley	15·83	13·74	12·29	10·94	9·69	8·82	7·93
Grampian	24·00	21·36	19·36	17·40	15·48	13·95	12·57
Greater Glasgow	54·64	48·79	44·50	39·54	35·45	32·21	28·84
Highland	10·19	8·97	7·99	6·98	6·13	5·49	4·84
Lanark	35·03	30·99	28·24	24·99	21·99	19·82	17·62
Lothians	38·42	34·48	31·68	28·51	25·66	23·27	20·75
Orkney	0·93	0·82	0·72	0·64	0·59	0·54	0·50
Shetland	0·94	0·85	0·75	0·66	0·60	0·54	0·48
Tayside	24·33	21·68	19·47	17·28	14·92	13·35	11·85
Western Isles	1·37	1·26	1·17	1·03	0·95	0·87	0·77
Scotland	288·91	257·09	233·42	207·70	184·54	167·23	149·22

Ingredient cost supplied to hospitals

£ million

Health Board	*1991-92*	*1990-91*	*1989-90*	*1988-89*	*1987-88*	*1986-87*	*1985-86*
Argyll and Clyde	3·59	2·79	2·64	2·29	2·03	1·59	1·63
Ayrshire and Arran	2·95	2·36	2·01	1·75	1·66	1·44	1·40
Borders	0·73	0·62	0·59	0·43	0·33	0·29	0·30
Dumfries and Galloway	1·35	0·99	0·88	0·74	0·70	0·60	0·53

Health Board	1991-92	1990-91	1989-90	1988-89	1987-88	1986-87	1985-86
Fife	2·42	2·09	1·91	1·69	1·53	1·36	1·20
Forth Valley	2·24	1·97	1·82	1·61	1·53	1·45	1·27
Grampian	5·15	4·60	4·23	3·86	3·42	3·11	2·75
Greater Glasgow	14·66	13·34	12·27	16·70	10·05	9·52	9·52
Highland	1·58	1·47	1·22	1·07	1·02	0·87	0·74
Lanarkshire	4·47	4·24	3·88	3·47	3·08	2·86	2·74
Lothian	9·60	8·80	8·79	7·70	6·79	6·24	5·98
Orkney	0·10	0·08	0·08	0·07	0·08	0·06	0·06
Shetland	0·12	0·12	0·09	0·09	0·08	0·07	0·08
Tayside	5·44	4·72	4·19	3·97	3·68	3·04	3·02
Western Isles	0·20	0·11	0·15	0·12	0·11	0·10	0·09
Scotland	54·60	48·30	44·75	45·56	36·09	32·60	31·31
Scotland—community and hospital	343·51	305·39	278·17	253·26	220·63	199·83	180·53

Holyrood House (Entrance Fees)

159. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of the entrance fees for Holyrood house for the latest year for which figures are available; and to what purposes the revenues are applied.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has no responsibility for the presentation of the Palace of Holyrood house to the public. The amount collected in entrance fees, which is directed towards the administrative and conservation costs of the royal collection, is a matter for the director of the royal collection, to whom the hon. Member may wish to write.

Tourism

160. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential" as it applies to his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In respect of the tourism issues relating to Scotland, the following action has been taken. The work of the task forces charged with improving arrangements for training in the tourist industry, developing arts-based tourism and implementing environmental tourism management schemes have been advanced. A new initiative to help tourists with disabilities has been launched. The Scottish tourist board has fully committed itself to the principles of the citizens charter. In addition, we have set in train a fundamental review of the structure of arrangements under which support is provided to the industry.

Skye Bridge

161. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of the construction of the bridge to Skye what changes have been made relevant to the planning inquiry to *(a)* the design of the secondary bridge, *(b)* the route of the approach road and *(c)* the construction of the prefabrication plant on the Plock of Kyle; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The changes made relevant to the public local inquiry held into the Skye bridge in early 1992 were: *(a)* the design of the secondary bridge was confirmed as a cast in-situ single spine beam deck launched incrementally on to single elliptical piers; and *(b)* the level of the approach road was lowered in front of Lochalsh road. The reporter was advised and took into consideration *(a)* and *(b)* before making her recommendation to the Secretary of State. This information therefore formed part of the inquiry and decision-making process.

The method of construction of the secondary bridge requires a temporary facility, to launch incrementally the deck of the bridge. The "cast and push" facility is contained within the boundaries of the confirmed road line and is a matter of construction for the contractor.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many suckler cow premium application forms were processed during each month of 1992; and what was *(a)* the shortest period and *(b)* the longest period to elapse between receipt of the application and payment of the claim.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 February 1993]*: The number of suckler cow premium applications processed for payment during each month of 1992 is set out in the following table. The information on the shortest and longest periods between receipt of application and payment of claim is not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

1992	Number of claims processed
January	1,075
February	777
March	233
April	134
May	31
June	39
July	0
August	594
September	2,253
October	1,834
November	1,305
December	1,709

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many late applications were received for suckler cow premium in respect of 1990 and 1991; and how many of these were *(a)* paid in full, *(b)* paid in part and *(c)* refused.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 February 1993]*: Under the 1990 suckler cow premium scheme a total of 80 late applications were received. All these were received between the closing date of 31 January 1991 and 14 February 1991, thereby qualifying for the 70 per cent. of premium specified by the European Community rules of the scheme.

Under the 1991 scheme a total of 67 late applications were received. Of these 62 were received between 31 January 1992 and 14 February 1992, qualifying for a 70 per cent. rate of premium. Five claims received after 14 February 1992 were refused as required by the rules of the scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many late applications for suckler cow premium in respect of 1992 he has received to date.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 February 1993]*: A total of 101 applications have been received since 15 December 1992, the closing date for the 1992 suckler cow premium scheme.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations and discussions he has had about the continuation of the less favoured areas supplement to the suckler cow premium; and what plans he has to continue the less favoured areas supplement to the suckler cow premium.

Sir Hector Monro: *[holding answer 8 February 1993]*: I announced on 12 November 1992 that the rate of suckler cow premium from 1993 onwards would be limited to that part of the premium which is entirely funded by the European Community. In 1993 the rate will be £65·73, which represents an increase of 10 per cent. on the rate currently payable in the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the beef special premium in each year since 1979; and what was the less favoured areas supplement to the suckler cow premium in each year since 1990.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer of 9 February 1993]*: The beef special premium scheme commenced in the United Kingdom in April 1989. Throughout the period 2 April 1989 to 31 December 1992 the premium was 40 ecu, but the amount paid to farmers varied with the value of the green pound on the date of receipt of their claims. The beef special premium increased to 60 ecu on 1 January 1993. The sterling value of the premium since its introduction is shown in the following table:

Date of Change	*Rate* £
2 April 1989	28·42
1 May 1989	29·19
11 January 1990	29·32
14 May 1990	31·81
17 June 1991	31·82
17 September 1992	32·33
22 September 1992	32·76
19 November 1992	35·22
26 November 1992	35·90
1 January 1993	56·34

The LFA supplement to the suckler cow premium was £4·26 in each year from 1990 to 1992.

Criminal Justice

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to amend section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 so as to substitute the age of 16 for the age of 21 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to amend section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has, following the issue of Crown Office circular No. 2025/1, on 20 December 1991, to amend the law relating to offences listed under statute or under common law; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to amend the law in this area.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on his prosecution policy in relation to prosecution of offences under section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, and similar offences under the common law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Prosecution policy is a matter for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate. A review of prosecution policy in relation to such offences which was instructed by the Lord Advocate in December 1991 is continuing.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he has taken of research by the Law Society of Scotland into the differing levels of remuneration for civil legal aid work by solicitors in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales in assessing proposed changes to legal advice and assistance in civil legal aid in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has considered the comparisons made on behalf of the Law Society of Scotland in November 1990. These comparisons are not, however, directly relevant to the proposed changes to eligibility for advice and assistance and civil legal aid. Legal aid fees in Scotland are set to take account of the circumstances of the Scottish legal and legal aid systems.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the cost of administration of the civil legal aid system by the Scottish Legal Aid Board for each financial year since 1987-88; and if he will show this as a percentage of the net payments from the civil legal aid fund in respect of each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

£ million

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Administrative costs for civil legal aid	2·915	3·138	3·479	3·796	3·850
Net civil legal aid payments	11·694	11·379	10·769	11·715	12·343
Administrative costs as a percentage of net civil legal aid payments	24·400	27·600	32·300	32·400	31·200

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in each of the past five years his permission has been sought prior to legal proceedings being instituted by the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. There is no statutory requirement for the Scottish Legal Aid Board to obtain my right hon. Friend's permission before instituting legal proceedings.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and source of representations he has received from the individual members or committees of the Scottish Legal Aid Board in relation to changes to legal advice and assistance and to civil legal aid to be instituted on 1 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations from individual members of the Scottish Legal Aid Board. The board itself and its legal aid committee submitted advice to my right hon. Friend on the proposed changes to eligibility for advice and assistance.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the gross payments for civil legal aid in each financial year since 1987-88; and if he will show each year's figure in real terms, using 1987-88 at base 100.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table shows *(a)* the gross expenditure on civil legal aid in each year since 1987-88, including actual expenditure in 1992-93 to January 1993 and estimated expenditure for the full year 1992-93; and *(b)* the same figures revalued where appropriate in line with the GDP deflator and expressed on a 1987-88 base of 100.

£ million

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	[1]1992-93	[2]1992-93	
Gross civil legal aid payments	15·697	15·273	14·729	15·679	16·581	20·535	23·449
Gross civil legal aid payments adjusted to a 1987-88 base of 100	15·697	14·237	12·883	12·699	12·562	14·924	17·041

[1] Actual to January 1993.
[2] Estimate.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the net sum met from civil legal aid in each financial year since 1987-88 after deducting from gross payments those amounts recovered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

Net civil legal aid payments

	£ million
1987-88	11·964
1988-89	11·379
1989-90	10·769
1990-91	11·715
1991-92	12·343

MV Braer

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the aftermath of the grounding of the MV "Braer".

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 February 1993]:* Follow-up action to the Shetland oil spill received the highest priority. The Government's bridging fund for businesses facing economic hardship is now in place; the health survey of people living in the vicinity has started; the remit and chairman, Professor William Ritchie, of the ecological steering group have been announced and the remaining membership will be shortly; and the fishery exclusion zone has been extended. The Government will continue to ensure that all necessary steps are taken.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* business frauds, *(b)* cheque, credit and cash card frauds, *(c)* thefts from companies, *(d)* thefts from employees, *(e)* offences of shoplifting, *(f)* offences of vandalism against business and *(g)* assaults at the workplace were committed (i) in Scotland and (ii) in each police force area in 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1993]:* The only available information collected centrally is given in the table.

Number of cases of theft by shoplifting recorded by the police in Scotland, 1991

Police force	Number
Northern	905
Grampian	2,329
Tayside	2,918
Fife	1,064
Lothian and Borders	5,750
Central	1,723
Strathclyde	14,862
Dumfries and Galloway	547
Scotland	30,098

Scottish Record Office

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future organisation of the Scottish Record Office.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that, under the next steps initiative, the Scottish Record Office should be considered for executive agency status.

Sports Council

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, on a parliamentary constituency basis, all the projects in which the Scottish Sports Council has made a financial contribution in the current year and for the years 1991-92 and 1990-91.

Sir Hector Monro: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Muir Russell

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how often Mr. Muir Russell of his Department has met representatives of Stagecoach Holdings plc, in connection with his official duties, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Prior to the first discussion of his possible appointment as a non-executive director, which was held on 1 December 1992, Mr. Russell had no meetings with representatives of Stagecoach Holdings plc.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to deal with under-age drinking in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 February 1993]:* The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Scotland Act 1990 prohibited the unsupervised sale of alcoholic liquor by under-age persons; required the sale of alcoholic liquor in wholesale quantities by under-age persons to be specifically authorised by responsible adults; and made it an offence to sell alcohol by wholesale to an under-age person. These provisions complemented existing legislation under which it is an offence for a licensee to allow a person under 18 to consume liquor in a bar and for alcoholic liquor to be sold to people under 18 or to be purchased on their behalf. The impact of experimental byelaws prohibiting drinking in public places in parts of Motherwell, Dundee and Galashiels is currently being assessed. If found to be effective my right hon. Friend will consider applications for the introduction of similar byelaws elsewhere.

The Government encourage schools to tackle alcohol education. Two conferences for student teachers were held in Scotland last year to increase teachers' awareness of the levels of alcohol misuse among young people and the ways in which alcohol education can be integrated into the school curriculum.

Much of the work of the Health Education Board for Scotland focuses on the young drinker. Further initiatives, bearing particularly on young people, are envisaged for 1993-94.

National Portrait Gallery

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to intervene in the proposed closure of the Scottish national portrait gallery; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received on the importance of the Scottish national portrait gallery as a scholarly resource and to Scottish life; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 February 1993]:* When the trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland first announced, in August 1991, that they wished to establish a gallery of Scottish art, one member of the public wrote to my right hon. Friend expressing concern that such a proposal could lead to the demise of the Scottish national portrait gallery.

My right hon. Friend has not received from the trustees a firm and costed proposal for a Scottish gallery and has given no commitment to funding for such a proposal. The trustees have been specifically asked to examine the effect of the proposed gallery on the existing grouping of the national collections and on the buildings in which these are currently housed.

Severely Disadvantaged Areas

Dr, Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many regular full-time hired farm workers are employed on farm holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Figures for severely disadvantaged areas are not readily available. However, the employment information requested for holdings within the Scottish less-favoured areas is set out in the table below. Information for the years prior to 1982 is not available.

	Number
1982	10,109
1983	9,993
1984	9,544
1985	9,393
1986	8,607
1987	8,133
1988	7,855
1989	7,609
1990	7,264
1991	6,916
1992	6,658

Source: Scottish June Agricultural Census. Figures are hired male and female full time regular staff who are not members of the occupier's family.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the level of indebtedness among mostly sheep farmers and sheep and beef farmers, respectively, in the severely disadvantaged areas for each year since 1978.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* The information requested is set out in the table. Figures are available only since 1986-87.

	LFA mainly sheep farms		LFA sheep and cattle farms	
	Total[1] liabilities £ per farm	Total liabilities as a percentage of total assets[2]	Total[1] liabilities £ per farm	Total liabilities as a percentage of total assets[2]
1986-87	19,000	13·5	32,000	16·8
1987-88	21,000	12·7	36,000	18·1
1988-89	16,000	10·5	33,000	15·1
1989-90	18,000	10·6	35,000	16·7
1990-91	22,000	13·3	34,000	15·7
1991-92	21,000	11·6	36,000	16·3

Source: Scottish Farm Accounts Scheme: Owner-occupied and tenanted farm results weighted together.
[1] Liabilities include bank loans, overdrafts and other long and short term loans.
[2] Total assets includes land and buildings, machinery, vehicles and breeding livestock, and current assets.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes there have been in the proportion of mostly sheep and sheep and beef farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in relation to the number of mostly sheep farmers and sheep and beef farmers in total for Scotland since 1978; and if he will chart the change.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1993]:* Information for severely disadvantaged areas is not readily available. The information requested comparing sheep and cattle and sheep holdings within the Scottish less-favoured areas with such holdings in Scotland as a whole is set out in the table. Information prior to 1982 is not available.

Percentage of mainly sheep and cattle and sheep holdings in the Scottish LFA in relation to the numbers of such holdings in Scotland as a whole

	Per cent.
1982	60·1
1983	60·6
1984	62·8
1985	64·0
1986	69·2
1987	69·7
1988	70·1
1989	69·2
1990	68·6
1991	70·3
1992	71·5

Source: Derived from Scottish June Agricultural Census.

Caledonian MacBrayne

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *232*, how many Caledonian MacBrayne ferry routes are unprofitable; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* My right hon. Friend does not consider it desirable to indicate which Caledonian MacBrayne's routes are profitable or unprofitable or to require the company to make public commercially sensitive information about operating surpluses and deficits incurred on individual routes.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in support of separating the two branches of the Forestry Commission into separate organisations; and what discussions have taken place.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The House of Commons Agriculture Committee, in its report "Land Use and Forestry", published in February 1990, recommended that the Forestry Commission's forestry authority and forest enterprise functions should be divided between separate departments. The Government did not accept this recommendation, but subsequently agreed that the Forestry Commission should carry out an internal reorganisation to distinguish clearly between its functions as a Government Department and its role in managing publicly owned forests. This reorganisation took place with effect from 1 April 1992.

The Government have since received some representations in support of splitting the two parts of the Forestry Commission into separate organisations, most notably from the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute. No discussions have taken place.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public access in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England has been lost since 1981 when Forestry Commission land was sold to the private sector.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The Government have retained no direct interest in such land following its sale by the Forestry Commission and no official statistics on the provision of access by the new owners have therefore been collected.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Forestry Commission land in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England has been sold to the private sector each year since 1981; and how much money has been raised in each case.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The areas of land sold by the Forestry Commission in each year since 1981 are shown in the following table. These include woodlands and other land such as agricultural land and residential properties. The total receipts from these sales are also shown. A breakdown of the receipts by country is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry Commission land sales

Year ended March	Scotland (hectares)	Wales (hectares)	England (hectares)	Great Britain (hectares)	Great Britain Receipts (£ million)
1982	7,371	1,743	1,309	10,423	6·9
1983	8,135	1,450	2,523	12,108	14·6
1984	36,543	3,347	4,680	44,570	23·6
1985	18,359	3,522	6,976	28,857	22·1
1986	10,555	3,229	2,789	16,573	17·0
1987	6,220	1,950	2,786	10,956	14·7
1988	3,359	977	4,593	8,929	13·1
1989	4,286	1,760	1,629	7,675	12·4
1990	4,620	1,242	1,989	7,851	13·0
1991	4,754	1,118	1,556	7,428	12·0
1992	3,517	1,657	1,737	6,911	14·5

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken or intends to take, to introduce legislation which will ensure public access before and after Forestry Commission land is sold.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the announcement made on this subject by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland on 21 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *164-66*. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hectares of land the Forestry Commission has held in each of the years since 1979 in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England; and what percentage of total land this is.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The information is given in the following table:

Year ended 31 March	Area (hectares)	Percentage of total land
Scotland		
1980	799,700	10·4
1981	800,052	10·4
1982	797,511	10·3
1983	793,540	10·3
1984	759,758	9·9
1985	741,993	9·6
1986	732,154	9·5
1987	729,217	9·5
1988	727,670	9·4
1989	725,576	9·4
1990	723,497	9·4
1991	720,467	9·3
1992	718,421	9·3
Wales		
1980	160,700	7·8
1981	160,674	7·8
1982	158,979	7·7
1983	157,699	7·6
1984	154,410	7·5
1985	150,901	7·3
1986	147,751	7·2
1987	145,306	7·0
1988	144,329	7·0
1989	142,654	6·9
1990	141,490	6·9
1991	140,299	6·8
1992	138,671	6·7
England		
1980	303,000	2·3
1981	303,271	2·3
1982	302,193	2·3
1983	299,685	2·3
1984	295,004	2·3
1985	288,080	2·2
1986	285,685	2·2
1987	282,031	2·2
1988	277,440	2·1
1989	276,026	2·1
1990	274,638	2·1
1991	272,157	2·1
1992	270,502	2·1

Note:
All the 1980 figures are rounded to the nearest 100 hectares.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many access arrangements, and how many access agreements, the Forestry Commission have made in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England in each year since 1991.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* Arrangements for securing continued public access to Forestry Commission woodlands after sale, by means of prior agreements entered into between the Commission and local authorities, were introduced in October 1991. No access agreements were completed in that year, but three were concluded in 1992, two in Wales and one in England.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hectares of *(a)* Forestry Commission and *(b)* private planting each year since 1981 in (1) Scotland, (2) Wales and (3) England have been (i) new planting of conifers, (ii) restocking of conifers, (iii) new planting of broadleaf trees and (iv) restocking of broadleaf trees.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her yesterday at column *634*.

Forestry

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations he has received, and what discussions he has held, in respect of increasing forestry in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England;

(2) what plans he has for increasing forestry in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* I have had many representations on the need for increasing forestry in Britain. The Government made clear their support for

"a steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many, diverse benefits that forests provide"

in a statement published in September 1991 under the title "Forestry Policy for Great Britain", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. This continues to be our policy, and we shall be reviewing the effectiveness of the incentives currently available for forestry investment in accordance with the commitment we gave in our election manifesto. This review will be completed later this year.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of afforestation in Great Britain has been in Scotland each year since 1981; and how much of this has been coniferous.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The information is given in the following table.

Year ended 31 March	*Area afforested in Scotland as percentage of area in Britain*	*Area of conifers planted as percentage of total area planted in Scotland*
1982	89	100
1983	85	99
1984	87	99
1985	89	99
1986	91	99
1987	91	97
1988	90	95
1989	90	93
1990	78	84
1991	74	80
1992	74	78

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hectares of forest have been planted each year in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England without a grant from the woodland grant scheme since its introduction.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The Forestry Commission's estimates of the area of new woodlands planted without grant-aid each year since the woodland grant scheme was introduced are given in the table.

(hectares)

Year ended 31 March	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*England*	*Total*
1989	38	22	136	196
1990	2	4	185	191
1991	0	3	134	137
1992	0	4	119	123

Forestry Commission (Privatisation)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to privatise the Forestry Commission; and what consultations he has held.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The Government have no plans at present to privatise the Forestry Commission.

Fishing Nets

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the approximate cost to the Scottish Office of the recent prosecution of the owner of the Moyallan for carriage of a monofilament net.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The case has been handled through the normal procedures that exist for dealing with alleged breaches of fisheries law. It has involved a number of different officials who have spent small amounts of time over a period and for that reason it is not possible to estimate the costs involved.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy towards the carriage of monofilament nets in Scottish waters by fishing boats which are *(a)* United Kingdom-registered flag of convenience boats and *(b)* United Kingdom-registered in ports other than in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* Under the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986 the carriage of monofilament gill nets by any British fishing boat, including United Kingdom-registered flag of convenience boats and United Kingdom boats registered in ports other than in Scotland, is prohibited in the 0 to 6 mile sea area adjacent to the coast of Scotland.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grants have been paid out under the woodland grant scheme in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England; and how much this has amounted to in each of the years since 1988.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The numbers of applications approved under the woodland grant scheme in each of the last four financial years, together with the grants paid, are shown in the following table. Applications associated with the farm woodland scheme have been included, but the grants paid do not take account of any annual payments made under that scheme.

	1988-89		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	Number of applications approved	*Grants paid (£ thousand)*	*Number of applications approved*	*Grants paid (£ thousand)*	*Number of applications approved*	*Grants paid (£ thousand)*	*Number of applications approved*	*Grants paid (£ thousand)*
Scotland	698	222	1,436	5,026	1,218	6,509	697	6,926
Wales	290	25	348	406	347	463	283	621
England	2,233	382	3,688	4,773	2,935	6,527	2,273	7,048
Total	3,221	629	5,472	10,205	4,500	13,499	3,253	14,595

NHS Drugs Committee

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appointees serve on the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs; and how many more seats there will be when the Committee is extended.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* There are currently 15 members on the advisory committee on NHS drugs; a further five members are being appointed.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about extending the increase to the SAP less-favoured areas supplement after the current year; ane when the SAP less-favoured areas supplement will be paid.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* I have received no such representations. An LFA supplement of 5·5 ecu was paid to Scottish sheep producers in late summer. The further 1·5 ecu agreed by the Agriculture Council in December is expected to be paid in April 1993.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments for the forthcoming year; and what was the value of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in each year since 1979.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The great majority of sheep and cattle which qualify for HLCAs in Scotland are located in the severely disadvantaged area of the less-favoured area. The HLCA sheep and cattle rates in the severely disadvantaged area in each year since 1979 were as set out in the following table:

Year	*Cows* £	*Upland sheep* £	*Hill sheep* £
1979	29·00	2·85	3·60
1980	35·00	4·25	5·50
1981	42·50	4·25	6·25
1982	44·50	4·25	6·25
1983	44·50	4·25	6·25
1984	44·50	4·25	6·25
1985	44·50	4·25	6·25
1986	54·50	4·50	6·75
1987	54·50	4·50	6·75
1988	54·50	4·50	6·75
1989	54·50	4·50	6·75
1990	54·50	4·50	7·50
1991	63·30	4·90	8·75
1992	63·30	4·90	8·75
1993	63·30	3·60	6·50

Potatoes

128. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what national support schemes are planned within the proposed EC potato regime.

Sir Hector Monro *Holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The current EC proposals for potatoes make no provision for the recognition or maintenance of national support measures.

The EC considers that potatoes should be brought within the coverage of the CAP and that a harmonised regime is necessary for completion of the single market.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the operating costs of the Potato Marketing Board in each year since 1979.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The operating costs of the Potato Marketing Board are to be found in the annual report and accounts of the board. The figures in the table, for the period 1979 to 1991, reflect the total administrative costs incurred, excluding costs of market intervention.

	Administration cost
	£ million
1979	3·3
1980	3·9
1981	4·8
1982	5·0
1983	5·7
1984	6·0
1985	6·9
1986	7·0
1987	7·5
1988	7·8
1989	8·2
1990	6·9
1991	9·1

Source: PMB Annual report and accounts.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times the Government have intervened in the potato market; and what was the tonnage and cost in each year since 1979.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The Government do not intervene directly in the potato market but may pay a proportion of the cost of any intervention by the Potato Marketing Board under the provisions of the potato marketing scheme.

It is therefore difficult to link Government expenditure to tonnage. Since 1979 Government expenditure has been as follows:

	£ million
1981	13·5
1983	0·3
1985	12·9

Wool

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations and discussions he has received about retaining the British Wool Marketing Board's statutory guarantee duties; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* I have received representations about the ending of the wool guarantee from a number of hon. Members, from the National Farmers Union of Scotland, from the Scottish Crofters Union and from the Scottish northern regional committee of the British Wool Marketing Board.

We announced our decision to terminate the wool guarantee in 1988. This element of direct involvement in

the wool market has outlived its usefulness, particularly in the face of EC support measures under the common agricultural policy. Sheep farmers will continue to receive very substantial Government support through ewe premium and hill livestock compensatory allowances. Scottish producers currently benefit each year by over £100 million in direct subsidies from these sources.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the British Wool Marketing Board's standard guarantee price in each year since 1979; what was the world wool price in each year since 1979; and what the income from wool has been to producers in the less favoured areas in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The guarantee price for wool in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 is given in the table:

Year	*Price (p/kg)*
1979	112
1980-83	115
1984	120
1985-89	129
1990	125
1991	130
1992	117

The price of wool on world markets varies from country to country and is influenced by factors such as demand, availability and quality. The average price achieved for British wool at auction in each year since 1979 is given in the table:

Year	*Price (p/kg)*
1979-80	103·20
1980-81	87·64
1981-82	101·99
1982-83	99·86
1983-84	119·91
1984-85	138·70
1985-86	112·69
1986-87	116·72
1987-88	133·87
1988-89	136·38
1989-90	109·58
1990-91	61·85
1991-92	[1]61·08

[1] Provisional.

Information covering the income of producers in the less-favoured areas only is not available.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations and discussions he has had with regard to maintaining the current restrictions which ensure the milk quotas on remote and island areas in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* A number of representations have been received about ring-fencing milk quotas within the remote and island areas of Scotland. The Government are considering this matter in the light of new European Community regulations governing milk quotas.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table of farm income figures in Scotland in each year since 1979, at 1992 prices.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The figures requested are set out in the table:

Farming income at 1992 prices[1]

	£ million
1979	182·8
1980	47·5
1981	146·5
1982	226·5
1983	148·3
1984	281·4
1985	32·4
1986	125·0
1987	215·5
1988	138·9
1989	205·8
1990	153·3
1991	100·9
[2]1992	163·4

[1] Aggregate farming income in cash terms deflated by the retail price index (1992 = 100).
[2] Estimated.

Note: Farming income is the return to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial input and the capital they have in the farm business.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of redundancies among NHS staff for each year since 1989-90 dividing the figures by the reason.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* Statistics on redundancies in the NHS in Scotland are not collected centrally other than in respect of staff who are both over 50 years of age and have at least five years' reckonable service for superannuation purposes where a benefit is immediately payable under the NHS (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1981. The total number of such premature retirement awards for the years since 1989-90 is as follows:

Year	*Number of cases*
1989-90	1,040
1990-91	480
1991-92	625

A breakdown by reason of redundancy is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Private Roads

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what circumstances EC funds can be sought to meet the cost of bringing a private road up to a standard where it can be adopted by the roads authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The normal method of attracting EC funding for a road project would be through the European

regional development fund. To qualify, the project would have to be in an eligible area and be carried out by a public body. In Scotland, the areas eligible for ERDF are parts of Galloway, Lothian except Edinburgh city, parts of Central, Fife and Tayside regions, and all of Strathclyde and Highlands and Islands regions.

In the majority of circumstances roads projects can be funded by ERDF only if they make a direct contribution to the creation and maintenance of employment, economic development, and productive investment. They must also be essential to the efficient movement of industrial, commercial, or tourist traffic. I am unaware of any other EC funds which might be available for the stated purpose.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* A provisional list of regulations which impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the capital spending allocation for the Greater Glasgow health board for each of the last five years together with the comparable figure for 1992-93 and the projected capital budget for each of the next three years both in cash and real terms.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 February 1993]:* The figures for total capital allocations to Greater Glasgow health board for 1987-88 to 1992-93 are given in the table.

Year	*Cash*	*£ million at 1992-93 prices*
1987-88	20·216	27·817
1988-89	21·365	27·403
1989-90	28·031	33·735
1990-91	22·341	24·900
1991-92	30·627	31·929
1992-93	41·613	41·613

For 1993-94, Greater Glasgow health board, along with all other boards, received capital allocations for the building programme and computer developments which will be carried out by its directly managed units. It has also received provisional allocations for its directly managed units' building programme for 1994-95 and 1995-96. However, these figures are not comparable with those for previous years since they do not include the building and computer programmes of the prospective trusts. Capital provision for those will be included in their external financing limits. Additional small capital allocations may also be made for other purposes. For all boards and trusts the provisional allocations for 1994-95 and 1995-96 reflect only the consequences of the 1993-94 allocation and do not take into account potential new approvals given in the course of 1993-94. The figures are:

	Cash	*£ million 1992-93 prices*
1993-94 Building and computer programme	29·196	28·415
1994-95 Building programme only	20·048	18·897
1995-96 Building programme only	18·984	17·415

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all schools which have opted to adopt grant-maintained status.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 February 1993]:* Parents at London Street primary school in Edinburgh and Dalmuir primary school in Clydebank have voted in favour of applying for self-governing status. The subsequent application by the London Street primary school board was rejected and the Dalmuir primary school board has been advised that I am considering rejection of their application.

Parents of three schools are currently being balloted by their school boards on self-governing status. The schools are St. Mary's Episcopal primary school, Dunblane where the school board has passed two resolutions calling for a ballot; and St. Gerard's and Queen's Park secondary schools in Glasgow where parents have presented the school board with a petition seeking a ballot.

Hospitals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce a guarantee for patients who wish to receive in-patient treatment at the same hospital they attended as out-patients.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* No. The decision as to how treatment should be carried out is a matter for discussion between the patient and his or her general practitioner and then the patient and consultant to whom he or she is referred. This may lead to a decision that the in-patient treatment may be most appropriately provided at another hospital.

TRANSPORT

Tourism

Mr.Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential" as it applies to his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department recognises that travel is an integral part of tourism and continues to make progress in the areas of work which are described in "Tourism in the UK: Realising the Potential". As foreshadowed in the report a number of initiatives have been taken to assist tourist coach operation in central London, including the provision of over 160 additional parking spaces for the 1992 summer season.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1991; whether

the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Two market tests have taken place in the Department of Transport since November 1991:

1. Subject: Procurement and Storage of Protective Clothing. Service was contracted out. Contractor is Greenham Trading Limited.
2. Subject: Bulk/High Speed Reprographic Services. Service was contracted out: a split award, the contractors are HMSO Reprographics and Multiplex Technics Limited.

These services were examined and tenders invited under the procedures obtaining before the publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" in November 1991. It is likely that any remaining items from this original programme will be dealt with under the new procedures, including the in-house bid. None of the items included in the new programme, published in the citizens charter first report, has reached tender stage.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff in his Department are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The equivalent of eight full-time staff are assigned to the market testing programme. The approximate costs, including consultancies since November 1991 are £250,000.

Pedestrian Crossing, Dorrington

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to respond to representations on the need for pedestrian crossing facilities on the A49 in Dorrington, Shrewsbury.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Discussions on the need for pedestrian crossing facilities on the A49 in Dorrington have been proceeding for some time. The Department's officials are arranging to meet representatives of Shropshire county council and Condover parish council later this month to discuss the options.

Exmoor

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the representations by the Exmoor Society about the protection of moorland and villages from increased motor traffic.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am aware that the Exmoor Society has expressed to the national park authority its concern about traffic on Exmoor. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has not been asked to consider this matter which is one for the local authorities concerned.

Rail Freight

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what tonnage of freight was transported by railway in each year since 1974; and what percentage this represented of total freight movements.

Mr. Freeman: Annual freight tonnages moved by rail can be found in table 9.3 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992," a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Rail's percentage share for the years 1981 to 1991 is shown in table 1.9; comparable data for ealier years may be found in previous editions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *418-19*, if he will now make public payment for track costs of rail freight operations in advance of conclusions to the parliamentary consideration of rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: No. Such payments must await the clear identification of track costs which the formal establishment of Railtrack will bring and the designation of the Secretary of State as the competent authority under EC regulation 1893-91.

Maritime Radar

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of a maritime radar installation with a recording facility.

Mr. Norris: It is not possible to estimate the costs of a radar installation without knowing the details of the location and type of facility proposed.

Lorries

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken on the night and weekend exemption system for lorries in parts of London, on its costs and benefits, and on the average cost of each lorry refused an exemption permit in each year of operation of the scheme.

Mr. Norris: The Londonwide overnight and weekend lorry ban was adopted by a number of London borough councils following the abolition of the Greater London council. It is administered by the London Boroughs Transport Committee. None of the information requested is readily available to my Department.

Fuel Consumption (Motorways)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the revenue from duty on fuel consumed on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Approximately one eighth of the petrol and one quarter of the diesel fuel used in this country is consumed on motorways. The duty paid on this fuel would have been about £1·7 billion in 1991-92.

Trans-Pennine Routes

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column 493, what route across the Pennines he intends to exclude from consideration.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The route referred to by my right hon. Friend in that answer was a dual carriageway on the A628-A616 through the Peak District national park. I shall consider any suggestions about extension of the M65 which may emerge from the current consultation on the trans-Pennine study strategy report.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the terms of reference for the consultants responsible for the trans-Pennine study strategy report.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: To study traffic levels on the existing routes across the Pennines; to identify existing and future problems on the road network taking into account planned network developments and forecast increases in traffic and the role of public transport; and to identify potential solutions and assess their environmental and economic impact.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies and reports he has commissioned on the extension of the M65 eastwards from Colne.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None apart from the trans-Pennine study, which looked at all major routes across the Pennines.

Stockport Bypass

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to hold the next public inquiry into the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I cannot yet say when we shall be able to hold the next public inquiry. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Railway Staff

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will conduct an examination of the consequences of the cessation of national negotiating machinery for weekly wages railway staff on their respective responsibilities.

Mr. Freeman: No. Collective bargaining arrangements are a matter for negotiation between employers and employees.

Rail Franchises

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable he expects to be followed in the award of the initial franchises for existing British Rail services.

Mr. Freeman: Subject to Parliament approving the Railways Bill, we expect the franchising director to award the franchise contracts for the initial franchises in time for the first private sector railway franchises to commence services in 1994.

Railway Investment

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has received from external sources on the effect of the cost of capital to private investors relative to the cost to the public sector on the level of future investment in the railways.

Mr. Freeman: We receive advice on a regular basis from our merchant bank advisers, Samuel Montagu. The cost of capital to private sector companies involved in the railway will depend on the market's view of the risks and rewards involved.

Railway Equipment

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the length of time it will take to renew existing British Rail bridges, trains, signalling and power supply equipment at the present rate of replacements; and what information he has on the average design life of each category or main type of *(a)* bridge, *(b)* train, *(c)* signalling and *(d)* power supply equipment.

Mr. Freeman: An assessment of this kind would not yield meaningful results given the varied durability of the different assets mentioned. The design life of bridges varies from 20 years to more than a century, of trains from 25 to 40 years and for signalling and power supply equipment from 20 years upwards. Asset lives assumed for the purpose of calculation of amortisation and depreciation charges in British Rail's annual report and accounts for 1991-92 are set out in note 4 on accounting policies in that report.

Oil Tankers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oil tankers travelled through United Kingdom waters in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to provide 24-hour availability of tugs to assist oil tankers in distress.

Mr. Norris: The provision of salvage tugs is a matter for commercial salvage companies and other owners of suitable vessels. Suitable Ministry of Defence vessels will offer emergency assistance if they are available and no suitable commercial vessel is within reach. The Government have no plans to provide salvage tugs themselves, other than for Ministry of Defence purposes. The Government are aware of work being done by the international salvage industry on the availability of salvage services and will consider carefully the implications of the forthcoming report by the industry's salvage working group. In addition, Lord Donaldson has identified that one of the topics which he expects his inquiry to consider is whether present and traditional salvage arrangements are satisfactory in the context of a hazardous cargo, and at its recent meeting the EC Council noted that the Commission intends to include in its communication on maritime safety

> "Initiatives to . . . promote measures concerning emergency services, in particular towing and co-ordination of the availability of salvage capacities".

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ban oil tankers built before 1980 from British waters.

Mr. Norris: There is no justification for banning tankers on a basis of age. A well-operated pre-1980 tanker presents less risk to the environment than a badly managed new vessel. This will be considered by Lord Donaldson in his inquiry, taking account of the economic implications as set out in his terms of reference.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to advocate mandatory standards at international level for alcohol policies and fail-safe mechanisms on oil tankers.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom already gives support at the International Maritime Organisation to international endorsement of a legal intoxication standard based on

blood-alcohol level or equivalent and has a leading role in ensuring international recognition of the highest possible standards of design and construction for oil tankers and other merchant ships, having regard to detailed Classification Society requirements and any ship's specific company requirement related to the intended nature of service.

Sea-going Tugs

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many sea-going tugs are available in British waters; and where they are stationed.

Mr. Norris: According to the records held by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, there are approximately 455 tugs. Information as to where they are stationed is not recorded.

Community Transport, London

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the community transport budget for London in each year since 1987.

Mr. Norris: The provision of community transport is primarily a matter for individual London boroughs. My Department does, however, provide funds for the Dial-a-Ride service through London Transport. Expenditure on this since 1987, in cash terms, is as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	6·000
1988-89	6·270
1989-90	7·270
1990-91	8·270
1991-92	10·015
1992-93	10·500

ScotRail

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the public service obligation grant requirement of regional railways was allocated to ScotRail in each year for which figures are available; and what was the amount in each year.

Mr. Freeman: PSO grant is given in relation to the total requirements of Regional Railways and Network SouthEast. It is not allocated to particular sectors within these businesses.

Chelmsford Bypass

Mr Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on widening the Chelmsford A12 bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 11 February 1993]:* We expect to consult the public by the end of this year and announce a preferred option in 1994. Further progress will be dependent on the successful outcome of statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SESSION 1992–93

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

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